

Inspiring The Future. In particular, we will seek to inspire more children and young people to follow technical and scientific careers through partnership with relevant businesses.

4.7 A world class university sector, open to all

Liberal Democrats have ensured that no undergraduate student in England has to pay a penny up front of their tuition fees. Students in England do not have to pay anything until they are earning over £21,000 per year – a figure which will increase in line with earnings – and over that income, monthly repayments are linked to earnings. This means only high-earning graduates pay their tuition fees in full. We now have the highest university application rates ever, including from disadvantaged students.

But we need to ensure higher education is accessible to all those who can benefit, including at postgraduate level. Liberal Democrats in government secured the first ever income-contingent loans scheme for graduate degrees, which we will protect and seek to extend.

We will:

- ◆ Ensure that all universities work to widen participation across the sector, prioritising early intervention in schools and colleges. This will include running summer schools and setting up mentoring programmes between students or alumni and school pupils.
- ◆ Require universities to be transparent about their selection criteria.
- ◆ Work with university ‘mission groups’ to develop a comprehensive credit accumulation and transfer framework to help students transfer between and within institutions, enable more part-time learning, and help more people to complete qualifications.
- ◆ Improve the Key Information Set and explore the option of a standardised student contract. We will legislate to reform regulation of the higher education sector, improving student protection.
- ◆ Establish a review of higher education finance within the next Parliament to consider any necessary reforms, in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation (including of low-income groups) and quality. The review will cover undergraduate and postgraduate courses, with an emphasis on support for living costs for students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds.