Where student fees go
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Universities in England are often asked to explain where the income from tuition fees goes. This report provides an answer.

It focuses on some of the changes that universities have made since the introduction of variable fees for UK and EU undergraduate students in 2006. It explains the shift from government funding to fees, backed by public loans, which took place in 2012, when direct government funding was cut and the fee cap was increased to £9,000. It describes the way universities are responding to changing student expectations in the light of these higher fees, and the shifting external environment.

It shows a university system which is going through tremendous change during a rapid transition to a new funding model. For some universities the introduction of the £9,000 tuition fee cap has resulted in increased income. For others it has fallen. For all there have been significant decreases in capital funding from government. But all universities across England are building, investing, improving and adapting what they do to give their students the best possible higher education, and future opportunities.

Case studies show how universities such as Aston, Derby, Liverpool, Leeds and Chichester are investing heavily in careers-focused support including work experience, internships and integrated placements to help their graduates secure good jobs. Bournemouth, De Montfort and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS) have major capital investment programmes underway which will transform learning and social spaces. Sheffield Hallam, Exeter and Bedfordshire explain how they have listened carefully to what students say is most important to them, and are shaping their decisions in consultation with them.

The report also shows how hard universities are working to ensure that higher fees do not deter poor students from going to university, from Manchester Metropolitan’s focus on reducing costs to students where they most need help, in day-to-day expenses, to the University of Birmingham’s involvement in a scheme to grow the confidence of potential applicants who are most able, yet least likely to apply to study there.

These investments are making a difference to students. Satisfaction, as measured by the National Student Survey, was higher in 2013 than at any point since the survey began in 2005, and students from the lowest-income backgrounds are now more likely than ever to apply to university.

Although there are universities which have seen their income go down since 2012 for a variety of reasons, the examples given in this report illustrate the way that long-term ambitions are informing decisions to borrow and invest. By increasing the efficiency of their operations, universities are finding ways to respond to the priorities identified by their students.

The first group of students to pay higher tuition fees are seeing better facilities, teaching, support, advice, learning and social space. But universities operate on long time horizons. The decisions and investments they are making now are based on the expectation of a stable future income stream. Cuts in public funding mean that universities now depend on fee income. Without it they will not attract students in an increasingly competitive environment. Without it they could not sustain the world-class higher education they offer, or adapt to meet the evolving needs of students.
Chapter 1: Context and strategic choices

In the past few years the way English universities are funded to teach full-time UK and EU undergraduate students has shifted rapidly, from significant dependence on government funding to significant dependence on income from student fees.

Almost all full-time undergraduate students from the UK or EU have access to government loans, which they only repay when they are earning over a certain threshold. Students understandably want to know that they are getting value for money. This has led to noticeable changes in the way universities are thinking about how to use their resources.

When the changes were implemented there were concerns that this shift would discourage students from low-income backgrounds from going to university. That has not happened. In fact application rates from the lowest-income backgrounds have increased since 2006.

Meanwhile the National Student Survey, which provides a useful barometer of how students feel they are being served by their university across the whole range of their experiences, shows that satisfaction rates are high and rising. We do not yet have the results for the cohort of students who started at university in 2012 when the tuition fee cap increased to £9,000. However, between 2005, before variable fees were introduced, and 2013, overall satisfaction rose from 80% to 85%, while satisfaction with important elements such as teaching quality has also been rising steadily.

Professor Sir Steve Smith, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Exeter

Rather than depending upon meeting the requirements of funding bodies, our first priority must be meeting the expectations of students as graduate contributions become our biggest single source of income.”

Figure 1: Percentage of students expressing overall satisfaction, studying at higher education institutions in England, 2005–2013

Source: National Student Survey
Chapter 1: Context and strategic choices

Shifting sources of income

The 1990s saw a rapid expansion in the number of students in UK universities. However, public funding for teaching did not keep pace with that expansion, such that between 1989 and 2004 public funding per student fell by 37%. Tuition fees were introduced in 1997 to try to address that decline and in 2006 fees became variable, capped at £3,000. In 2012 the fee cap was increased to £9,000. This coincided with a cut in direct grant funding from government (public funding). Between 2009–10 and 2010–11 direct public funding for teaching provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) fell by 11.2% in real terms, while tuition fee income [supported by publicly funded loans] rose by 14%. Overall, there has been a steady rise in the income universities receive for teaching, but the effect has been highly variable between different institutions.

Figure 2: Balance between HEFCE teaching grant and tuition fee loan outlay to 2014–15

Almost half Aston’s tuition fees income has been used to make up for a decrease of approximately £5 million in HEFCE funding. Almost 35% of the current undergraduate student body are from the lowest four income groups, and strategic investment decisions made around the remaining income have prioritised support for students in the form of scholarships, outreach and mentoring.

In addition, Aston has improved its staff-student ratio, and cut the costs of broadband internet access in residences to under £10 a year. Aston has also invested £200,000 in introducing free language tuition, supporting its commitment to helping graduates to get jobs in an increasingly globalised economy.

The benefits to students are shown in the improvements in student satisfaction surveys in the teaching, personal development, and feedback and assessment categories. Aston’s scholarship offer is oversubscribed, while its innovative ‘Languages for All’ programme has been taken up by 27% of first year students, with Mandarin, Arabic and Portuguese being the most popular choices.
The teachers are brilliant and they make it lively and engaging. The course content is very practical and applicable to real life situations, for instance I can now write a CV and cover letter in a second language.”

Kate Truskovska, BSc logistics, Aston University

Fee income varies between universities

Despite the increase in undergraduate fee levels, some universities have seen their income for teaching fall as a result of reductions in funding from HEFCE. Other universities have seen increases. The pattern depends on a number of factors, such as the balance between different types of student, recruitment patterns and the subject mix at each university. In 2011–12 universities’ income from full-time UK and EU student fees varied from 0% of total income to 37% of total income.

Undergraduate fee income is just one element of universities’ funding. The last few years have seen significant decreases in part-time and postgraduate numbers, and considerable shifts in patterns of international student enrolment. Combined with cuts in government capital investment, and fluctuating investment income, universities face a volatile and highly variable funding environment, with direct consequences for their individual ability to invest in the staff and infrastructure which supports students.

Despite variable financial positions, universities across England are making plans and investments for the future. Their strategic choices are based on the fact that the majority of their income for teaching now comes directly or indirectly from students themselves.

