

Preserving Bursaries and Widening Participation #1: *Why you should sign the '25 Member' Amending Grace*

Transparency

We fully expect that, if the University intends to make up for the cuts to its HEFCE teaching budget, it must indeed charge a significantly higher fee level than it does at present. In order to do this, however, it must clearly explain the financial situation it faces.

The explanation of the financial situation so far provided by the University Council, in its Notice of 23 February 2011, has been entirely inadequate: we have been offered a single graph, without full explanation of the data that underlies it, or the financial context, or information as to the funding streams included (and those chosen to be excluded). Having interrogated the University's assumptions and data ourselves, in comparison with (publicly available) HEFCE allocation data, we simply do not have confidence that the figures provided by the Council represent an adequate or sufficiently detailed analysis of the University's financial outlook for use as the basis for such a significant decision.

It is extremely disappointing that the Regent House has not been afforded opportunity to participate in making this decision, especially since the charging of a very much higher fee has the potential to cause enormous damage to the University's ability to attract the best applicants irrespective of background. There is no longer sufficient time to require an additional Report, Discussion and Grace before confirmation of the Council's intention to submit an access agreement before the deadline for their receipt by the Director of Fair Access to Higher Education. But since the Council has not offered such an opportunity, the University must explain and fully justify the financial basis upon which it has made this decision.

The University has declined to do this: the proposed amending grace requires the Council, albeit retrospectively, to fulfil its obligation to transparency in its decisions.

Preserving bursary levels

The promise of generous maintenance bursaries is one of our most powerful means of convincing students from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome their expectations that Cambridge is overly expensive and exclusive.

This historical legacy of exclusivity has resulted in Cambridge suffering unique difficulties in its attempts at broadening its social intake, in part because prospective applicants do indeed perceive the University to be more expensive to study at than elsewhere in the UK. Given the higher fee level the Council does now plan to charge, if we are to have any hope of continuing to tackle these challenges we simply must not cut this financial support we offer to poorer students.

We fear that a majority of Council members are still inclined to accept in full the recommendation of its Working Group that it could get away with cutting bursaries by more than £2,000.

Cambridge is currently the most generous university in the UK in its provision of maintenance bursaries. Any cut to maintenance bursaries *will become a headline media figure*. **The loss of this claim would be nothing short of a disaster to our Widening Participation efforts and this amending Grace will ensure this does not happen.**