

# Leeds University Union

## Higher Education Funding Survey

### Summary of results

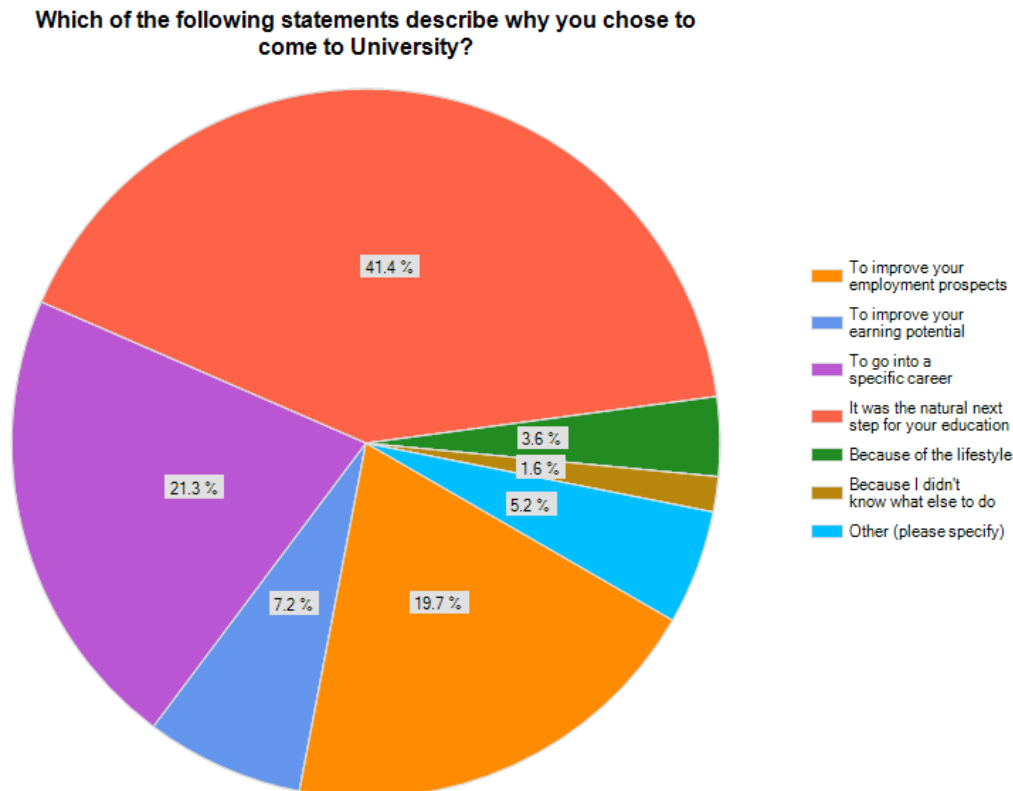
258 students completed the Higher Education Funding online survey, between Friday 8<sup>th</sup> and Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2010. A breakdown of respondents shows the majority (81%) were undergraduate students, 16% were taught postgraduates and 3% were research postgraduates.

### Why do students go to university?

Most students chose to come to University because it was the logical next step for their education (42%), to go into a specific career (21%) or to improve employment prospects (20%).

It seems reasonable to expect that students will need to be convinced that they are going to receive a return on their educational investment in order to continue choosing to enter Higher Education.

The following chart shows a breakdown of the responses.

