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# Hidden Costs

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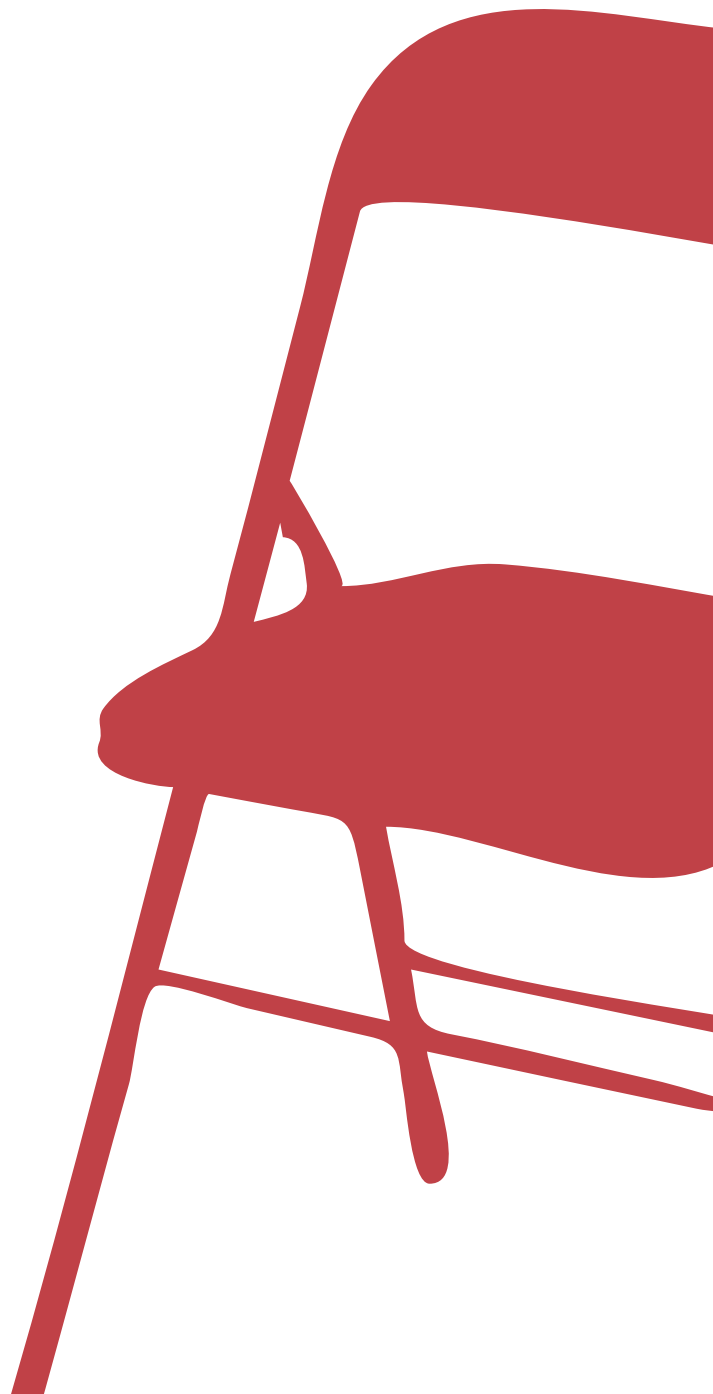
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# Hidden Costs





**It's my pleasure to present to you the toolkit on hidden costs. Whether lab coats, field trips, printing or materials, we know that across the country students are paying sums of money well beyond their tuition fees.**

What's worse, the vast majority of students know nothing of the scale of these additional costs. The effect of this puts students under additional financial pressure, leading to all sorts of issues – from having to work even more hours, sacrificing study time, spiralling into debt and in the worst cases dropping out.

This comes at a time when NUS is asking for the financial support students receive to be urgently revisited. The number of students employed 16 or more hours each week – around 250,000 – has doubled in the past decade as student financial support has been neglected.

## **These hidden costs are yet another tax on the pound in students' pockets.**

At the very least, unexpected, unpublished costs are unfair. In many cases, these costs in and of themselves can surely no longer be justified. Albeit we see the balance of university funding shift from the state to the student, charging students for what is core to our learning would be unacceptable whether we had higher tuition fees or not.

