

<b>Idea/Policy:</b>	Funding [ <a href="#">link</a> ]
<b>Date/Time/Location:</b>	2 Dec, 13:00 – 14:00
<b>Student Attendees:</b>	Antonia Listrat (Pres)
<b>Staff Attendees:</b>	Jane Baston (SVRM), Chloe Batten (SVC-DE)
<b>Apologies:</b>	
<b>Actions/Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Send policy to February ASV</li> </ul>

## Minutes

JB: Policy might need revising because it's outdated

AL asks for more context about when it came to policy and why

JB: was a B&C and renewed as policy. Not sure on deeper context. Offers to dig through democracy files

JL: how familiar are you with funding in HE and how tuition fees have escalated over the last few years? The student movement and funding of HE was aligned to how politically the government were looking at it. Jane means the wording of policy was dated to a time where the govt's approach to funding was different to how it is now as there were proposed cuts to central funding. Now we're in a tuition fee model and have the marketisation of HE which provides sustainability of HE through fees and international income. The direction of travel is also different.

If the theory still held by students is that the govt needs to properly fund and prioritise the HE system, we'll need to reword the policy

AL: this did come up in RGSU (Russel Group SU) as priorities for other SUs in the group

JB: I've found policy back to 2018 at least. It's been there for a while and has gone through some changes. If it's something students still care about (thinks they do) - though the situation has changed, there are still concerns.

AL: are there any changes you're proposing?

JL: The HE market back then was predominately home students with a small percentage of international students as customers of the system. This motion is designed to talk to UK govt about funding home students. Students at UoB now might have a different view on UK govt paying home students when int students are paying more of a 'commercial' rate.

AL: Good point. When previously discussed, the intention was about a return to free education. Presume that's what students would want. Students before us benefited from free education, didn't have to go to debt. Need to add a PG element/ consider PG affordability. It's not good for international students to be treated as 'cash cows', especially with the recent international student levy.

JL – If putting out to a vote, what would the opposing argument be? With free education, the opposing argument is quality. Amount of income available to unis would be lower so quality of university would be significantly less (based on a capitalist theory).

When asking do u want free education or quality, some will pick quality. Some students can afford costs of education and would want quality.

AL: Free education doesn't necessarily mean a reduction of quality. Oxbridge existed before when it was free.

JL: Free education was good because only those privileged enough to get there did it. New labour opened up university to the masses. Prior to that it was largely well-educated middle-class, predominantly men attending

JB: Doesn't disagree with either argument. We take a principle approach with policy. It's not a proposal for how HE should be funded nor meant to fix all the issues. It's about what the Guild and student membership believe about the funding of HE.

AL suggests adding a point on free education/how students might feel

JB: yes. Need to look at where to add it. "Opposing cuts to HE funding" needs wording change because of context. Second half of that sentence still stands

AL: there was a petition signed by lots of student officers opposing national student levy for international students

JB adds to policy

AL: govt wants to fund certain degrees and not others. Can we include wanting equitable access to a variety of subjects, not just STEM.

JB: still fits but we don't want to broaden the policy too much

AL feels like there are significant HE reforms currently happening, so it is relevant.

JB explains what the term "real term cuts" means in this context

AL: would be helpful to write "real term" cuts more descriptively for people who don't understand the concept

AL: not sure about addition of freezing tuition fees. If you don't freeze you increase student debt

JB: trying to communicate that the overall funding package for funding HE hasn't been enough. This is the first bit to explain there's been cuts and then we can go on to explain what we want

AL doesn't think we should use freezing as an example/doesn't want Guild to say we oppose freezing fees as tuition fees are a lot

JL suggests revising the structure of the policy/order of sentences for clarity

AL thanks James.

JB: we need an explainer as to why the Guild opposes.

JB, JL and AL talk through restructuring the paragraph and amending phrasing to reflect current views and the letter from RUSU opposing the international student levy.

Discussion around opposing the preferential funding of STEM subjects proposed by the govt.

AL: Study found humanities subject have same economic value 10 years later – same impact as STEM but takes longer to get there. Why should subjects designated less value to govt be less accessible to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds?

AL requests to put 'economically valuable' in quotation marks. It's the principle of deciding what has value. It depends on who you ask

JL suggests adding an ending paragraph with what the Guild will do

AL: we should have action-based statement. We're going to support the Guild officers to contribute to the uni's Access and Participation Plan

JL: we've never had a high-level commitment to do that so will be interesting

AL: not just access but also students' experiences while they're here

JB: what's the link to funding?

AL: it's part of the APP, attainment gaps etc

JL: the first line contains that, so we don't need to qualify with specifics

JL: APP is govt led so might be contradictory. So may want to qualify why, in case the APP moves away from attainment gap focus

JB: could qualify to say we'll work with them on APP to ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds have equitable access to funding opportunities and information?

AL: or broaden to say students from disadvantaged backgrounds have a consistent experience

Further discussion between JB/AL to devise actions

AL: do we send to ASV?

JB: recommends this as we've made quite a lot of changes and to get a democratic mandate

AL: it's also a good opportunity to raise awareness. If it goes to an ASV we can campaign about it. We want it to reach quorum.

It's agreed that the policy should be sent to February's ASV.