

UNION RESPONSE TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION GREEN PAPER

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ICU Notes:

1. The release of the green paper *Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*¹. It proposes:
2. An explicit commitment to a “market based” system of higher education (HE).²
3. The introduction of a “Teaching Excellence Framework” (TEF). This will:
 - a. Judge the teaching of universities based solely on graduate employment statistics, student retention/continuation rate and NSS student satisfaction indicators.³
 - b. Determine HE providers’ tuition fee cap.⁴
4. An increase in tuition fee cap “in line with inflation” from 2017/18 for HE providers who undertake minimal engagement with the TEF.⁵
5. Further increases in tuition fee caps for institutions who achieve higher levels in the TEF to apply from 2017/18.⁶
6. The transfer of power of determining tuition fee caps from parliament to the secretary of state.⁷
7. Deregulation of and increased support for the establishment of alternative (i.e. private) HE providers.⁸
8. Increased provision for the “exit” (i.e. closure) of HE providers.⁹
9. A commitment to reduce the public body requirements of HEFCE-funded HE providers, such as the requirements of being under the scope of the Freedom of Information Act.¹⁰
10. A suggestion that new legislation could be introduced to regulate student unions in a similar fashion to the government's current Trade Union Bill.¹¹

ICU Further Notes:

1. The student body at Imperial has expressed opposition to the marketisation of higher education.¹²
2. There is broad opposition to the proposals in the Green Paper throughout the sector including the National Union of Students and a huge number of other Students’ Unions throughout England.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/higher-education-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice>

2 Green paper C.1.4

3 Green paper A.3.12

4 Green paper A.2.18

5 Green paper A.1.26

6 Green paper A.1.31

7 Green paper C.2.5

8 Green paper B.1

9 Green paper B.2 & C.3

10 Green paper C.3.17-18

11 Green paper C.1.23-24

12 <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/dbfile/pbf/20> pg appendix pg 9

ICU Believes:

1. That education is a right, not a privilege or a commodity.
2. That the marketisation of our universities distorts their purpose. We are students, not passive consumers, and our education is not a commodity to be bought and sold.
3. That reform based on the idea of a “market-based” system of higher education is flawed.
4. That the use of employment statistics as a metric for assessing teaching quality will cause catastrophic damage to the arts, humanities and social sciences, as well as allow the cost of STEMB courses to increase disproportionately.
5. That graduated fees based on this metric will cause the ghettoization of higher education, where only the rich will be able to afford to study STEMB subjects at high teaching quality institutions, while those less well off will be forced by financial constraints to undertake less ‘valuable’ degrees with lower graduate employment possibilities. This can only serve to widen the current wealth gap.
6. That good education is about more than our potential value to an employer.
7. That the green paper's attempt to increase tuition fees “by the back door” is a disgrace.
8. That transferring the duty of setting tuition fee caps from parliament to ministers is an undemocratic attempt to avoid due scrutiny.
9. That the increased provision for the exit of HE providers indicates a willingness to let public universities fail.
10. That this, coupled with deregulation of private providers, indicates an intention to effectively further the privatisation of higher education.
11. That education is a public good and attempts to privatise the higher education sector are fundamentally wrong.
12. That as public institutions, it is a democratic necessity that some public body requirements (including those given under the Freedom of Information Act) apply to universities.
13. That any attempt to regulate this Union in a manner similar to the Trade Union Bill is fundamentally undemocratic and should be opposed as strongly as possible.

ICU Resolves:

1. To take a formal stance against the higher education green paper.
2. To form a campaign against the proposals included in the green paper, using a diversity of tactics.
3. To mandate the DPW to arrange an open meeting about the proposals included in the green paper, and the state of higher education in general.
4. To mandate the DPW to release a statement publicised by all means possible summarising our opposition to the green paper.
5. To coordinate with other student unions (particularly in London), the NUS, campus trade unions and other interested parties about how to best challenge the green paper.