In this kit, we present some initial research on hidden costs, as a precursor to research currently being undertaken by NUS on student financial support, to kick start your campaigning to get more cash in students pockets.

We outline our core principles on hidden costs as well as case studies from other unions, resources, research, campaigning and communications tools which you can use, as well as our on campus Out of Pocket campaign. The latter includes a web widget which tell us nationally and locally how much your students are spending and on what.

I hope that you find this kit useful, and can help get that fairer deal for your members.

Good luck,

**Liam Burns,  
President**

# **HIDDEN COSTS £**

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# What's it all about?

In this toolkit we want to familiarise you with the issues and the arguments which can be used as well as the principles behind them. We want to help you understand what some other unions are doing and get you planning your campaign to get rid of hidden costs on your campus.



## Principles

### No surprises

Easyjet's surprise costs, such as paying for items of luggage on top of your flight ticket, are bad enough when you're going on holiday, but they are certainly not acceptable in an educational context. Our education shouldn't be commodified at all, and hidden costs certainly shouldn't be left to the small print either. We think that financial surprises should be left for lottery winners. Student financial concerns are a real thing and it's unfair to expect students to be able to absorb unexpected costs.

### Cover the costs

It's ridiculous that students pay so much for their

education in tuition fees, and yet we are still being asked to fork out cash for items and services which are key to taking part and succeeding academically. These mandatory costs should be absorbed by the institution as a part of the fees they are already collecting.

### Means-tested support

Not all costs can necessarily be covered by your institution's tuition fee, but we believe that if someone is enrolled on a programme, they should be able to benefit from all the opportunities available regardless of how much disposable cash they have. For high cost activities, whether field trips abroad, or the use of expensive materials in assessments, students should have access to means-tested funds to cover the costs.

## NUS Wales: Provision of information for students on cost of study

In 2010, NUS Wales worked with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to produce guidance to Welsh institutions about cost of study.

The guidance aimed to provide 'timely transparent information on the cost of study to students and prospective students of higher education, including those studying HE in FE.' It was in part motivated by a need to improve retention as it was becoming increasingly clear that such costs were pushing students into financial hardship and causing drop-outs.

Since this guidance has been published HEFCW, unlike HEFCE or the other funding bodies, has made the inclusion of this information mandatory in Key Information Sets (KISs) – a set of key information made available for every course across the UK available from September 2012.

The guidance classified costs into one of three categories:

### Mandatory Costs

These costs arise from studying core/compulsory modules. Information on these costs needs to be available to students at the time of application.

- Fees
- Materials (canvasses, paint, clay, textiles)

- Learning resources
- CRB checks
- Studio/Laboratory/Bench fees

### Necessarily incurred costs

These are not a direct result of undertaking core modules, may not be experienced by all students, and will vary with students' circumstances. They may be beyond the control of the institution. General information needs to be available to students from time of application in case they will be applicable.

- Living costs (food, bills)
- Accommodation
- Car Parking
- Care costs for dependents
- Adjustments for disabled students to address their needs.