The pace and scale of investment is impressive. For many universities, the changing funding regime offers considerable opportunities to transform the learning environment for their students. They are also conscious, however, of the volatility and risk inherent in the new system. A strong theme of the responses to a survey conducted by Universities UK in preparing this report was the need to build financial stability to withstand the shocks which come with the transition from one funding model to another.

**Figure 3: Income from full-time undergraduate UK/EU student tuition fees as a percentage of total income of higher education institutions in England, 2011–12**

Even where they have only a small amount of additional income – or are managing a decrease in income for teaching – what is overwhelmingly clear is that universities are changing the way they make investment decisions. In Chapter 6, we show how the views of students, and students’ unions, are central to strategic planning and decision-making. For many, this has meant rethinking decisions about what
would be most useful to students, such as Oxford Brookes’ focus on improving staff-student ratios and subsidising accommodation costs, described in this chapter. With students’ expectations driving this strategic thinking, universities are investing in what students say matter most to them, including state-of-the-art teaching facilities, additional staff, improved libraries and flexible and informal study areas where students can work in an environment that suits them.

The National Student Survey has been an important prompt for many universities, enabling them to focus their efforts in areas where students are less satisfied, for example by investing in additional staff to improve assessment and feedback. Rising levels of satisfaction measured by this survey show that these decisions are producing results.

All universities have increased the financial support they offer students while they are studying. As Chapter 2 shows, universities provided nearly £400 million in financial support to students in 2011–12 alone, and nearly £55 million in additional outreach activities to potential future students, and they are changing the nature of this support in response to student feedback.

While improving teaching and learning facilities was the strongest theme in the responses we received, there was also a major emphasis on supporting students to get good jobs. Chapter 5 shows the actions universities are taking in response to this challenge.

*Returning to a single campus will maintain the School’s intimate, vibrant character which powers our research and teaching even as we grow.*

David Christmas, Director of Student and Registry Services, SOAS

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London – leveraging investment

The change in fee regime prompted SOAS, University of London to increase its annual target surplus from 3% to 6–9% in the medium term. This recognised that a proportion of the additional fee income from 2012 would be needed to compensate for reduced HEFCE capital funding.

The School needed to increase the cash generated from its operations in order to maintain levels of investment in infrastructure to transform the student experience at SOAS. The main aim is the creation of a single campus in Bloomsbury, in the heart of London, in 2015.

The single campus will be facilitated by a £33 million investment in the North Block of Senate House, leased by SOAS from the University of London. The improvements will include state-of-the-art research and teaching facilities, as well as a dedicated ‘student hub’. Staff and students are playing a central role in determining what the campus will look like.

‘The new fee regime has improved the School’s reserves, which has contributed directly to the project,’ says Barry Douglas, Acting Director of Finance and Planning. ‘The School will be able to leverage additional borrowing on the back of the improved financial performance afforded by the funding regime.’
Maintaining and improving facilities

Since 2009 government grants to universities for capital investments (for example maintaining or constructing university buildings and infrastructure) have fallen by 84%. In many cases, income from fees has enabled universities to maintain or increase their investment in major developments. This report gives many examples of this, including the development of a single campus at SOAS in this chapter, the University of Liverpool’s Central Teaching Labs in Chapter 3, and De Montfort University’s new Student Gateway in Chapter 4. Manchester Metropolitan University is investing £350 million in completing a Business School, Student Hub, School of Art, and a new campus for its education and health faculties; while Birmingham City University is developing a new £185 million city centre campus. In fact, a survey carried out by Universities UK in 2012 identified planned capital investment by universities totalling £8 billion. This generates jobs and opportunities across the country.

From state-of-the-art science laboratories, studios, workshops and IT provision, to enhanced learning and social space, universities are making strategic investment in their estate. Chapter 4 shows how universities have prioritised improving the practicalities of campus life, such as bringing all their information and advice services into one easily accessible location on campus.

At the heart of all the examples in this report is the commitment to enhancing the student experience, and improving the learning outcomes and employment prospects of graduates.

An early snapshot

This report is a snapshot of where and how the new fee regime is changing the decisions universities make. Fees capped at £9,000 were introduced in 2012, while cuts in HEFCE funding for teaching were introduced in 2011. Universities have had one year under the new fee regime, and several other significant policy changes, such as student number controls and new visa restrictions for international students, have also affected their financial position. It is therefore too early to demonstrate fully the impact of the latest fee reforms. However, this report seeks to show the kinds of decisions universities are making. Some of these decisions will benefit future cohorts of students, but many current students are seeing the benefits which flow from universities’ anticipation of future income.

What is clear is that universities face enormous pressure to show that they are doing more for students, even where they have less money to spend. This report shows how universities are rising to that challenge.

Higher levels of surpluses are required to meet students’ needs as well as providing a buffer against risk and volatility.”

Jane Madeley, Finance Director, University of Leeds
Oxford Brookes University – ring-fencing the financial impact

The emphasis on supporting students while they are studying and on enhancing the student experience led to the decision by Oxford Brookes to increase the resource per student.

It has done this by reducing permanently the intake of home and EU undergraduate students from 2012 by 15% of the 2010 intake level, while maintaining the faculty resources available to support them.

The financial impact of the £9,000 fees was also ring-fenced to protect student support, and accelerate investment in IT and estates infrastructure.

Approximately 30% of the fee above the basic £6,000 tuition fee is used in its student support package.

The university’s original financial support for 2012 included fee waivers, bursaries, no charges for mandatory field trips and free bus passes to all students studying programmes costing £9,000. The university involved students in decisions about how to target financial support and listened to student feedback. As a result the university changed the type of support it provided, moving away from fee waivers towards a package which from 2014 will include a discount for accommodation.

Fee income since 2012 has also driven an acceleration of investment in IT infrastructure. This will include the introduction of faster, more reliable teaching computers and £1.2 million allocated for wireless coverage in halls of residence.

The Students’ Union will continue to push for more investment in student support, which is vital during this period of uncertainty in higher education.”

Tom Smith, Vice President for Academic Experience, Oxford Brookes University
Universities have a long-standing commitment to attracting students from a wide range of backgrounds. Higher education can transform the opportunities and choices open to graduates, as well as leading, on average, to significantly higher lifetime earnings. Universities are therefore powerful agents of social mobility.

Since the introduction of variable fees universities have increased substantially their spending on measures to widen access, and on supporting students while they are at university, to help them complete their courses successfully.

This significant investment has been motivated by a determination, on the part of universities and government, to ensure that higher fees do not deter students from low-income backgrounds.

