

Should QMSU work on a national scale to refund fees for University students?

Proposed by: Shamima Akter (QMSU President)

Seconded by: Tiana Dinard-Samuel (QMSU VP Communities), Cameron Storey (QMSU VP HSS), Jack Juckes (QMSU VP Welfare), Aphrodite Murray-Liddington (QMSU VP S&E)

What do we want?

Throughout the Covid pandemic, students have always been seen as an afterthought. We have constantly been expected to work miracles with no support, whether financial or otherwise. Higher Education institutions have been notoriously underfunded for many years and enough is enough.

This motion is to further mandate the Executive Officers to continue their work with Russell Group Students' Unions and their respective Vice Chancellors. Collectively, we endeavour to lobby and pressure the government to provide more support for the Higher Education sector, especially financial, so that Universities can reduce fees and provide other support for students.

Why do we want it?

The government spent £252 million on faulty PPE and £522 million on the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme, but how much has it spent on students? Nothing, in comparison.

It has been a difficult year for everyone, due to the effects that this global pandemic has had on our livelihoods. As a student, the uncertainty around our education during this period has been unending. There have been some levels of optimism regarding normality, but the reality is that we are in our third national lockdown and students still have not received the experience they deserve. The educational experience, along with the intangible experience of self-development and growth, have all been compromised drastically. We have received no help from the government whatsoever. In fact in most of the PMs speeches, we are mentioned in half a sentence, if at all.

The government has kept students as an afterthought the past year. They have not provided adequate support for HE providers financially to allow for the providers to reduce fees and still be able to run as an institution. As a Russell Group Students' Union, we have a unique opportunity to create pressure on the government, collectively. In order to do so, and be taken seriously, we need the support from you, our students, to lobby the government to enable those conversations and provide pathways through their existing networks.

The government loves to pass the blame but we will not be played around any longer. Students are the heart and soul of all Higher Education establishments, this motion demands that we receive a world class educational experience, reflective of a Russell Group institution. The failure to meet this constitutes a full refund and true support for both our Home and International students.

Universities cannot be bankrupted and students cannot be conned, we must unitedly hold the government to account for its inadequacies. Students cannot be sidelined and treated as scapegoats as a result of the government's management failures during this pandemic. As

students, you have not received the experience you deserve, due to the inconsistent government guidelines. You deserve better or at least to be compensated. The government needs to be pushed strongly to provide this, and the Russell Group Student's Unions are already working towards this national campaign. Queen Mary is in a strong position, through these collective voices, to make national impact for its students.

What impact will it have?

Students would receive the compensation they deserve, whilst also protecting the existence of their Universities, especially those that are at the brink of bankruptcy. It is not in the interest of students that our institution becomes insolvent, therefore, the government needs to protect Higher Education Institutions. This would benefit students in the now, through compensation, and in the future during employment attempts, by being from a university that still exists.

End this divide and conquer strategy by the government, that academics are not the enemies of students. We are all struggling within this Institution and the real blame lies on the government who mismanaged the pandemic.

We understand that the pandemic has created multiple challenges for everyone. This motion focuses on alleviating some financial strain, which we hope will have a positive impact on students' mental health and wellbeing.