

8.1. R. 12 A Motion to Reaffirm the SRC's opposition to Increased RUK Tuition Fees

THIS STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL NOTES:

1. Andrew Hamilton, in his annual speech as Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, has raised the idea of an increase beyond the £9000 ceiling for Rest of UK fees – a move supported by the Russell group.¹
2. Currently, the average student debt for a student on a 3-year course is estimated to be £43,515.² By comparison, the average US graduate debt is £15,700, with much lower rates of interest on the repayments.³
3. RUK students already face the highest fees in Europe, within a system that places the financial burden (perceived or otherwise) upon them.
4. St Andrews, in 2011, stated that education currently costs an average of £11,772, per student, per year.⁴
5. There have been no comprehensive studies on the effects on application numbers of students from different economic backgrounds applying to university, based on their perception of £9000 fees.
6. St Andrews already charges more than any other RUK university, due to the nature of its 4/5-year degree structure.
7. Several of Oxford University's JCRs have passed motions against any potential increases, with the support of their sabbatical officers.⁵

THIS STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL BELIEVES:

1. An increase in fees – beyond the current £9000 cap – would have a negative impact on the number of students that would apply to this university from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
2. A further increase in the limit on fees will simply result in a 'race to the top' from institutions who wish to be perceived as on a competitive footing with Oxbridge, as has been proven by the number of universities who charge £9000.
3. Whilst an increase in fees would inevitably come with an increase in bursaries and aid for the lowest socio-economic groups, it would still increase their debt, and an increase in fees will further disenfranchise a middle bracket that cannot benefit from family, state, or institutional financial aid.
4. Whilst there is an acknowledged shortfall in higher education funding, the burden of meeting this should not fall upon the students.

THIS STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL RESOLVES:

1. To affirm the SRC's status against any further fee rises in recognition of higher education as a public service rather than a commercial service.
2. To support Oxford University Students' Union, and any others, in their opposition to any further increase in fees.

¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/we-need-tuition-fees-of-up-to-16000-says-oxfordvicechancellor-professor-andrew-hamilton-8867323.html>

² <http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/cardsloans/article-2326560/Debt-timebomb-85-centstudents-pay-loans.html>

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/13/england-leave-funding-universitiesstudents>

⁴ <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/st-andrews-university-to-charge-maximum-1081402>

⁵ twitter.com/tomrutland

3. To campaign against any move from the University to increase tuition fees.
4. To support any further nationwide campaigns against an increase in fees. Mr Anderson proposed the motion, Ms Hill seconded.