

## **SUARTS HE Funding Toolkit**

Angry about fees? Fed up with being bottom of the pile? Just noticed the interest on your loan? Do something about it!

This toolkit is intended to give you some basics to achieve real change in the area of HE Funding, whether you're an elected representative or an interested student.

### **Introduction**

There are lots of myths around campaigns, and merely the mention of the word usually brings up visions of mass demonstrations, placard waving and petitions. Campaigning can look like this, but fundamentally it's about getting results. The less effort you have to put in to achieve things the better! If something can be achieved with a quiet word to a senior staff member, or careful choice of words at a meeting, there's no need to try and organize a march of thousands – this might even damage your chances!

### **Examples of actions from existing HE Campaigns (courtesy of NUS):**

#### **1) SUARTS' Debt Santa**

Students' Union Santa's collected around 950 festive cards stating students' debt and delivered to the Rector of the University requesting a formal stance on debt.

#### **2) Wall of debt**

The students' union in Lincoln created a 'wall of debt' along Lincoln High Street and were one of the first to receive press coverage on their event. More than 90 comments were posted in response to this article, demonstrating how serious the issue is.

Anglia Ruskin University Students' Union, Cambridge University Students' Union and University of East Anglia Students' Union held not one, but two demonstrations in Cambridge.

#### **3) Ticket to ride**

In the North West, Liverpool Guild of Students, Liverpool John Moores Students' Union and Liverpool Hope University Students' Union joined forces to drive their message. Their campaign bus transported local councillors and students' union representatives to a school

sixth form in the city to discuss the issues facing them in the future. Members of the community were also engaged in the campaign and were asked to send postcards to their local MP.

#### 4) **Soaring debt**

The University of Wolverhampton Students' Union's event saw students writing their debt on a tag and tying it to a helium balloon. The balloons were then released by the University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Caroline Gipps, and members of the University's Board of Governors.

Further north in Leeds, as part of Leeds University Union's World Class Funding Campaign, students marched through the city to Millennium Square, accompanied by a giant globe and helium balloons.

#### 5) **Building bridges**

Meanwhile, in the North East, students from Durham, Northumbria, Teesside and Newcastle universities erected a banner on the Millennium Bridge in Gateshead, spelling out the average student debt.

### **Your options for action: Pick your target...**

#### **...Students**

**Why?** Targeting other students is a good way to raise the issue, build awareness, and get people involved.

**How?** Face-to-face interaction, facebook, petitions, organizing debates/talks. Contact the SU if you'd like a speaker to come in to talk to students.

**Pros** Makes people feel invested, recruits other campaigners, can be lots of fun!

**Cons** Unlikely to achieve much "change" unless followed through with another target.

#### **...FE students/Schools**

**Why?** The students of the future need to know what they could be in for! They are the people who will suffer if we don't stand up and fight now.

**How?** Target individual schools and colleges, run workshops using creative skills to engage pupils in issues(The SU has advice on this), talk with head teachers and senior staff – many don't like the way HE is funded either!

**Pros** Educates the people who will actually be affected by future developments, spreads the word to parents etc.

**Cons** Must be careful not to manipulate/put words in the mouth of pupils.

### ...The wider public

**Why?** The funding, and future of the UK's universities is something which will affect the entire nation. The public need to care about the catastrophe that could be heading our way.

**How?** Exhibitions, stunts, use of the press, going to local community groups and centres.

**Pros** Has potential

**Cons** Labour intensive, must be linked to a constructive call for "change"

### ...The press

**Why?** The media are a great way of contacting the aforementioned groups, and getting your message "out there"

**How?** Write letters to editors, plan a visual stunt and invite press, contact Arts London News ([www.artslondonnews.co.uk](http://www.artslondonnews.co.uk)), contact your local paper.

**Pros** Can reach large amounts of people

**Cons** You must have a story worthy of interest – many of these issues have already been covered in some form, so your stance must have a difference!

### ...Rector/Head of college/university staff

**Why?** Staff decide how the university is run, with senior staff being able to take a stance on issues, and to use the university/college's weight behind an issue.

**How?** Use your course reps, the SU, forums and other meetings to raise your concerns. Use petitions, focus groups, and discussions with students to demonstrate the size of the issue.

**Pros** Talking to the people that can make local change

**Cons** Many of the issues around funding are national – getting staff/the university to stand up and openly take a stance is a challenge.

### ...Your MP/Government

**Why?** Your local MP can raise queries in the House of Commons, will get to vote on policy, and will be well connected to the people making the big decisions on Higher Education.

**How?** Write them a letter, use resources like <http://www.writetothem.com/> to contact your MP stating your case. Give out proforma letters around college, or get people to sit down with you and write them!

**Pros** The best way to work for real change.

**Cons** Can take a lot of time. Best to talk to the SU and/or NUS to inform your stance and call for the same things as other people in the movement.

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