### Optional Costs

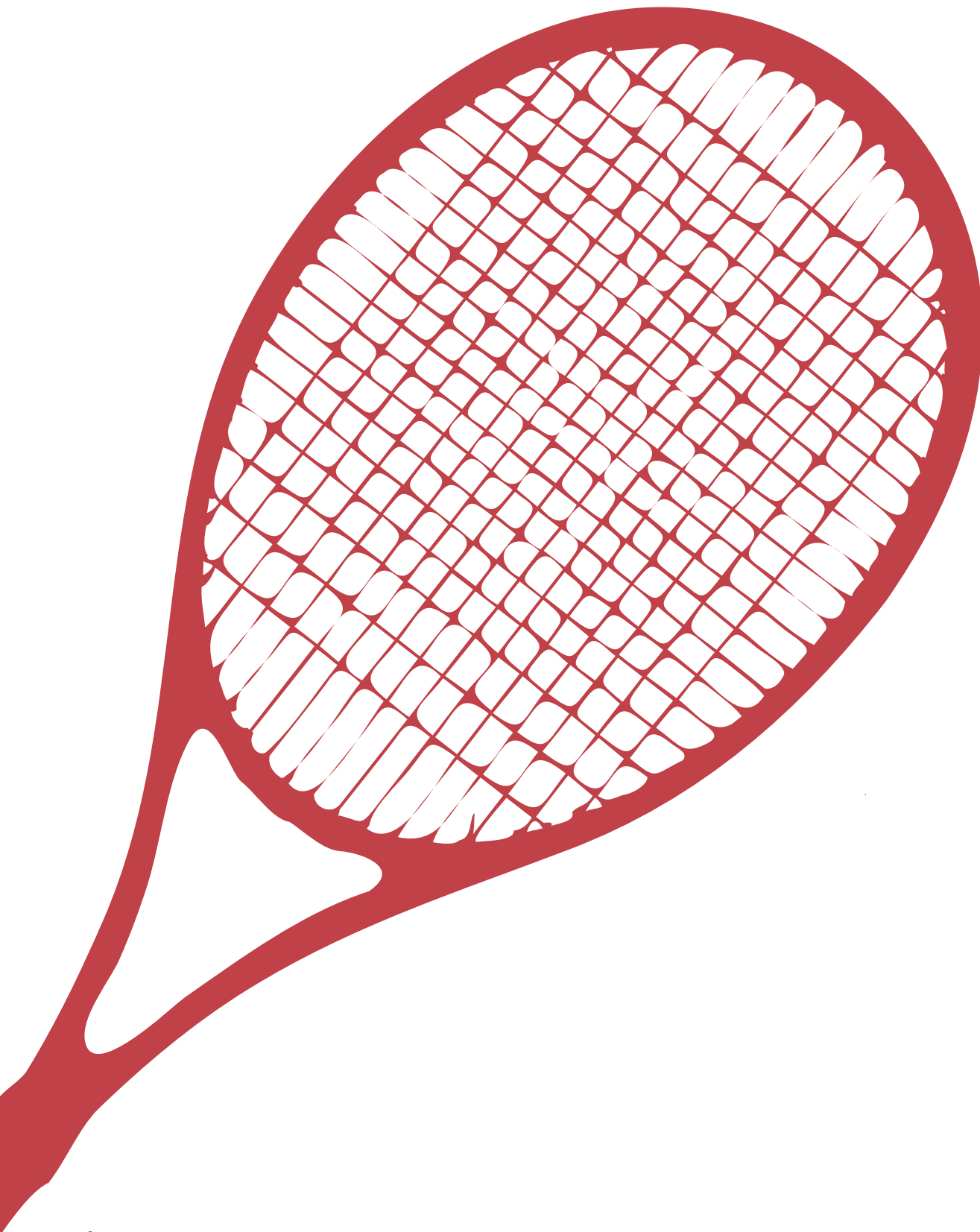
Optional costs are incurred only as a result of student choice of module. Institutions should aim to provide students with an indication of optional costs in order to inform student module choice. Given that prospective students will make institutional choices often on the basis of module variety and opportunity, it would be desirable to publicise such costs at point of application.

HEFCW brought their recommendations on the provision of information to the attention of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and NUS is pursuing this with them.

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# Survey results

A short survey was conducted of students' unions in October 2011. We had responses from 71 unions which gave us an insight into institutional and union policies and 22 unions divulged what costs their institution included in the fee.





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## Institutional discussions

The survey indicates that over three quarters of institutions are discussing hidden costs. Of the unions that said they had developed policy, or had dealt with such costs as a priority, only one reported that their institution was not looking at this issue. This is a strong indicator that where unions have taken a line or expressed an opinion on hidden costs, it has led to engagement with the institution on the matter.

## Demand from students' union members

The main reason that policy was developed by unions on hidden costs was due to feedback from students. What are your course reps saying about costs? What about areas of your membership with whom you don't have good communication?

