

## Should the university look into reducing the financial burden on international students?

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### What do you want?

We want more transparency regarding the breakdown of international tuition fees and how the figure is decided by the university.

We want the university to help with the financial burden that international students face either through reasonable reductions in international tuition fees or the provision of scholarship opportunities to certain groups of international students.

We suggest the following ideas:

- Match the lowest international tuition fees for that particular course of other universities in London e.g. reduce international tuition fees for 2022/23 intake for medicine from GBP 44,250 for first year to match St. Georges which is GBP 38,500 for first year.
- Increase the 1% discount for international students for paying the tuition fees in full before enrolment.
- Alumni/ siblings discount.
- Scholarships and bursaries e.g. merit-based scholarships.
- Make the international tuition fees for each year constant throughout the whole degree.
- Stop the increase in international tuition fees for each subsequent intake.

### Why do you want it?

There is a huge difference between local and international tuition fees.

For example, for 2022/23 intake, the local tuition fee for law is GBP 9,250 per year and the international fee for law is GBP 24,950 per year. The difference between local and international tuition fees for law is GBP 15,700 per year.

However, this difference is even greater for some other courses such as medicine and dentistry.

For example, for 2022/23 intake, the local tuition fees for medicine is still GBP 9,250 per year but the international tuition fees for medicine is GBP 44,250 per year. The difference between local and international tuition fees for medicine is GBP 35,000 per year. For the whole degree (five years), the difference will be at least GBP 140,000. If we were to consider the NHS bursary that quite a significant number of local students receive for their final year, the difference would be at least GBP 149,250.

The figure is actually greater than mentioned, as Queen Mary increases international university fees by a standard amount each year. For example, the inflationary increase for international university fees in 2020-21 was 1.8%.

As a reminder, the medicine degree will cost international students a grand sum of at least GBP 221,250 for 2022/23 intake. To make matters worse, this figure increases with each subsequent intake. For example, the international tuition fees for medicine for 2021/22 intake in their first year was GBP 38,000 but that for 2022/23 intake is GBP 44,250.

This huge difference (about 5 times the amount local students pay) cannot be justified because international students receive the same treatment as local students, and no additional opportunities.

Many people assume that all international students are well-off and could pay international tuition fees easily. This is simply untrue as some international students actually struggle to pay the fees.

In addition to that, international students also are under more stress to excel in their studies while living abroad in a foreign country, as many simply barely have enough to pay their tuition fees and cannot afford to redo the year if needed. This puts a toll on their mental health whilst they are struggling to stay afloat in this cost-of-living crisis.

If sudden unforeseen circumstances arise during the course of the degree e.g. the death of the breadwinner in the family/ sudden illness in the family requiring funds/ natural disasters/ wars or many more, there are extremely limited loan and scholarship opportunities for international students. International students are also limited to 20 working hours per week. As a result, they simply cannot fund their fees in any other way. Even if they can, having to work while being a full-time student will negatively affect their academic performance.

A number of international students that come to the UK to pursue higher education are from developing countries. The amount of money that international students have available to pay for the tuition fees will be directly affected by the constant fluctuations of currency change as well as the economic situation of their origin countries which can be very significant. This results in international students being vulnerable to price fluctuations and may cause them to be unable to afford their tuition fees as it is higher than first anticipated.

Moreover, the difference in tuition fees between local and international students also causes inequality between these groups of students and puts international students at a disadvantage. One such example is for medicine, it may be easier for local students to afford to do an intercalated degree compared to international students. In the past where an extra degree puts you at an advantage in the UKFPO, international students are likely to be affected. Although currently, an extra degree does not give additional points anymore, this may still revert in the future. This also poses an issue in terms of accessibility to education.

### **What impact will this have?**

- Reduce the financial burden and stress faced by international students.
- Improve the well-being and mental health of international students.
- Potentially improve academic performance of international students.
- Improve equality and accessibility to education between local and international students.
- Provide better chances for international students to complete their course even in unforeseen circumstances e.g. currency fluctuations or sudden loss of financial sources due to many reasons.