



How do Domestic Students in the UK Feel About Tuition Fees?

Description

The [QS UK Domestic Student Survey 2019](#) wades into the value for money debate, as universities confront threats to funding.

With the Augar review into post-18 education fast-approaching, universities are facing a reduction in university fees that could shake the UK's higher education (HE) sector. Leaked proposals also indicate a potentially damaging impact for disadvantaged students and social mobility, with indications of reduced access to student loans and a new minimum entry requirement of three Ds at A Level.

There has been an angry backlash from the HE sector in response to circulating rumors that there will be a reduction of three thousand pounds to courses in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and a potential increase in fees for courses that generally lead to higher earnings like Science, Medicine and Engineering. Universities argue that this devalues the creative industries and the impact of culture on society, whilst reduced fees could lead to less funding for support services, job losses and even a reduction of courses in these disciplines.

With such a response emerging among universities in the media, it is important to also take into consideration the perspective of students, as debates about value for money gain traction in this context. The [QS UK Domestic Student Survey 2019](#) tracks the interests, motivations and priorities of prospective students, with 1,700 respondents between the ages of 16-18 taking part this year. The survey explores the somewhat contestable balance between individual investment and the contribution of the state, according to prospective students. Our research reveals the financial burden of a degree, threatening the appeal of university and pushing many potential applicants to think critically about return on investment.

Concerns about debt mean that a considerable 39% of respondents are less likely to apply to university, whilst 88% of participants feel the government should be responsible for at least half of the teaching cost of an undergraduate degree. Prospective students also believe that in order to receive a good return on their investment, their tuition fees should be directed towards student accommodation, course facilities, careers support and links to employers. Such insight can be used to tailor student experience and recruitment strategies in line with the needs of the market.

74% of students would like more information on where their fees are invested, according to research conducted by HEPI. Research suggests that just 45% of fees go towards teaching, whilst the rest is focused on areas students stand to gain from like buildings, information technology, student support services (including counselling and careers advice), alongside widening participation activities and the students' union. The Augur review represents a potential threat to these areas, as they are most likely to face cuts in the event of a reduction to funding.

This indicates the importance of a cohesive response from the government and the UK's HE sector should fees be reduced, to ensure that troubled perceptions about value for money do not lead to a drop in applicants. Transparency about exactly where tuition fee money is invested could be essential to tampering any negative impacts on the sector. With the political and economic uncertainty of Brexit looming on the horizon, the increasing importance of collaboration between universities and Government could not be more relevant, especially in the context of how potential new funding arrangements might influence value for money.

This environment also calls for optimal engagement between universities and prospective students. QS has thus included an [Action Plan](#) for Domestic Student Recruitment in the 2019 report, to enable universities and Government to achieve just that. Whilst a reduction of funding has the potential to hurt the sector, the government should not ignore the views of domestic students, who at large feel current fee structures are unjust. QS remains committed to providing a voice for prospective students, which is of growing importance in this climate of uncertainty.

For the full findings and recommendations, [download the QS UK Domestic Student Survey 2019](#).