Access and outreach

In 2011–12 universities in England spent a total of £431.4 million on measures to improve and sustain access to higher education for people from lower income and other underrepresented groups. This was equivalent to 23% of their fee income, and was more than three and a half times the expenditure in 2006–07. Following the 2012 higher education reforms, universities estimate that their expenditure on access measures will grow substantially to £673.4 million (27% of their fee income) in 2014–15.

Reaching out to communities where fewer people go on to higher education, to raise aspirations and attainment, begins with primary schools. Income from a variety of sources, including fees and philanthropic donations, has been used to expand and grow proven initiatives, and ensure the continuation of infrastructure and activities following the loss of public funding to support this type of activity.

The examples in this chapter show how investment has gone into building partnerships and links with local schools and colleges, enabling outreach visits, open days, mentoring, masterclasses, taster events and summer schools. Student ambassadors play a visible and important role in these activities, supporting an expansion in dedicated outreach staff. Meanwhile, universities are also finding ways to attract older learners into higher education, working with local businesses and offering drop-in information and taster sessions at community centres and shopping centres, and contributing to the many events and opportunities offered during Adult Learners’ Week, the annual celebration of the benefits of lifelong learning.

Figure 5: Total expenditure on bursaries and additional outreach by higher education institutions in England, 2006–07 to 2013–14

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Note: Dotted line represents estimates.
Source: Office for Fair Access
Sheffield Hallam University – a Cash Course in student finance

In 2006, aware of the deterrent potential of the new fee and finance arrangements, particularly among students from non-traditional and lower income backgrounds, Sheffield Hallam’s outreach team launched its Cash Course project, an interactive budgeting game for school and college students in years 9 to 13. The activity aims to improve students’ financial literacy, while increasing understanding of student finance and student life.

Playing the role of a student starting university, groups are given a weekly budget and asked to make decisions about how they are going to spend their money on accommodation, course costs and food. The groups then justify their decisions to a panel of judges – their bank manager, best friend and lecturer – played by current students who provide feedback on the financial, academic and social implications of the group’s choices.

The activity introduces school and college groups to the language of higher education finance, and provides critical information in an engaging way. Since 2006 Sheffield Hallam’s student ambassadors have delivered sessions to over 5,000 students and the Cash Course activity pack is now used by 14 other universities.

Before the session I was worried about how much university would cost, but it isn’t as scary as I first thought and it has made me realise that I can do it.”

Cash Course participant, Sheffield Hallam University

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Figure 6: Application rate for English 18-year-olds by socio-economic group, 2004–2013

Note: Socio-economic group is measured by Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) classification.
Source: UCAS

For example the Open Book Project, based at Goldsmiths, University of London, supports people who have been through the criminal justice system for a variety of reasons to reach, attend and successfully complete university. More than 300 students have registered with Open Book, and over 100 have completed first, masters and doctoral degrees at Goldsmiths and other universities. Committed and personalised support from the team, all of whom share some experiences with the Open Book students, aims to ensure that no one completing their studies reoffends.

Another important element of outreach work since 2006 has been to respond to the need – and significant demand – from schools and colleges for information and reassurance about the affordability and accessibility of higher education. Higher education finance can be a daunting topic for students and their parents. Universities have developed various innovative ways of explaining the system.
University of Birmingham – realising opportunities

Additional fee income to support access activity under Birmingham’s Access Agreement is being used to further expand the university’s long-standing Access to Birmingham (A2B) scheme, which will increase to 6% of intake by 2016.

The A2B scheme works with those most able yet least likely to take advantage of the opportunity to study at Birmingham, developing their understanding of university life, growing their confidence, supporting their access and aiding transition.

Fee income is also supporting Birmingham’s contribution to the Realising Opportunities programme, a growing collaboration of 15 universities promoting fair access and social mobility among students from under-represented groups. Students on the programme receive e-mentoring, and the university’s online study module ‘Skills4uni’, adopted by the partnership, helps develop their independent study skills before applying to university.

The activities are designed to raise the aspirations of post-16 students to go to research-intensive universities, and to give them a greater understanding of what to expect at university. As such, the benefits are to Birmingham’s local education community and the wider higher education sector, not just to the university.

Support for students while they study

Encouraging potential students to apply to university is only the first step. Universities also make considerable efforts to ensure students from low-participation backgrounds succeed once they arrive. Examples given in this chapter show how universities are investing in activities such as peer mentoring, study skills, and programmes to help students settle in to university life in their first year.

Bursary expenditure has also increased substantially since fees were introduced. In 2011–12 around 442,000 students received a university bursary, up from 346,000 in 2008–09. By 2017–18 universities and colleges predict that they will be spending £464.5 million on financial support including bursaries, fee waivers and ‘in-kind’ support such as discounted accommodation.

As with their other investments, universities have described how they are changing the financial assistance they provide in response to the views of students, and students’ unions. As the examples given in this chapter show, their feedback on the student support packages offered since 2006 has led to better targeting of financial support. Fee waivers, for example, are being balanced by options such as cash bursaries; help with accommodation, travel costs and child care; and removing associated course costs such as charges for mandatory field trips.

As Professor Les Ebdon, Director of the Office for Fair Access has said: ‘expenditure remains above our expectations both in cash terms and as a proportion of higher fee income’.

I’ve just graduated with a first class degree and secured a job with UBS investment bank. The A2B scheme has been one of the biggest contributors to my success.”

Eiranpreet Khangura, graduate, University of Birmingham
Manchester Metropolitan University – building a cashless campus

Each new first year undergraduate student joining the university in 2012 received a ‘Met Card’ – a personalised cashless card which can be used in MMU’s cafes, bookshop, libraries, IT and sports facilities, as well as to pay for course materials, accommodation, printing, and some online services.

In setting up the card with the university’s bank and a commercial provider, MMU’s main aim was to help those students who receive the university’s student support package to reduce costs where they need it most. Distributing some of that funding via the pre-paid Met Card gives students some flexibility and choice in how they use their bursary cash.

Following a 75% take-up in the first six weeks of term there are plans to extend the card to other years. This has potentially many benefits for the large, campus-based university: it offers students financial stability, greater predictability of cost for a range of university services, and provides MMU with a unique way of monitoring student engagement.

Impact of investment

Universities have made a long-term and strategic commitment to widening participation, and have dedicated considerable financial and other resources to it. They are developing an evidence base that they can increasingly use to evaluate the decisions they make about what will have the greatest impact. As the examples in this chapter show, none of this would be possible without the involvement of students and students’ unions, both as participants in outreach activities, and in helping to shape universities’ decisions about how to target financial assistance.