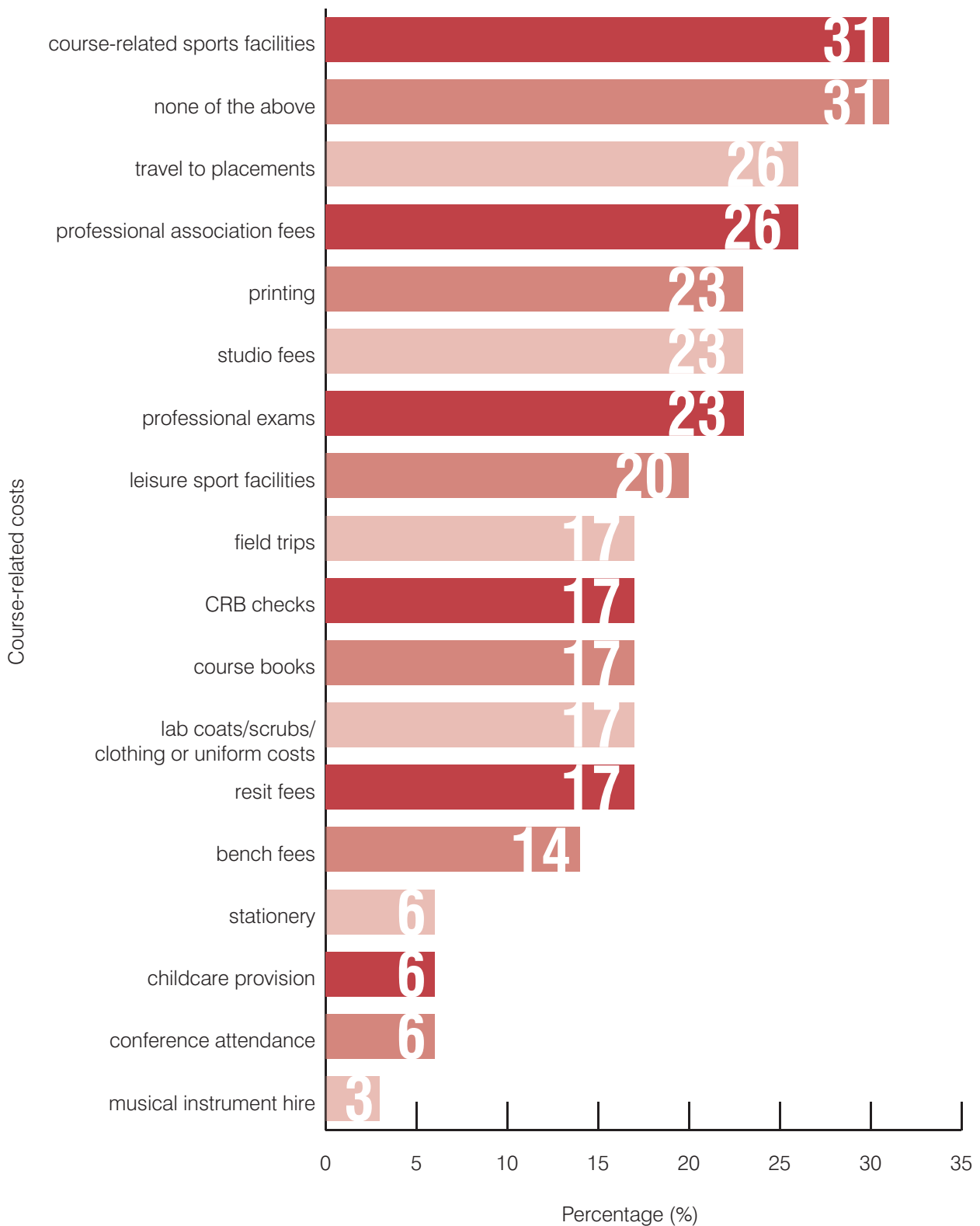
## Costs covered

The majority of costs covered include course-related sports facilities, travel to placements and printing. There were some surprises when it came to what institutions tended to omit, such as resit fees, Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and bench fees.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, over a third of unions responded that their institution covered none of the listed costs. This could be true of your institution or of programmes of which you are unaware.

Overall, the institutions that tended to include more costs were those in the 1994 Group: Bath, Reading, Exeter, Royal Holloway and York, especially when it came to professional association fees.

1 | Which of the following costs are (or will be) included in your institution's tuition fee?



