

4<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Dear Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee,

Ref – Higher Education (Fee Limits and Fee Limit Condition) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2025

I would be grateful if the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee could ask the Government/ House of Parliament to explain how its increase of universities fees to only £9,535 addresses the problem that:

- (a) The fee rise of only £285 is far too low.
- (b) University tuition fees have been frozen by the Government for the past 8 years therefore the rise to £9,535 is completely insufficient.
- (c) That small rise will not buffer universities against costs which have drastically risen because of inflation and the cost of living crisis since 2017. For instance, energy prices have risen drastically for everyone, wherein universities need heating and other energy resources within student and teaching facilities. Likewise, the cost of salaries has risen for universities, including among workers on the minimum wage, because of national rises in the latter.
- (d) Therefore, please ask the House of Parliament and/or the Government to increase university tuition fees to a much higher amount – one which they can calculate in consultation stakeholders such as heads of universities and the University College Union.
- (e) A much higher rise in university tuition fees is drastically required because the OfS has warned that 72% of universities are on operating in a financial deficit.<sup>1</sup>
- (f) 40% of universities are in such a deficit that they can only afford to cover one month's worth of staff salaries.<sup>1</sup>
- (g) Many universities have already suffered heavy periods of redundancies, and course closures, including in core sciences.
- (h) A further 25% of universities are at immediate such risk.<sup>2</sup>
- (i) The consequences are multiple and dangerous, ranging from a drastic fall in the UK's ability to generate scientific advances which save lives, to a UK workforce which has been ill prepared in fields such as chemistry and physics, leading to the UK lagging behind globally in its ability to give businesses/employers the skilled workers that they need.
- (j) Inevitably, the problem will spill over into the economy, shrinking the proportion of medium and high wage earners in the UK, as skills diversity narrows and as the UK workforce becomes less and less globally competitive.

Please urgently ask the Government to raise university tuition fees further, quickly and as a matter of emergency.

Thank you,

Dr. Caroline Kamau-Mitchell,

Reader in Occupational Health,

University academic, Birkbeck, University of London.

## References

1. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/what-the-ofs-is-doing-to-help-universities-and-colleges-ensure-their-long-term-financial-sustainability/#:~:text=Without%20taking%20steps%20to%20address,less%20than%2030%20days%27%20liquidity.>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/01/quarter-of-leading-uk-universities-cutting-staff-due-to-budget-shortfalls>