Figures for university entry in 2012 and 2013 show that students from low-income backgrounds do not appear to have been put off university by the new fee regime. The proportion of 18 year olds living in disadvantaged areas (Socio-economic group 1) applying to universities is at its highest recorded level. As Figure 7 shows, participation rates have increased since 2006 for all areas, but the increase has been particularly strong for those from low-participation neighbourhoods.

The strong application rate may be a reflection of the important changes to student finance that have accompanied the introduction of higher fees. Fee loans mean that students do not have to pay up-front, as they did between 1997 and 2006. Maintenance loans and grants have been introduced to provide additional support when students need it most. These government-funded changes sit alongside the financial assistance that individual universities provide.

Figure 7: Increase in participation rates by socio-economic group, before and after 2006

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<th>Socio-economic group (1=low-participation neighbourhoods)</th>
<th>Proportional increase %</th>
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<td>1 3 4 5 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before 2006</td>
<td>After 2006</td>
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<td>Note: Socio-economic group is measured by Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) classification.</td>
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<td>Source: HEFCE</td>
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Once students arrive at university, the quality of the teaching and learning environment is extremely important. Higher tuition fees mean higher student expectations across all aspects of the teaching and learning experience.

Contact with teaching staff, the timeliness of feedback on work and the quality of teaching are all important requirements which universities have responded to in a variety of ways.

Because fee income has largely replaced government funding for teaching, universities are adapting to students’ increased expectations, often within tightly constrained resources.

The examples in this chapter illustrate the scale of change across the sector. In many cases, improvements anticipated the introduction of fees, as universities borrowed against future income, so that students are already benefiting from those early strategic decisions in the form of better teaching, new buildings, expanded and improved libraries, and upgraded classrooms, studios and laboratories.

[The] huge lab complex has state-of-the-art microscopes and state-of-the-art computer labs and it does inspire you – having lecturers who do world-leading research.”

Will Johnston, oceans, climate and physical geography BSc, University of Liverpool

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**Excellent staff**

Fee income has allowed universities to continue to invest in staffing. For many this has meant expanding academic support, to provide mentoring and help with study skills. The University of Birmingham’s Academic Skills Centre, which opened in its main library in 2012, provides a central, highly visible focus for blended academic skills support to all undergraduates looking to develop their mathematical, statistical, academic writing and general study skills. Workshops, drop-ins and telephone, Skype and email support are offered for those unable to come on to campus.

At the University of Roehampton, dedicated academic learning advisers offer a range of courses designed to develop students’ independent research, critical, analytical and reflective skills relevant to the demands of their subject. In 2012–13 more than 5,000 students took up different programmes. In the same academic year, a team of specialist tutors also supported some 500 students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalculia, offering approximately 3,600 hours of one-to-one specialised study skills teaching on campus.

At the University of Leeds the emphasis has been on developing a world-class research-led teaching environment, through the targeted recruitment of academic leaders who are committed to innovative and inspiring teaching as well as being at the cutting edge of research in their fields.

Student-led awards to acknowledge excellent teaching have also been given greater emphasis under the new fee regime, and are a feature at several institutions. For example, at the University of East Anglia, up to six awards are made annually to staff whom students feel have shown the highest levels of enthusiasm and commitment.
University of Liverpool – changing the way sciences are taught

The teaching of subjects including physics, chemistry, environmental sciences and archaeology at Liverpool has been transformed following the opening of the university’s £23 million Central Teaching Laboratories (CTL) in September 2012.

The interdisciplinary facilities – there are seven laboratories accommodating up to 1,000 students – are an innovation in the university sector. Bringing together a variety of disciplines under one roof demonstrates to students the benefits of learning from related scientific subject areas and enables them to work together to learn diagnostic and measurement skills that prepare them for employment.

The CTL is also being used to showcase the university to schools via open days and alumni events. Highlighting the cutting-edge student experience offered by Liverpool in these strategically important and vulnerable subjects aims to help ensure student demand and sustainability. In its first year, the CTL has hosted events for 2,000 students, with the aim of growing this to 5,000 within three years.

Better facilities

Many of the most recent capital investments on campus are major developments and upgrades to teaching and learning facilities. Expanded and improved libraries and new social learning spaces, designed to take advantage of the possibilities created by rapid developments in information and communications technology, have transformed university campuses in recent years.

In particular, major investments in IT reflect the rapid developments in new technologies with huge potential to support learning. For example, the University of Exeter is investing in video lecture capture and online coursework management systems as part of a £20 million investment in IT.

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<th>Figure 8: Percentage of students expressing overall satisfaction, by area, studying at higher education institutions in England, 2005–2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>88%</td>
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Source: National Student Survey
The new Britannia Mill site looks great, is easy to work in and a really flexible space.”

Student, University of Derby

University of Derby – interactive learning

Students in the faculties of Arts, Design and Technology and Education, Health and Sciences are benefiting from an £8 million continuing programme of improvements to the teaching facilities on the university’s Britannia Mill site. The results to date are better access, improved informal and flexible learning and social spaces, a bigger refectory and a redesigned library.

In 2012 the university began a total refurbishment of its classrooms and upgrade of AV and IT hardware and infrastructure. New classrooms have been created, equipped with high spec AV technology for interactive teaching and learning. While the refurbishment forms part of an ongoing commitment to capital investment, targeted on infrastructure and facilities that support the student experience, listening to students and acting on their feedback to bring the work together has been critical. All phases of the work have involved intensive consultation with students and staff across all areas of the university, and reflect their feedback on what would best improve the learning environment.

Elsewhere, Plymouth University aims to become an ‘edgeless digital campus’. Investment in the university’s IT structure has introduced technologies that offer interactive ways to learn and study and promote student mobility through greater use of online, anytime delivery.

Involving students

Taking steps to capture student feedback to inform improvements – on a ‘you said, we did’ basis – has been a common priority. But increasingly student involvement goes further than this. Birmingham City University’s award-winning Student Academic Partners initiative involves students in the development work of the university. Undergraduate and postgraduate students work alongside staff on curriculum design and delivery, and on assessment design and feedback. Run in partnership with the students’ union, more than 600 students have been employed in over 300 projects.