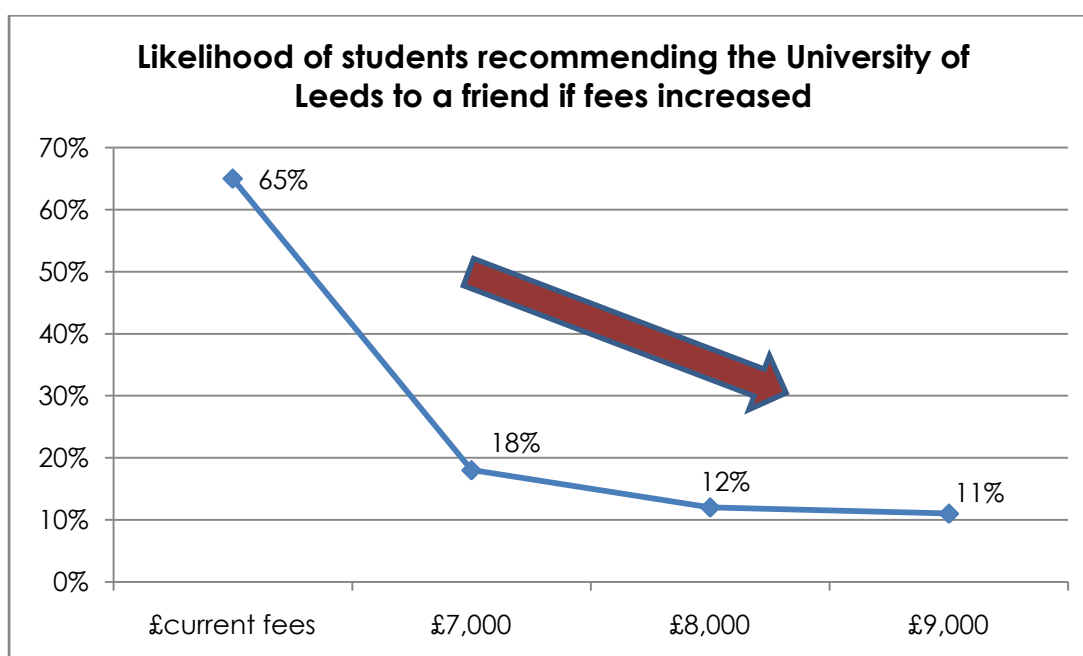


## Higher Education Fees

68% of students agreed that students should pay the same amount for their degree, regardless of how much they earn once they graduate. The results were based on the following question:

*Two people have a degree in Law from the University of Leeds. One is an investment banker earning £80 000 per year and one is a social worker earning £25 000 per year. Should both people pay the same for their degree in Law?*

The following chart shows a comparison of how the increase in fees would affect the students' likelihood of recommending the University of Leeds to a friend. The results clearly show that most students (65%) would currently recommend their degree at the University to a friend, based on what they currently pay and the quality of learning that is delivered. That figure decreases significantly as soon as students imagine themselves paying £7000 in annual fees, and falls even further at £8000 and £9000.



69% of students feel they should be paying anywhere between £1,000 and £4,000 for the degree they are currently studying for.

## Debt

64% of students think that they are currently paying too much for their degree at Leeds.

39% of students expect to graduate with debts of £15k - £25k, and 27% of students expect the final amount to be greater than this. 56% of students are concerned or slightly concerned about that level of debt.

If fees rose to £9000, the level of concern increases to 91%.

## Student comments about changes to Higher Education Fundings

The majority of comments were against the rise in higher education fees. Some popular comments included *'fees should be lower; 'fees should not go up'; 'fees should vary for different subjects and be proportional to the number of hours undertaken'; 'a degree should offer value for money' and 'a rise in fees will deter students from attending'*.

All comments from the survey are shown below:

1. Inevitable
2. I think that I am paying too much for my degree because I only get 7 contact hours a week whereas Science based subjects get much more teaching time. That is very unfair.
3. Students aren't guaranteed a well paying job well above £15000 when they graduate so could be paying off their student debt for many years to come, so raising HE fees to ridiculous amounts like £9000 is not feasible for students.
4. Keep it low otherwise no one will come and we'll breed a generation of idiots.
5. Tuition fees must not go up, it would affect the already disadvantaged people in society.
6. As it is we already overpay for HE, but in the end every graduate has better prospects than most people their age, and so even with bigger debts they have a better potential to pay it off with.
7. If the funding goes up I won't be able to afford university. I'm from a working class background and have had to support my mam and dad previously working so I couldn't get into as much debt as they did.
8. Scandalous
9. MAKE IT CHEAPER!
10. I have 3 hours a week and pay exactly the same as a medic who is in 9-5 every day!
11. Raising the costs would exclude masses from being able to attend university, especially if government funding doesn't match the price increase.
12. Going to university is great it should not be about how much debt you get into, fair enough when you leave you will be in debt, but aren't you leaving with education that you didn't have before? And all the good time and mates you have made? Can you put a price on that? The majority of people leave university and get a well paid job, well above the pay that they would have got if they didn't go to uni and only have to pay their student loan off a few pounds a month. As long as the fees don't go up to £9000 a degree is still worth investing in, after all it's your future and standard of living for the rest of your life that you are investing in.
13. I feel that it is unfair that for an arts degree a student has to pay the same as a student studying a science degree when the standard of teaching is less, the contact hours are far lower and we use fewer resources. I currently feel that I am paying over £3000 a year just to use the library and I do not feel it is even nearly worth the money it is costing.
14. Though universities are clearly in need of a great deal more funding which the government cannot currently provide them, increasing tuition fees is a short sighted step which can only lead to a greater chasm between those from privileged backgrounds and those less well off. Though the hope is that if tuition fees rise, scholarship schemes and bursaries for poorer students will become more widespread and generous, the fact still remains that whilst a few thousand pounds more each year for fees may not seem much to a wealthy student whose parents are financially fortunate enough to help them, for someone like me who comes from a low income family, whose parents did not go to university, an education costing seven, eight or nine thousand pounds a year just seems like an unnecessary luxury. If my course were to cost £8000 a year, I can honestly say I wouldn't be here. Despite all my bursaries, grants and scholarships, it really would not seem 'worth it', for in the short term a university course would not be value for money (the

- current level of teaching hours for certain humanities subjects are a joke. Wanting to add an extra few thousand pounds onto the price tag of what we are currently getting is farcical) and in the long term offer no guarantee of a decent wage. An increase in tuition fees will do nothing but turn universities which currently welcome people from diverse backgrounds into the playground of the rich. It's a complete step backwards, and as far as I can see the only fair solution to the funding crisis is to introduce a graduate tax.
15. It will put off many intelligent people, who get no support from their families from going to university as they simply won't be able to afford it. As it is the majority of us will be paying off our debts for at least 15 years..... that's a high enough price to pay!
  16. I think it's one of the worst things that could possibly happen to the UK. The UK doesn't have a lot going for it anymore and British education at university level is one of the few good things we have left. If tuition fees rise the gap between wealth of students in Leeds will get even larger which is a problem because Leeds University is already a mostly middle-class university.
  17. If people are struggling to pay off their debts at the moment, increasing it is just going to put everyone into a more impossible situation, which is surely the opposite of what the government want?
  18. I wouldn't come to university at all for much more than £4000 per year; I would do a skills based qualification, get a job with a good career track or start my own company.
  19. I believe fees should be directly proportional to the number of hours that are undertaken. I study psychology which never has more than 7 hours a week...and in my 3rd year I have 3 hours of contact. However, medics etc get a full timetable. I feel I don't get the same level of qualification as those who have more hours....so why should I be paying the same?
  20. £9000 a year is obscene. It would mean university is only an option to the middle class, which is outrageous. Society will work better when there are equal numbers of people from each class doing white collar jobs that influence the running of the country. At £9000 a year, I would not be able to afford to come to university.
  21. Nothing that will make a difference, my opinion like many students doesn't really count. It's not really a decision I can have ANY part in playing.
  22. If we knew exactly what changes the extra costs are funding, then it may not be much of a problem.
  23. Do not change it or you'll see a huge drop in applicants! Young people have a right to learn, why pay more?
  24. I understand why funding is being changed, cash crisis and all... But surely if the government is worried about people going into debt post university they would freeze the fees at an appropriate level, or restrict the amount of university places available and therefore save money on university funding.
  25. Increasing university fees by up to 300% of the current rate would not only be horrendously crippling to the vast majority of students, but would also put off a significant number of those who are not in a particularly secure financial position before they come away. Ultimately you would just be left with uni being a place for the richest people in society and further increase the gap between rich and poor.
  26. The distribution of funds can be unfair sometimes and not individual circumstances can sometimes be passed over. People with low household incomes get a lot of money given to them at university, however people with household incomes of £35k+ don't really get a look in, even if that persons household is under financial stress that could result in them not being able to afford to support their child through HE.
  27. I'm not sure if the possible increase in earnings from coming to uni would be enough to outweigh the fact that you could go straight into work after 6th form, therefore earning for 4 extra years and not have any debt.

