

2183 UEASU Response to OfS Consultation

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Union Notes

1. The Department for Education is currently consulting on reforms to the way Universities are regulated

Union Believes

1. That when a course closes students are often let down by poor "teach out" arrangements or by being shunted to another University
2. That too little attention is paid to subjects which are poor at widening participation like medicine.
3. That many students from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to access the wider benefits and activities on offer at University.
4. That in an HE Market it is no-one's job to fix big problems like the massive gap in participation in HE in some regions.
5. That in some new private providers there is no evidence of meaningful student representation.
6. That students tell us that they repeatedly choose modules that turn out to be full or try to choose modules that clash because of timetabling.
7. That academic services like advising sometimes fall short of the standard agreed in UEA wide policies
8. That many of the wider non academic services like SSS and space on campus are under huge strain due to expansion
9. That at UEA when a student has a problem they can turn to the SU for advice- but the SU is not well funded and in many smaller Universities there's no such access to help
10. That very few students are aware of their legal rights when it comes to education
11. That too many students tell us that they were not prepared for the full costs of University life
12. That students are unhappy that the cost of accommodation on campus has risen by more than inflation every year for a decade
13. That students are also unhappy that their tuition fees subsidise UEA's loss making catering service
14. Many students tell us they are disappointed about how few hours teaching they have and how large their classes are
15. That OfS is to "take action" on "freedom of speech" on campus

Union Resolves

1. To lobby for all Universities to be required to put in place Student Protection Plans in the event of course and module closure rather than just institution closure. These should protect the widest range of student interests which include proper compensation in the event of change of location or institution.
2. To argue that access regulation should examine efforts to widen participation, progression and achievement at subject level- especially in professions like accountancy and medicine.
3. To argue that access regulation should examine not just course access, progression and achievement but access to the wider student experience and the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups.
4. To recommend that all Universities should be required to collaborate to widen access to students in particular "HE Cold Spots" like Norfolk

5. To argue that a culture of student representation should be regarded as a "baseline feature" of Higher Education in the UK rather than an optional extra.
6. To argue that "alternative" provision like two year degrees should have additional protections to prevent students and the taxpayer being ripped off
7. To ensure that student agreements rule out promoting modules which turn out to be full and learning pathways/joint honours courses that turn out to be impossible because of timetable clashes
8. To argue that Universities should promise and clear entitlements and standards on academic and student services (things like personal tutors, library services, assessment & feedback) with redress for students if they do not
9. To argue that all Universities facilitate access to and fund free independent advocacy for students who have a complaint, want to make an appeal, or are accused of an academic or disciplinary offence.
10. To ensure that Universities that offer "opportunities" like trips abroad or links to employers are required to deliver on their promises
11. To continue to oppose the TEF in its current form and to argue for students to be able to access data and information that is relevant to them instead of "medals"
12. To ensure that OfS takes action to ensure that students are aware of their rights and how to enforce them.
13. To argue that OfS should take action on hidden course costs
14. To ask OfS to investigate excess profits from courses that are cheaper to run and services like accommodation.
15. To recommend that OfS take forward work on "teaching intensity" which seeks to look at contact hours and class sizes
16. In any debate about Freedom of Speech to protect students' rights to take action collectively through their SU on hate speech.
17. To include the above in UEASU's response to the consultation and report back to Council on the outcome in the New Year.