The development of this type of partnership approach, which is explored more fully in Chapter 6, is fundamentally changing both the way universities deliver their teaching and students’ involvement in the courses they study.
Increasing satisfaction

Results from the National Student Survey demonstrate that the improvements universities are delivering are making an impact. According to the survey, student satisfaction across all areas of teaching and learning has increased since 2005. The percentage expressing satisfaction with the teaching on their course rose by seven percentage points between 2005 and 2013, from 80% to 87%.

The strong percentage point increases in satisfaction levels between 2007 and 2011 in the areas of assessment and feedback, and academic support are a reflection of the response universities have made to student feedback in these areas. For example, Plymouth University introduced a diagnostic tutorial in response to students who said they did not always understand feedback, and wanted it faster. The university also now offers poster presentations, group work and work-based learning projects and portfolios, meeting students’ requests for more variety in assessments.

University of Leeds – investing in leadership

Integrating student education with world-class research is at the heart of the University of Leeds’s strategy under a changing fee regime.

It is investing £12 million in its research-led teaching model which has already seen 25 appointments made to senior academic leadership chairs across all disciplines. Many of the appointments are international, and all have had to demonstrate a record of teaching commitment and innovation alongside research excellence. Many are enthusiastic supporters of FutureLearn, the UK’s first massive open online course (MOOC) platform, with Leeds planning to launch its first MOOC in October 2013.

A further £5.6 million is being invested to employ academic and support staff to develop the curriculum in strong partnership with students, while £12 million capital investment in facilities is being targeted at areas vital to educating students in a research-led environment. Leeds students are also offered a personal tutoring programme as part of ‘Leeds for Life’, a support system which aims to enhance students’ understanding of a research-led education, helping them articulate the complementary value of their co-curricular activities and improve their employability.

шей facilities are amazing – it is a fantastic environment to learn and work in and we have access to some great materials.”

Charlotte Leigh, fifth year dentistry,
University of Leeds
Investing where it matters most means that many universities have focused on improving support for teaching and learning. But students also depend on a range of professional and support services to get the most out of university life.

These services include financial, welfare and pastoral support, social and leisure facilities, reasonably priced accommodation and catering facilities. Increasingly, universities are re-engineering the support they offer to cater for a broader range of students, including those who study part-time or combine full-time study with work and caring responsibilities. This means the university has to be more flexible and student-centred in the way it provides such support.

New facilities

Chapter 1 showed how government grants to universities for capital investment have fallen by 84% since 2009. Without fee income, universities would have been unable to maintain the necessary investment in buildings and infrastructure to provide the facilities students expect.

In fact, a combination of projected income and increased capacity to borrow has enabled universities to undertake a programme of necessary capital investment.

Investment in university estates has been a visible outcome of the higher fee regime. Between 2010 and 2011 nearly 80% of institutions reported that they had maintained or increased the quality of their non-residential estate. Figure 9 shows the increase in the average proportion of university estates which are described as being in ‘condition A’: either new or having been subject to major refurbishment. This stood at nearly 22% in 2011–12, compared to just over 18% in 2006–07.

Figure 9: Average proportion of non-residential estate in condition A, 2006–07 to 2011–12

Source: HESA

Building our new £10.5 million Student Centre will create construction work and opportunities for local suppliers. In total, the university’s activities support 2,700 jobs, and contribute £240 million to the regional economy.”

Professor John Vinney, Vice-Chancellor, Bournemouth University
Work has begun on the university’s new Student Centre at the heart of its Talbot Campus, due to open in 2015. The low-carbon, six-storey £10.5 million building will provide significant additional learning space and a new home for the students’ union.

Its facilities will include social learning and meeting spaces, radio and media studios, a student advice centre, accessible open-plan areas for student-focused services, and a café. Designed to meet top environmental credentials, the building will have a sedum roof and 20% of its energy will be generated from renewable sources.

‘Students expect modern, fit-for-purpose facilities that promote learning and generate a richer experience. We are committed to providing world-class facilities for our students,’ says Vice-Chancellor John Vinney.

While the new fee regime has not brought significant additional income to the university, it has helped develop an even closer relationship between the institution and its students. During 2012 the vice-chancellor held a ‘talk-out’ to discuss the changing fee regime and student concerns about value for money. Feedback indicated that learning space and facilities were top of the agenda, and shortly afterwards the Student Centre project was born. The close involvement of the students’ union means that Bournemouth’s students have had the opportunity to influence the design and use of space.

**Integrated and specialised student services**

Instead of fragmented services, with offices scattered across the campus, many universities have created joined-up systems which offer students a single point of contact for all the support services they are likely to need on campus. This approach makes life easier for students but it also promises greater efficiency for the university, freeing resources to invest in other improvements.

‘One-stop-shops’ such as the facilities at De Montfort University and the University of Hull have brought together advice centres and student services in one location at the heart of each campus, revitalising those areas and making it easier for staff to work across teams or cover for each other. These single contact centres give the services greater visibility on campus and make it easier for students to find the help they need.

The University of Oxford has established a Student Fees and Funding Office to provide more sophisticated information, advice and guidance to applicants and students. It has invested to keep pace with increasing demand across student services, including its Disability Advisory Services, which has seen a 28% increase in student users since 2006–07.

**Services when students need them**

Improving accessibility to learning resources is particularly important for part-time and mature students, who are likely to be fitting study around other commitments, such as work or family. Birkbeck, University of London, which specialises in evening-taught degree courses, offers extended opening hours for its library and IT helpdesk, and 24-hour access to some computer classrooms. At a great many universities, including the University of East Anglia and Staffordshire University, libraries are now open 24 hours during term and vacation to support part-time students.
This is the first place I come for everything I need. I am a part-time student and do not spend much time on campus but I am able to access the services I need in University House.”

Second year student, history with art, University of Hull

University of Hull – one-stop-shop

‘Students are paying a lot more money and are right to expect an experience that is excellent,’ says Linda Hockley, head of a recently created Student Services Directorate at Hull.

The new directorate brings together the careers and employability offices, disability services and student admin services such as registry, exam timetabling and graduations, as well as student accommodation and student finance. Co-locating these services with the students’ union offices and social spaces on the university’s Hull campus now means students can go to just one place to get a wide range of information and advice.

A similar radical restructuring at the university’s Scarborough campus two years earlier has made a huge difference to campus life – where once students had to go to 14 locations for information, there are now three cross-cutting teams offering front-line support.

‘This is about improving the student experience – both projects were driven by student feedback, and reflect the university’s core focus on putting students at the heart of the university,’ adds Hockley.