Source: NUS Course Costs survey, October 2011

2 | Table showing items included in institutional fees

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1994 Group	Bath			●					●		●		●					
	Reading								●				●			●	●	
	Royal Holloway	●		●				●	●		●			●				
	Exeter	●											●	●	●	●		
	York	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Guild HE	Worcester					●					●		●				●	
Million Plus	Bath Spa	●	●				●		●		●				●			
	Bucks				●		●		●	●	●		●		●		●	●
	Leeds Met																	●
	UCLAN													●				
Russell Group	Imperial	●												●		●		●
	Manchester								●				●					
	Nottingham										●						●	
Unaffiliated	Brighton				●	●	●				●		●				●	●
	Swansea	●				●									●	●	●	
University Alliance	LJMU			●	●								●	●				
	Northumbria																	
	Hertfordshire	●			●	●							●		●	●		
	Huddersfield																	
	Salford				●	●												
	UWE			●		●												
	Glasgow Cali	●																

Key:

- |                          |                                       |   |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 – printing             | 7 – childcare                         | 13 – leisure sports facilities              |
| 2 – stationery           | 8 – professional association fees     | 14 – course books                           |
| 3 – bench fees           | 9 – conference attendance             | 15 – lab coats, scrubs, clothing or uniform |
| 4 – field trips          | 10 – studio fees                      | 16 – professional exams                     |
| 5 – travel to placements | 11 – musical instrument hire          | 17 – resit fees                             |
| 6 – CRB checks           | 12 – course-related sports facilities |   |

Source: NUS Course Costs survey, October 2011

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# Campaigning for change

In this section we want to give you the tools and advice to take the issues/principles outlined above and turn them into powerful campaigns that will win for your members. Remember that at the end of this report we have included campaign resources and more can be downloaded from NUS Connect.<sup>1</sup>



## We have developed the Out of Pocket campaign as a starter for you:

Every year, students find themselves out of pocket by having to pay for extra resources and activities in order to carry out their studies. These 'hidden costs' are on top of any tuition fees and are often not advertised to students when they apply for a course. This campaign empowers students to lobby their institution to do something about hidden costs by either scrapping the cost completely, securing financial support to help cover these costs or simply ensuring such costs are upfront and transparent before you apply.

## NUS have produced some resources to help you campaign on this issue:

- Receipt slips for students to fill in showing how much they have had to spend on hidden costs. You can collect these completed receipts and send them to your Vice Chancellor or Principal.
- 'Out of Pocket' stickers. Students can attach these to any items they've had to spend their own money on e.g. uniforms, kits, art materials, printed resources etc (though if you're encouraging students to stick these on assessed work, make sure they won't lose marks for it first!)
- Totaliser widget to put on your website. Students can fill out receipts online and you can see how much your students spend on what at the click of a button. You can take these results and present them in a letter to your Vice Chancellor or Principal and we'll collect them nationally to present to sector bodies, MPs and the media.

## These resources will help you get started but you can be as creative as you like. You could:

- Set up stalls with giant piggy banks for students to submit the receipt slips.

- Display a totaliser in your union.
- Arrange Debt Mobs where students all turn up in their lab coats which they've had to pay for, with the total cost of all the coats written on them.
- Show how students' money could be better spent e.g. '£50 for a lab coat could buy a week's worth of food' or '£30 transport costs to placement could pay for more secure accommodation.'
- Price-tag items which have cost students extra to demonstrate the scale of hidden costs on your campuses.
- Provide case studies from specific courses documenting how much a student would have to spend throughout the duration of the course.
- Work with your Student Services and Advice Centre to identify subject areas where hidden costs have forced students to drop out or fail courses.
- Encourage your members to make use of the free text comments in the National Student Survey (NSS) where they have issues with hidden costs.

This is a great opportunity to get students involved in a union campaign. Your students are your greatest asset and if you can inspire them to take action, they in turn will inspire others and not only will you stand a better chance of abolishing hidden costs, you will be developing your membership as activists, able to be the change elsewhere in their lives.

Don't forget to let us know what you're doing so we can share your creative campaigning activity with other unions. **Contact us at [campaigns@nus.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nus.org.uk).**

<sup>1</sup> [www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/fundingourfuture/the-pound-in-your-pocket/hidden-course-costs](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/fundingourfuture/the-pound-in-your-pocket/hidden-course-costs)

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# Planning your campaign



## Analyse the issue

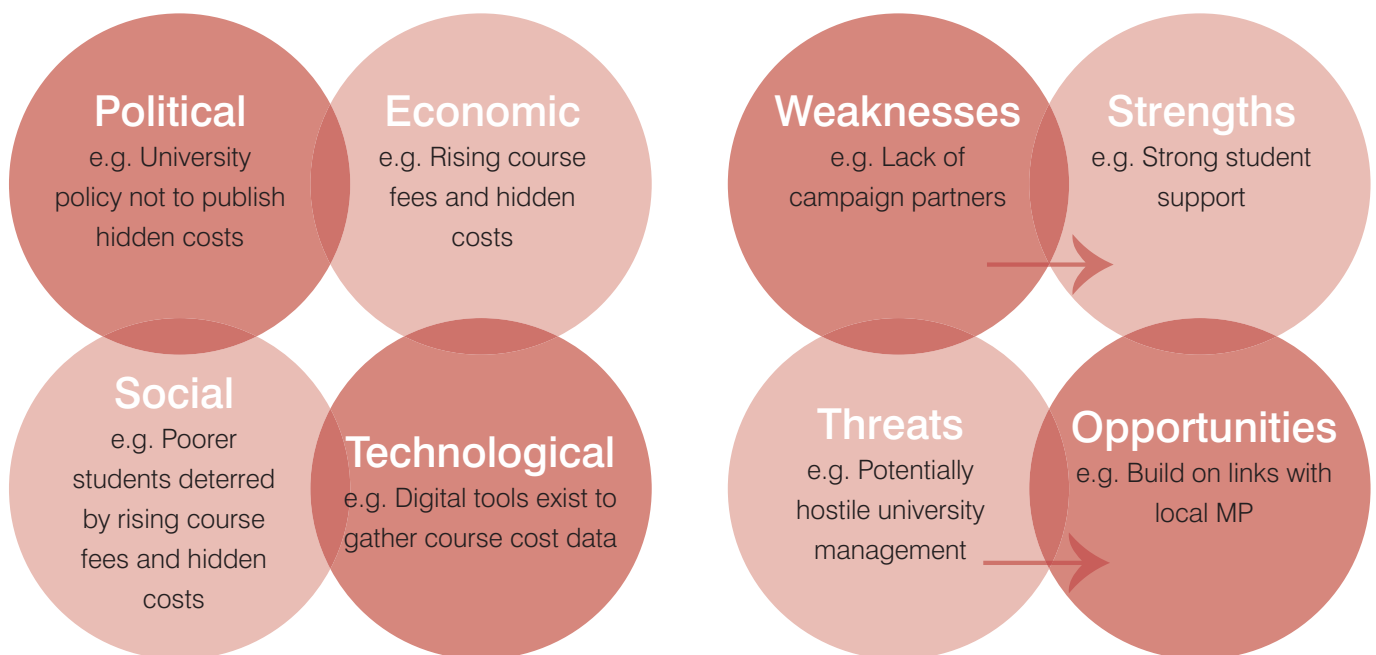
A good first step is to think about your issue (hidden costs) and then what it is you want to campaign for/against.

- A PEST / SWOT analysis is a good way to do this – consider the political, economic, social and technological factors surrounding your issue.
- Then consider your own organisations' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

Can you turn a threat into an opportunity and a weakness into a strength?

Make use of the Out of Pocket totaliser which we have developed for you. This will help you to find out what hidden costs they have to pay. Consider staging focus groups and/or interviews with your members to explore the issue.

### 1 | PEST/SWOT Analysis



## Debate

These are two important questions that you will face when lobbying your institution. Make sure you prepare by discussing these with students and academics as they will help you form your arguments:

### Too much information?

What's the impact of publishing all costs up front? Some have put forward the argument that to publish all costs up front would put people off studying for a degree, or taking up a particular discipline. How would

you campaign to ensure that all subjects are accessible to your members based on their ability?

### Designing out costs

What about costs that students choose to take on, such as spending more on expensive materials? This is especially important when the subject has a culture in which students expect to spend a lot of money on final year shows. Should assessments be designed to mitigate against this? If so, how?