28. The accessibility of HE is vital and the out-pricing of longer established, reputable universities (of which, University of Leeds is one) will obviously encourage degree programmes to incur a level of elitism. This does not simply mean those in less privileged circumstances do not have access to the better levels of education, but professional middle class families (like my own, with a single parent) may not afford to subsidise one or all child into HE. Starting life beyond academic fulfilment with such a huge debt as I expect is frightening as well as being an economic impediment. I have always felt grateful to live in a country where access to HE is affordable. It would be a shame to see my younger sibling not be able to have the same experience that I have had at this university.
29. It's like a bad dream future students won't wake up from.
30. Could put off high achieving students from poor backgrounds.
31. "GREAT!!!
32. BE EVER CONSCIOUS, EVER DETERMINED AND EVER PATRIOTIC IN FULFILLING YOUR OBJECTIVE"
33. If fees rose any higher people would be priced out of coming to university, universities would suffer, the student economy would suffer, young people would suffer, and employers would suffer.
34. Everyone should pay same amount! And keep it low! Just because peoples families are rich doesn't mean the student see's that money and so people getting grants are at an advantage!!
35. I think it's ridiculous. People from low income families get grant after bursary after scholarship but people like me from normal income families get nothing. My mum can't afford to completely support me so I've had a job since second year doing 20 hours a week just to get by. These hours are going to increase as I plan to do a masters. How are we meant to fund ourselves if things get even more expensive, why is it fair that people with talent are given barrier after barrier, making 4 hour a week courses more expensive to reduce the number of people coming to university just to mess around is one thing, but 9 grand a year for the academic subjects? Are you trying to stop people wanting to become doctors? Lawyers? Engineers? Because n absolute disgrace for 10 hours a week it is rubbish value and all we're doing is keeping the university a float when the government should be doing that. It's a ridiculous amount of money, and if it comes into place I sure won't be doing my MSc or PhD here.
36. HE funding should be increased, particularly to world-class universities.
37. Although this will not affect me now I must say that there is no way I would have been able to afford going to University at those prices and that is ridiculous! It annoys me that the government wanted all students to go to university (even to do mickey-mouse degrees) which has meant money is being spent in degrees that will not improve some people's chances at employment, but instead take away the 'glory' of the more established degrees such as medicine, English, engineering etc and where the money could have been used better.
38. Not really, not as if my opinion will really change their mind if I had one anyway.
39. I think if fees increase as is forecast I may have had to take a different route from University completely as I would not have been able to afford the repayments
40. There are too many opinions flying around about what the changes will be and how they will affect everyone, I feel a bit overwhelmed
41. "Student debt is not an astonishing surprise sprung upon people in their last year. People know exactly what they're getting into. They are paying off a loan slowly for decades after they graduate on the basis that their degree will improve their final salary and income. Any extra spending at University, i.e. the 'student life' is their own prerogative and choice, and hence must accept the consequences of it.