Information and communications technology

The last chapter touched on the potential for IT to support learning in new ways. This has been a major area of capital expenditure for a number of institutions. Universities know they must keep pace with the media devices, systems and experiences their students expect, from wi-fi access and mobile-optimised applications to the capability to work socially and collaborate within university systems. For example, Sheffield Hallam University has begun a cyclical replacement programme to ensure that students continue to have access to current technology following a spend of £8 million on computers and IT in 2011–12.

At the University of Chichester, all halls of residence now have free high speed internet and both its campuses are wi-fi enabled. Reducing broadband charges for students in university accommodation has been a priority for a number of institutions as they seek to target student support in ways that reflect students’ wishes.

Investment in IT has also created opportunities to deliver services more efficiently. At the University of Hull student contact with support services is recorded, providing a rich dataset which allows the university to assess the impact of its work with target groups, and make evidence-based decisions on future activities.
De Montfort University – a campus transformation

A focus on providing the best possible student experience saw DMU pioneer a new approach to funding by securing a £90 million bond that will augment fee income.

Over the next three years, DMU will be investing the funds to transform its city centre site, providing teaching rooms and refreshment areas, improving the students’ union, and creating parkland at the heart of the campus.

The centrepiece of the transformation will be the development of a new complex to house the expanding Faculty of Art, Design and Humanities.

A new ‘Student Gateway’ has also been established on campus, bringing separate reception and advice centres into a single accessible location, where all student non-academic support is offered.

Campus improvements began in 2012 with the opening of an £8 million leisure centre, offering students, staff and the local community facilities including a six-lane swimming pool, climbing wall, sports hall, fitness suite and dance studio.

At the University of Liverpool, a new on-campus eco-residence housing more than 700 students opened for 2012–13 at a cost of £45 million. A £30 million investment to create some 1,200 additional student beds on campus by 2014–15 is under way at Manchester Metropolitan University, which sees university-provided accommodation as a vital component of a student’s overall experience of university life. The investment reflects the importance the university attaches to retaining significant control over the price, quality and quantity of the accommodation it offers directly to students.

Another area of student services which has expanded and been given greater visibility as a direct response to the changing fee regime has been careers and employability advice. This is covered in Chapter 5.

Impact of investment in student services

Investment in student services has featured strongly in universities’ strategic plans to improve and enhance life on campus since the introduction of variable fees in 2006. This has been reflected in the rise in satisfaction rates for libraries and specialist equipment recorded in the National Student Survey since 2005.

Figure 10: Percentage of students expressing overall satisfaction, by area of support services, studying at higher education institutions in England, 2005–2013

Source: National Student Survey

Accommodation and leisure

Students continue to benefit from major investments in accommodation and leisure facilities, including sports centres, students’ unions and entertainment facilities. Students at the University of Leicester now have a choice of swimming pools following the development of a new sports centre close to its halls of residence and the acquisition of a sports centre near the main campus. Fee income has enabled Sheffield Hallam University to create international standard rugby and football pitches.
5: EMPLOYABILITY

The economic downturn has created a challenging environment for everyone seeking work, not least for new graduates looking for their first jobs. Universities know that their careers services must help students develop the skills they will need to succeed in a highly competitive labour market. Investment in employability and careers services was one of the strongest themes to emerge from the responses we received from universities.

Despite the real difficulties graduates face in securing jobs where their skills can be put to best use, it remains true that throughout the recent recession, graduates had better job prospects than non-graduates, and the net gain from having a degree remains one of the highest in the world. According to the OECD, in 2011 UK tertiary graduates’ earnings from employment for the 25 to 64 age group were 57% higher than those with upper secondary qualifications (equivalent to A-levels). Employment rates for those with tertiary education fell by two percentage points between 2008 and 2011, compared with three percentage points for those with only upper secondary education.

Although the outlook remains challenging, economic evidence shows that long-term demand for graduates will continue to grow. Occupations where graduates are in the majority are projected to account for nearly 80% of new jobs created in the UK economy by 2020.

—we encourage all our students to take a placement if it can fit with their studies, and students are showing interest right from their first year. The aim is that everyone benefits.”

Gill McKenzie, University of Hertfordshire
Figure 12: Percentage of graduates within occupations, 2012

Occupations with a growing share of the UK workforce

- Managers, directors and senior officials: 51%
- Associate professional and technical: 86%
- Professional occupations: 55%
- Caring, leisure and other services: 26%

Occupations with a declining share of the UK workforce

- Administrative and secretarial: 29%
- Process, plant and machine operatives: 14%
- Skilled trades occupations: 21%
- Elementary occupations: 11%
- Sales and customer service: 13%

Source: Office for National Statistics

University of Hertfordshire – thinking big with small to medium firms

The University of Hertfordshire has appointed a dedicated employment and placement liaison adviser to offer free assistance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in all aspects of their recruitment, from advertising vacancies and writing job descriptions to hosting interviews on campus. At the same time Gill McKenzie, who took up the post in March 2013, works to raise students’ awareness of the many opportunities and benefits of working for an SME, helping them to tailor CVs and improve interview techniques.

The university has recognised that while large firms are experienced in working closely with universities in their graduate recruitment, it is useful for SMEs to have a sole point of contact who can support them. Gill says: ‘We offer networking events, and opportunities to come on to campus and meet students. The university is surrounded by a large number of small towns, all of which have business parks and SME and micro firms looking for the right staff.’

‘I am also here to help students gain work experience ranging from summer internships and short part-time work experience to full-time posts on graduation.’
University of Warwick – successful scholars and employable graduates

Warwick students know they need more than a good degree from a good university to thrive in today’s labour market so they enhance their profile with work placements and work experience, meet and network with employers, do extra-curricular activities, and are encouraged to benefit from these experiences through reflection and analysis.

Warwick coordinates its work experience through Unitemps, Warwick Volunteers, academic contacts, and the Placement Learning Unit. With cuts to their recruitment budgets, employers now work differently with universities to attract and source the best graduate talent.

One of Warwick’s responses to changing circumstances is close collaboration within the university so students see their university life as a complete package of study, research experience, work experience, and extra-curricular activities. The Making History 30 credit core module for first year history students is an example of embedding scholarship and employability in the curriculum. This module treats students as researchers from the start of their academic career with lectures and seminars; workshops and films; completion of e-portfolios and an optional summer placement in local museums and galleries, and with input from the Modern Records Centre and Student Careers and Skills. Students can progress from this module to a paid undergraduate research internship where they work alongside academic staff on a research project.