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## Develop a strategy

You should now have the information you need to set your aim and some objectives:

- Be as specific as possible – e.g. ‘students only have to pay the main course fees and as a result have more pounds in their pockets’.
- Consider your campaign rationale – what resources do you have? How realistic is your aim? How will you measure impact?
- After this you can develop a campaign strategy. The impact chain is a useful tool to aid you to do this:

## The impact chain

**Input:** Money for campaign materials, staff time and expertise

**Activities:** Survey of students; letter writing to and meeting with Vice-Chancellor/Principal; meeting with local MP, visual stunts – NUS campaign stickers and hidden cost totaliser; public meeting

**Outputs:** 2000 costs in the Out of Pocket totaliser, 150 letters sent to VP/Principal, two meetings with VP/Principal, letter from MP to VP/Principal, proposal to publish hidden costs submitted to University Council/Principal, 2,000 NUS stickers handed out.

**Outcomes:** Commitment from Vice-Chancellor/Principal to publish hidden costs and explore a means-tested system of financial support for students.

**Impact:** Students’ quality of life is improved – aware of full costs of courses before applying and less constrained by hidden costs while studying.

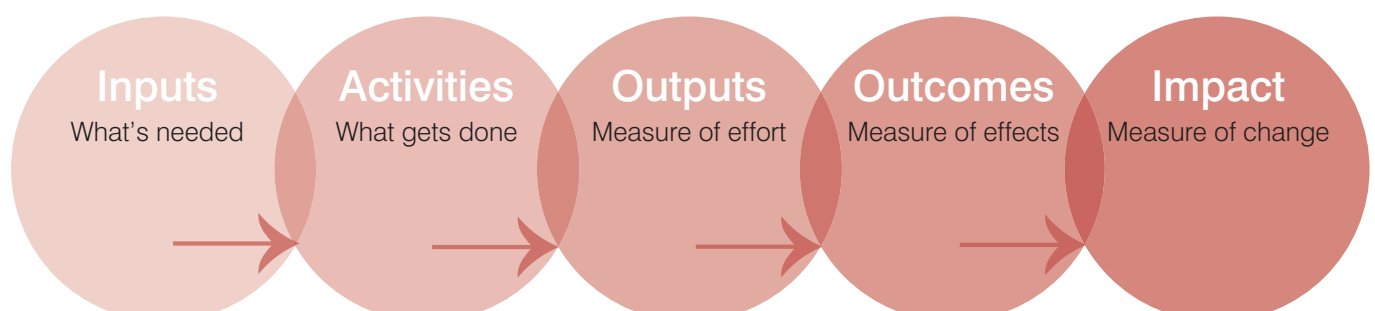
The Impact Chain describes your activities and measures as the campaign progresses, but in terms of planning, the discussions are all the wrong way round – you wouldn’t start talking about what activities you need to do without knowing what you wanted to achieve! The chain, as above, is great for reporting and monitoring, but to plan, you need to work from right to left:

- **With your Impact:** What is the change you want to see (this should be encapsulated in your aim)? E.g. Nursing students are less indebted and more able to pursue their studies.
- **Outcomes** might describe achievements which form this impact E.g. Travel to placements 100% subsidised; marketing for Access to Learning Fund (ALF) advertised in placement providers.
- **the Activities and Outputs might be:** Common Room talks at placement hospitals, resulting in 60% of nursing students listing their travel costs on the Out of Pocket totaliser; discussions with hospital publicity depts. Result in 100% promotion of ALF in common room areas;
- **And so your Inputs would be:** Volunteers to deliver talks, permission from hospitals to visit, support from the nursing school to communicate with student nurses, ALF uptake report from Student Services.

Think about where you want to be, what routes you will take to get there, how you will know you are on track and what you need to get the job done.