42. Useful degrees such as Medicine and such should be free or heavily subsidised anyway by people doing, like me, Humanities degrees like History and Politics. However important we think we are, our views and 'expertise' is not as needed in society as Doctors, Nurses, and Teachers. These professions need degree expertise, and the cost of a degree should depend on what type of degree it is.
43. Needed degrees should be cheaper, ideally free, and others like Media and Politics, should cost more. That way maybe people will only do these degrees that really want to. Maybe people will go to the "new Universities" that you refer to, and do vocational useful qualifications such as computer engineering, plumbing and joinery."
44. The important thing is receiving value for money. An increase in fees should lead to higher quality. However, it seems that the opposite would happen as teaching budgets would be cut or maintained at the same level regardless of any increase.
45. Considering the poor job market at the moment it's hard to justify a raise in tuition fees, especially if the interest is allowed to increase too, how can it be fair to graduate in debt and have that increase along the same scale of a bank loan and yet be unable to get a well paying job? It might be fine if the chances of getting a well paying graduate job were increased, but until that happens, graduate debt should be kept to a minimum.
46. Rich feeding into the rich and the poor feeding into the poor - an increase in fees would give yet more evidence that in this country that statement is more than true. Why should education have to be paid for? It should be not-for-profit i.e. you only pay for what it actually costs (e.g. wages and the cost of equipment). The right to receive free education in schools was passed but why should this be any different if you want to better yourself and learn at an older age. Why is it compulsory to attend school and learn for so many years to then be told that we have to either be extremely rich or go into mass debt if we wish to learn any further? Why should I have to pay over £22,000 if I wish to learn? Why is it even being considered that that debt may be tripled? Unemployment levels are high and if you create a massive barrier for people to educate themselves then it will create a less skilled workforce which will drive less money not more, into the system. It will cause unemployment to rise and demand for skilled workers will increase. We need these more skilled workers to help society, to become lawyers, doctors, scientists etc. For example, there is a shortage of midwives as it, never mind increasing the fees.
47. More student benefits would mean students needed fewer loans etc, so debt becomes less of an issue.
48. It's not fair Scotland students have it for free. Why should the fees go up for those who are doing degrees which improve society, as those who are using University to further a curiosity/waste time?
49. I'm so glad I was lucky enough to be born into the £3000 tuition fee bracket - those students who will have to pay whatever Lord Browne recommends will feel so much more pressured about their future and stressed about their debt
50. Increases in the student debt burden will price those from lower income families out of higher education.
51. If the increase in fees would still be covered by a tuition fee loan on a similar basis to how the fees are repaid now, this would lessen the issue of fees considerably.
52. I understand the need for changes, as educating students is expensive, and I think there should be differing costs for different degrees, I also feel that sometimes courses are not worth as much anymore due to the large amount now available, I understand that everyone has the right to a degree but it is a bit frustrating to those who really work hard to achieve the best they can to get a degree and then it to feel like it is worth nothing and they have to do even more to make them appear better to the industry.
53. Some changes are inevitable. Those who earn more should pay more and whose degrees cost the university more to run should cost more.

54. To campaign for no tuition fees whatsoever, OR to campaign for a graduate tax
55. I understand the nature and reason behind the cuts but doubling the fees or anything greater would serve to be a deterrent to many potential leaders that would not simply be inconvenienced by large amount of debts but incapable of affording them. It may also cause many prospective International Students to choose alternative countries which offer more reasonable fees.
56. The average deposit on a house for first time buyers this year was £37,000. We will be coming out of university with £30,000 debt. How are young people today suppose to make a decent quality of living for them? Even to get insured on a car can cost about £2000. For the career I chose I had to go to university and if there was any other way to do it, I would not have come to university. As it gives me a financial disadvantage in later life. The only people who are comfortable after university are the people whose parents can afford to put them through university or write off their debt for them, causing social divisions.
57. I took a break after my BA to earn and pay off 60% of my student debt, it has not cleared yet, but it worries me a lot. Being a postgrad, you have other concerns at this time too, like getting onto the property ladder, planning weddings, and even children. In this regard, finances are spread incredibly thin already for students in my situation.
58. It's all about returns. If I pay £9000 for a degree, I better have £9000 worth of degree at the end. If I paid that much money for my Bachelor's now, I don't think I'd get that return - so if the fee increased, it might not be worth completing the degree.  
Tuition fees should be paid or more subsidised by the government and no actual graduate tax
59. There needs to be a real move to relieving the pressures on individual students' finances; address the anomalies that a higher paid graduate pays the same as a lower paid one and that business makes no contribution to the cost of HE when they then benefit from the students who have studied there.
60. It is fundamental to individuals, families and the economy at large that fees do not increase. In a knowledge-based economy, education is the key to a career and exorbitant fees would undoubtedly inhibit many bright young people from achieving their potential, the only entrance criterion should be academic ability, not ability to pay.
61. It's not fair to deny anyone the chance to a higher education just because they may come from a low income background or want to pursue a career that doesn't pay very much. Nurses and scientists will often work jobs that they love for low pay, and help other.
62. Need to set up more access programmes and/or scholarships if fees are to increase to be certain the higher education is still open to people from all backgrounds
63. "I want to know EXACTLY where my money goes - why do some departments give free handouts where as others charge for them?"
64. Exactly how much does it cost to run a lecture on average? How much does it cost to run a seminar on average?
65. Why the increase? Are we paying for new buildings whilst our departments suffer?"
66. Regressive - will make good universities only for the rich
67. I will fight till death to prevent the cap being lifted
68. It is obvious that the change in fees is a move by the Tories to reintroduce elitism in education to keep the rich people rich. I am from a working class background and the fact I'm even at uni is something wonderful, make the rich pay more that'll solve it!
69. I am already considering dropping out due to the current fees. If they go up I certainly will have to. I have so few contact hours that the amount I am paying already is ridiculous.
70. Give priority to the quality of study rather than cost of study
71. It is ridiculous thinking that an increase in fees will not deter students going to university, especially those from a poorer background, even with increases in available grants and