Practical help to secure good jobs

Universities are dedicating increased resources to giving their graduates the edge in a competitive labour market.

This investment has led to rises in the number of funded internships and work placement opportunities offered by many universities, and a renewed focus on tailored careers advice. Universities have embedded employability and enterprise in degree programmes, and taken steps to help students develop entrepreneurial skills. Many universities are also encouraging volunteering, helping students to recognise the value of developing their skills and experience during their studies.

The previous chapter showed how some universities have brought their careers and employability services together into central, high profile buildings at the heart of the campus, as part of a major restructuring of their full range of student services. Making careers advice more visible and accessible is encouraging more, and earlier, engagement by students, who are clearly also aware of the difficult job climate. The opening of a ‘career development hub’ at the University of Leicester brought in 3,200 students in the first five months, while major restructuring at the University of Oxford has seen the careers service engage with more than 70% of undergraduate and postgraduate students each year, up from less than 40% four years ago.

Internships and work placements

Evidence shows that work experience is one of the most powerful means of securing a good job.

Increased investment in work placements and internships is a notable development since the introduction of higher fees. Aston University’s integrated placement year gives students time working within businesses, or in a professional context, and is taken up by almost 60% of students. The benefit is shown in the university’s 89.2% graduate employability record, one of the best in the UK.
The University of Liverpool cites high graduate employability as a priority. It aims to ensure the city has a strong talent pool of young professionals and has one of the largest careers resources centres in the UK. It offers an internship programme which gives students access to local, regional and national employers. The university provides an important talent source for local businesses, encouraging them to locate in the city and create local jobs for both graduates and non-graduates. This link with local employers is exemplified by the graduate internship programmes at the University of Chichester featured in this chapter. Many universities are offering a growing number of placements with local small and medium enterprises. Similarly, well-established links with local employers have led to co-funded internships, while initiatives such as IDEA Birmingham, a business-university collaboration across the West Midlands, showcases world-class brands alongside up-and-coming graduates.

At the University of Birmingham, bursaries are offered to support students undertaking internships or work experience during their summer vacation. Similarly, under a new £200,000 paid internship programme involving local employers, the University of Derby will be offering students relevant paid work experience fitting in with the summer holiday period, while graduates will be offered internships and routes to the professions lasting between six weeks and six months.

In addition to the work placements and employability and enterprise modules embedded in its degree programmes, Chichester has developed GraduateOn, a graduate internship programme which aims to ensure that every student from every discipline can apply for carefully matched internships at the end of their degree. GraduateOn promotes sector-specific short-term employment opportunities as well as longer internships and – recognising the importance of graduates to the south coast’s local economy – has been open to locally-based graduates of any university from the start.

Vicky Stickland is Commercial Director at Brandwave, an award-winning West Sussex-based marketing agency, and credits GraduateOn as the turning point of her career. ‘GraduateOn allowed me the opportunity to meet lots of graduates in the local area who were in a similar position. Workshops enabled us to define our unique selling points, reinstating our confidence in the job market and reinvigorating our job searches. The high level, varied internships open to me as part of the scheme... made me realise I wouldn’t necessarily have to move to London to gain the “dream job” I so wanted.’

Vicky Stickland, Chichester graduate and Commercial Director, Brandwave
Professional careers advice

Investment in staffing as well as new IT systems is enabling universities to offer increasingly tailored careers and employability advice. New emphasis on providing additional careers consultants, online e-guidance services, careers workshops and more one-to-one advice and guidance reflects the importance being placed on employability under the new fees regime. For example, Sheffield Hallam University offers specialist advice services for students with disabilities and a career mentoring scheme to match students with a professional mentor. At the University of East Anglia, the number of careers advisers has doubled since 2011–12, and new teams have been established to support internships, mentoring by alumni and local employers, volunteering schemes and student enterprise workshops, events and competitions. Employability champions have been established in all academic departments and a fund created to invest in department-led employability initiatives.

At Birmingham City University, a recent initiative has examined employability challenges for law students. The project, delivered by its Student Academic Partners initiative, used data gathered from students and legal graduate recruiters within local law firms and barristers’ chambers to redesign careers provision and other development activities within its School of Law. Students working on Student Academic Partners projects are encouraged to view these as short term employment opportunities, fitted around the demands of their coursework, and are paid by the university.

Help starting your own business

Increasingly, graduates are looking to set up businesses of their own. The most recent Higher Education-Business and Community interaction (HE-BCI) survey published annually by HEFCE shows that in 2011–12 graduates established 2,726 new enterprises, capitalising on the knowledge and experience they had gained while studying. It notes that universities are supporting this by embedding enterprise in degree courses, by providing advice and facilities for graduates to set up and grow their businesses, and by putting them in touch with investors looking for opportunities.

The University of East Anglia has introduced a student enterprise officer post in its Careers Service and funded a post in the students’ union to support student entrepreneurs and similar societies, as well as creating a fund to invest in student start-ups and support students to participate in national competitions such as Biotech YES, i-gems and FLUX. In 2014 the university will open a £15 million Enterprise Centre, acting as a focus for student enterprise and offering dedicated space for student start-ups, workshops and events.

Universities whose graduates offer specialist skills or who are looking to work in the creative industries have developed employability services to reflect this profile. Advice on protecting intellectual property, accessing start-up funding, and developing networking skills is offered by the University of the Arts London, as the case study in this chapter illustrates.

Meanwhile, Goldsmiths’ Enterprise Programme gives graduates one-on-one support to equip them with the team-working, problem-solving, and self-management skills so important for those with creative careers ahead of them. Placements are offered in the creative industries, while state-of-the-art recording studios and a new record label, NX Records, give Goldsmiths graduates relevant opportunities in an increasingly fluid world of work.
University of the Arts London – student enterprise and employability

Creative arts graduates typically have less clearly defined career paths than those of other disciplines. They are highly entrepreneurial – 18% of University of the Arts London (UAL) graduates are self-employed three years after graduating compared to the national average of 5% – and tend to pursue ‘portfolio’ careers, made up of self-employment, part-time and short-term contracts, freelancing, and creative practice. Networking and nurturing contacts are vital skills.

To ensure that students and graduates are prepared for the careers they will enter and that career skills are built into the curricula, UAL’s Student Enterprise and Employability service (SEE) was set up in September 2011. This provides advice, mentoring, events and surgeries focused on the skills creative arts graduates need – effective networking, business planning, pitching, presenting and marketing – as well as more technical skills for successful entrepreneurship, including protecting intellectual property, understanding legal contracts, accessing start-up funding, and taking advantage of new models for business success, such as crowd funding and selling online.

