

Review of Nottingham University tuition fees

With mounting rumours over the privatisation of certain Russell Group universities and the increase of tuition fees, the public has grown concerned over the role universities are predicted to play in the organisation of an advanced society like Britain, and whether they will fulfil the role demanded by the majority of the population and, as Bertrand Russell put it, 'give a sense of the value of things other than domination, to help create wise citizens of a free community, to encourage a combination of citizenship with liberty, individual creativeness, which means that we regard a child as a gardener regards a young tree, as something with an intrinsic nature which will develop into an admirable form given proper soil and air and light.'

The University of Nottingham, along with others in the Russell Group, has announced full support for charging the upper limit of £9000 for tuition fees. At the moment 9% of all income is paid back once the individual begins earning £15,000 annually, with zero interest. At the approval of the coalition government, the Browne Review has raised the threshold to £21,000, with interest fixed at 3% above the government's rate of borrowing. Universities charging more than £6,000 will have to undertake measures (bursaries, summer schools, outreach programmes; £4m dedicated for Nottingham) as incentives for poorer applicants.

The interest rate will be zero for students earning below £21,000. The government supports the Browne Review's proposal to increase maintenance grants to £3,250 up from £2,906, but recommends a lower threshold than the current £25,000. Funding for the Arts and Humanities subjects will be cut, and only the 'priority' disciplines like Technology and the Sciences will receive (decreased) support – even the Royal Society has predicted 'game over for British science.' Under a Browne Review proposal (since endorsed by the coalition) the loans provided will be capped at £3750 for all income levels, down £1174 from the current maximum.

The Government's proposals, as well as Chancellor Osborne's Comprehensive Spending Review, show a desire to shift 'funding from the taxpayer to the individuals who benefit'. Public funding will consequently decrease, and the richest 40% of graduates will pay considerably more overall than they do now, but the poorest 20% will pay less. Cuts to teaching and research at Nottingham University will reach £12 million during the 2011-12 academic year ('we' are finding these to be 'challenging reductions' announced the Vice-Chancellor). The cuts to the university's finance will also damage the East Midlands' economy, according to the Vice-Chancellor of Nottingham Trent, who sees the two universities as important drivers of the local economy.