- bursaries. Also, those proposing the increases are from a generation who received higher education for free, even being given grants towards their maintenance. New students will be paying for the previous generation's mistakes.
72. Question five is impossible to succinctly answer as it does not indicate how the fees stated relate to other Universities. If Leeds was charging £9000, but other Universities less the answer would depend on what course the potential student wished to do and why. If you are doing a course for career prospects and the University that was the elite for your course charged more it may be worth it, if you think in terms of money and earning potential.
  73. I think if the prices do go up the university system will go back to the way it was with only the most elite and richest people in the country going. I think that is unfair and classist.
  74. I think there'd be so many more people that wouldn't be able to afford university - education is a rite everyone should have, regardless of their financial situation.
  75. If fees went up to that amount, I would not continue with my degree (or start it if that was the starting price); due to the huge amount of debt it would create. In my opinion the current fees we pay are already high considering the actual number of contact hours received (I have maximum 10 per week, and for over £3000 I don't feel that is sufficient). University should be an option for anyone with the intellectual ability and raising fees would deter many people from lower income background which is unfair and shouldn't happen.
  76. The government has been talking about HE being available for everyone, but even with the current costs of university it is still very difficult for people from many backgrounds to finance HE. Increases in tuition fees would mean only the richest families being able to send their children into higher education.
  77. I would absolutely hate to see different uni's charging different amounts. Your place should be based on how clever you are, not what you can afford.
  78. Would be good if it was free (:
  79. It is not fair to change the fees for students that have already started their course. They have agreed to take the course due to the way it was presented to them when choosing whether to go to university. For fees to change is breaking their trust.
  80. I think it is a change that, given the current climate, has to happen. My concern is over the repayment of the debt after graduation. A graduate coming out of university with debts of around £30,000 is daunting, particularly as that is equal to what is a very good starting salary for even the top graduates. Where the issue of perhaps greater concern lies is the proposed increase in interest rate for those graduates who earn more. The fact that these graduates will be naturally paying higher tax suggests that the burden of an increased interest rate on their student loan repayment on top of that will be what is 'unfair'. It is a difficult issue to disseminate; as a Jersey man, I am already paying £7000 a year in fees anyway, and I thoroughly believe that my degree from Leeds will be worth that amount. As long as a secure, manageable, fair repayment scheme is put in place for graduates, then I think that given the huge cuts to university departments, the higher fees can to extent be justified.
  81. "I think that tuition fees should be based on household income and the degree you're doing, e.g. a maths degree should pay less in tuition fees than someone doing communication studies because of the strong employment and earning prospects of maths students.
  82. I think student loans should be changed to reflect how much parents support their children, I don't even live with my parents and get no support but I get the same as someone who gets hundreds of pounds a month from their parents. I live with other family who earn about half that of my parents but my parents' income is assessed as my 'household' income which I think is ridiculous, so now I am struggling to make ends meet.

