



national union of students

**National Union of Students  
Invitation to Tender: Literature Review of Student Financial Support  
January 2012**

**About the National Union of Students**

The National Union of Students (NUS) is a confederation of local students' unions in colleges, learning providers and universities throughout the United Kingdom. Through them, we represent the interests of over seven million learners and students in further and higher education.

Our mission is to promote, defend and extend the rights of students, and build strong and active students' unions. We work on a diverse range of areas to achieve this mission. One of the highest profile areas we work on is student finance, and the Pound In Your Pocket project is the latest iteration of this work.

**The Pound in Your Pocket Project**

In recent times, much emphasis has been rightly placed on debating the way that universities are funded, with the policy direction changing substantially as a result of the Browne Review and the election of the current coalition government. But this has meant that not enough attention has been paid to issues of student financial support – the pound in students' pockets.

These issues remain hugely complex and diverse, differing according to factors such as institutional mission, mode of study, subject of study, source of funding, student identity, socio-economic and family background, geography, and so on. With the higher education funding debate now moving into a new phase in which monitoring and analysis of the imposed settlement are the priorities, the opportunity has arisen to look properly at student financial support in a proactive and comprehensive way.

We want to better understand the financial pressures facing students today and the impact of the complex range of support measures available to them, finding out if the right people are getting the right help, in the right way. We are gathering evidence using a multi-method research project including a national survey of students, qualitative research delivered by students' unions, an analysis of government spending and a literature review. This will be used to develop proposals for an equitable and sophisticated student support system which meets the support needs of the full diversity of students in further and higher education.

We are seeking to build a case and consensus behind the need for change, to aim for a high degree of cross-party support and improve our chances of protecting student support budgets in future years – and ensure money is spent more effectively.





## **Aims of the review**

We wish to commission a piece of desk-based research which will:

- map the available evidence relating to English student financial support in further and higher education;
- provide a significant contribution to the evidence-base we are developing in order to make policy recommendations in this area; and,
- form part of the final report arising from this project and also stand alone as a publication in its own right.

## **Research questions**

We would like the researcher to use existing evidence to review student financial support policies in England, across further and higher education, not including support for fees.<sup>1</sup> Specifically the review should seek to answer the following questions:

- How closely is each instrument meeting the aims for which it was established?
- What factors frustrate the meeting of those aims?
- How are 'needs' and 'means' currently identified and where are these concepts applied?
- Are some students disadvantaged because of the way that their support is delivered and/or the amount of money they receive?
- Does the student support system facilitate lifelong learning, i.e. people moving between further and higher education, and between different modes of study?

## **Outputs**

This review will consist of an appraisal of the policy drivers behind the student finance system, and will assess its impact and effectiveness. The researcher will be expected to provide a written report in electronic format and a PowerPoint presentation with an indication of emerging findings to be presented at a meeting on Monday, February 20.

We would expect the researcher to draw on a range of resources such as journals and academic articles, think tank publications, Government materials, official statistics, Student Loans Company data etc.

As this will form part of our final report, we would also expect the final paper to contain full references in NUS house style and be written to the quality which would be required for external dissemination.

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<sup>1</sup> Although certain aspects of student support linked to fees, such as the National Scholarship Programme, would count.





## **Application and selection process**

We have a maximum budget of £2500 (including VAT) for this piece of work.

If you are interested in applying, please send us:

- a copy of your CV and an example of a similar piece of work you have authored yourself;
- a covering letter highlighting your research experience and knowledge of further and/or higher education policy;
- an estimate of the amount of time you anticipate spending on this research.

## **Budget and timelines**

- The deadline for applications is Wednesday, February 1 at 9 AM.
- We will let the successful candidate know in the following week.
- We would like the researcher to attend a steering group meeting of the NUS Student Financial Support Commission on Monday, February 20.
- The deadline for completing the work is Monday, March 5 at 9 AM.

For more information about the project, or to apply to undertake the work please contact:

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