With flexible part-time work as important to new graduates starting to establish themselves as it is to students, the service also offers relevant paid employment through its in-house agency, ArtsTemps. SEE supports artists and craftspeople to develop their practice through Artquest, a service providing practical peer support and networking to develop their ability to make, sell and find work. It has also set up Showroom, a high profile shop and gallery at UAL’s central London headquarters that displays and sells work by UAL students and graduates.

Extra-curricular activities – particularly volunteering – are a further route to enhancing students’ employability skills, often bringing additional benefits to the local community. At the University of Lincoln, volunteering is encouraged as part of its Lincoln Award. The award is tailored to each subject and aims to enhance students’ skills development and employability by supporting extra-curricular activities. The students’ union is funded to source safe and work-relevant volunteering opportunities in the UK and abroad, and works in partnership with the university’s careers service. The nearly 1,000 students registered on the Lincoln Award start with a skills matrix exercise, plan their activities with an adviser, receive advice on career planning and attend CV workshops.
This report provides a snapshot of how tuition fee income is changing universities. It illustrates, for current and potential students, their families and advisers, how their fees will be used, and how students are at the heart of funding decisions.

We have shown how, to a large extent, tuition fee income replaces lost public funding for teaching, but that even where financial resources are limited, universities are changing the way they invest to meet the rising expectations of their students.

The period following the 2006 introduction of higher fees brought new opportunities. It allowed English universities to make significant investments in buildings and infrastructure. It provided financial support packages for students from lower income and other under-represented groups. It resulted in new accommodation, sports facilities and libraries, transforming campuses.

It is too soon to show the full impact of the 2012 fees reforms, combined with cuts in public funding and other changes, such as part-time and postgraduate enrolments. But the evidence produced for this report shows universities are continuing to develop, change and improve the student experience – from access and outreach through improved teaching and learning opportunities, to careers advice and help with finding jobs.

### University of Leicester – answering the £9,000 question

A webpage dedicated to answering the question ‘how do my fees fit in?’ is one way the University of Leicester is seeking to explain the new fees regime to its students. Its aim is to explain how tuition fees contribute to the university’s finances, and uses a pie chart to show how the university’s income is spent.

It tackles head-on the assumption that the rise in tuition fees means that universities generally have a lot more money coming in and, in a straightforward question-and-answer format, explains that universities’ income is now coming from a different source.

The answers highlight that while tuition fees account for less than 50% of the university’s income, the ‘tuition’ fee pays for much more than tuition, and contributes to much more than the cost of a lecturer or enhanced contact hours. The answers also point out that the time spent at university is not just about the number of hours spent in lectures or seminars, emphasising that the value of a student’s time at university is also reflected in the quality of teaching, in facilities such as the library, academic and personal support services, careers advice, and the students’ union.
Listening to students
The universities submitting evidence to this report are putting students’ views at the heart of their decision-making processes. Universities are listening to their students in a range of ways. An example of this, referenced in Chapter 4, is the vice-chancellor of Bournemouth’s ‘talk-out’ session with students in 2012, which looked at the changing fee regime and student concerns about value for money, and which later informed the development of a new Student Centre. Meanwhile the University of Hertfordshire’s I-barometer survey of students’ views provided the evidence base for the university’s investment in new campus halls of residence. But universities have also been able to show how students are becoming more active participants in decision making.

The case studies in this chapter exemplify the way that many institutions now have in place student experience groups, set up to prioritise projects. In some cases, this means that staff and students have the opportunity to bid for financial backing for the projects they believe are most important. In other cases, these groups influence aspects of university life ranging from the way courses are taught to the eco credentials of new buildings.

At its best, this engagement is a genuine partnership between student representatives and the university’s executive decision-makers. It goes even further than the reactive ‘you said, we did’ improvements which have been so effectively demonstrated in National Student Survey feedback since its inception in 2005.

University of Bedfordshire – active partnership, active citizenship

An annual internal conference, jointly planned, delivered and acted on by the university and the students’ union, ensures students’ views are central to life at Bedfordshire. The all-day event has just two agenda items – one chosen by the university and one by the union – and recent topics have included the grading system, course management and representation, personal tutoring, and assessment and feedback.

Students are also active partners in the university’s strategic decision-making processes. The students’ union is represented on the Board of Governors and its sub-committees, and on the core task and finish groups set up by the vice-chancellor. All posts at head of department level have a student representative on the interview panel, and from September 2013, the president of the students’ union will sit on the university’s senior advisory/executive group. Students are also represented on the project boards responsible for major developments such as the new University Campus Milton Keynes and the £46 million Library Project – even down to the level of how many physical books, rather than e-resources, the library should stock.

We don’t sit, wait and expect managers at the university to make decisions on our new library, new social venues or changes in the grading system, we get in there and work with them as active partners to develop the student experience.”

Katie Ross, Vice President (Education), Bedfordshire Students’ Union
University of Exeter – budgets under student scrutiny

Students are involved in the earliest stages of strategic planning at Exeter and are given a major role in making spending decisions through a specially created Budget Scrutiny Group (BSG), jointly chaired by the president of the Exeter Students’ Guild and the university’s chief operating officer. The group has addressed specific concerns raised by the Guild, such as improving staff-student ratios and eliminating hidden course costs.

The BSG has also enabled students’ views to inform the prioritising of spending of any increased income under the new fees regime. A visible example is the Forum, a £50 million student services building at the heart of the Streatham campus. Anticipating student expectations following higher fees, the university invested in improving and bringing together student services that were previously scattered around the campus. The flagship building features additional library and study space alongside careers and employability services. Engagement levels have tripled, with a 20% increase in students researching careers and employers before their final year.

The future

Many universities pointed out in their submissions to this report that their improvements to the student experience were being put in place before the 2012 fee reforms were introduced. For some, the changes have altered the speed and scope of their improvements, allowing them to develop more quickly. For others, fee income has been vital to fill the gap that would have been left by cuts in public funding. All agree that the changes they are implementing are essential to remaining world-class providers of higher education.
Section 4: Campus life

This publication has been produced by Universities UK, the representative organisation for the UK’s universities. Founded in 1918, its mission is to be the definitive voice for all universities in the UK, providing high quality leadership and support to its members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector. With 133 members and offices in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh, it promotes the strength and success of UK universities nationally and internationally.

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