83. Finally I think people who live at home when at uni should get far less than those in student accommodation, at the moment they receive maybe 1000 less, even though standard uni accommodation is around 4500 a year. At home they won't even pay rent!"
84. When did we start turning into America?
85. I am an international student so I already have to pay very high tuition fee without the help of loans. I simply wouldn't be able to afford tuition if it increased which would be a shame because I chose Leeds above top schools in the United States.
86. I think that the government are making it a lot more difficult for lower income families to support their children throughout their time at university. Maybe the fees for less academic courses should cost more as the demand in jobs is less important in the country. Subjects such as law, Mathematics, medicine, and Sciences should cost less as they are essential in the running of the country and the health and education of future generations. A way of reducing costs in universities would be to shorten courses that have few hours contact time through the week to 2 year degrees, which would lessen the need for so many lecturers and would result in a better profit for the university.
87. I have six contact hours a week. I do not think that this is good enough for the present £3000 that I pay. If this was to rise, I would be very reluctant to do a degree. I would want to see improvements and to see where my money would be going.
88. I believe it is unfair to charge more for the status of the university as it makes the uni become for the rich and those exceptional students who obtain scholarships. If the fees were to increase dramatically, and the help offered to remain the same, then it would be those in the so called 'middle classes' who would miss out on the assistance with funding and yet still unable to afford the higher fees. This would drive the economy back to an almost industrial era where those middle and lower classes would end up to the manufacturing sector of industry as opposed to the service industry which the UK currently gains most income from.
89. More grants and scholarships should be made available to students; students who come from a higher-earning family should not be cut off from grants or scholarships based on merit etc.
90. It's very difficult, as we aren't rich students.
91. Increasing fees significantly above the level they are at now will reduce the ability of many intelligent and talented young people to get into University and make it far more select and middle/upper class which should not be allowed.
92. Not all universities are the same, I would pay slightly more for my fees at Leeds University because I feel as though I am getting all the support I need, other universities however may charge the same and support their students less, and this doesn't seem fair. I also wouldn't object to paying slightly more for a degree from a university with a good reputation, thus increasing your chances of employability.
93. I'm from a British Overseas Territory where £1 is about \$5 my home currency. I chose coming to the UK because of the low home fees and that I didn't need a visa. So my graduating debt is tremendous. If fees were even double what they are now, I would have opted for school in the USA. Especially, because of the global financial down turn I was unable to get a scholarship from my local government council. I REALLY can't afford fees that are significantly higher!
94. Education is for living not for livelihood!!!!
95. Removing the cap on fees will aggravate an already difficult position. Currently there are capable, intelligent students choosing not to go to university because of the costs; surely increasing fees will only worsen that state, therefore resulting in increased inequality and reduced social mobility.
96. I'm worried for my children

97. I am a European student and in most other EU countries it would've been much cheaper for me to enrol in a University. If when choosing a university the fees for Leeds University would have been over 6,000 pounds a year, I would have decided to study somewhere else in Europe.
98. International students are paying too much fees, it is not fair that we are paying more than double what an EU or UK citizen pays.
99. It promotes elitism in that poorer families will then not be able to send their children to university for financial reasons regardless of how intelligent and worthy their child is.
100. It will discourage people from going to university if the fees are increased - telling people that they will have more time to pay it back does not improve people's view on going!
101. People should not be hindered from attending the best possible university offered to them because of financial reasons.
102. People who want to study should contribute towards fees in accordance to their income. Getting into a postgraduate course for someone from a working class family means, not only increasing their debt but also being stuck for 5 or more years struggling to pay it.
103. There is no possible way families like mine could send me as an EU student to the UK when university in Sweden is free, however I didn't want to stay in Sweden and neither want to move back. But if the fees will be raised there is no possibility of me finishing my studies.
104. No matter what the fees were I would pay them because I would HAVE to pay them. I need a degree for my prospective career; I'm not here to waste a few years of my life. I would not like the changes, it would just make me poorer and I have no choice but to pay them.