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## 2 | The Impact Chain





## Plan the campaign

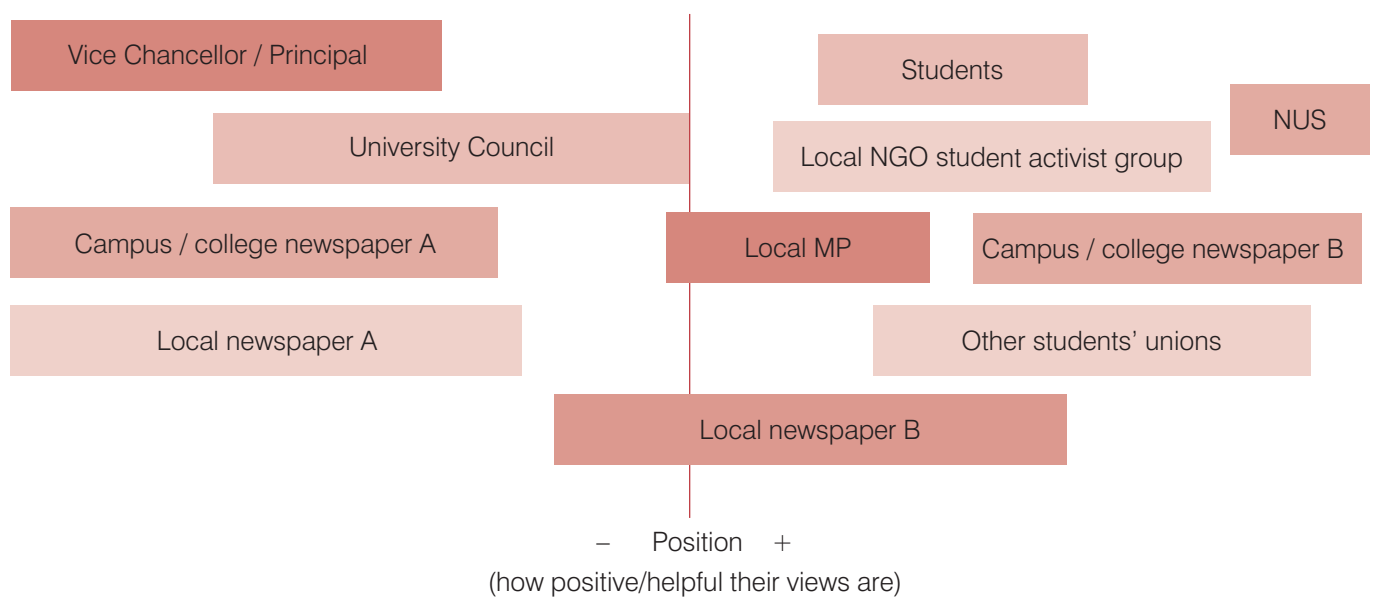
Now you need to look at who to influence and how – map your potential allies and foes, as well as how to best use your resources.

Use this map to plot the level of influence every stakeholder has to help you achieve your campaign

aim, relative to how positive and helpful their views are to your campaign.

Think about how you can work with allies to minimise effort and maximise impact.

### 3 | Plan the Campaign



## Deliver and support

Consider using a range of tactics - a mixture of persuasion and pressure – depending on what is the best way to reach your influencers and achieve your aim.

- See the next section of the toolkit for suggestions of activities and resources to help you.
- If you want to influence the Vice Chancellor or Principal, letter writing by students and dialogue may be key. However, such actions may be more effective if bolstered by public campaigning and evidence.
- Evidence can be collected from the information in the Out of Pocket Totaliser and other activities could include visual stunts (e.g the Out of Pocket stickers), public meetings, support from your local MP or sympathetic articles in local media.

- Involving students is critical – harness their expertise to help you – think about how to achieve maximum impact with minimal effort.

## Take a snapshot – know where you are

An important factor in the Hidden Costs campaign is to be able to demonstrate your impact – as NUS wants to do nationally. Through this campaign, we want to measure how much money we are putting back into students' pockets and how many hidden costs we are able to reveal.

For you to do this, you need to find a way of taking a snapshot of your current students. You could do this by sampling schools which you suggest have high course costs (look at the example from LSU for how to do this);

get a snapshot of the statistics and some case studies from your advice service on how many students and, from where are facing financial problems. Encourage your advisers to explore hidden costs, to see if these lie behind such financial difficulties.

As you use the Out of Pocket totaliser, you will be able to build a picture of the costs your students face; with a list of students and their subject, you will gradually be able to describe how things are now.

NUS will be in touch after your campaign to go through what you have achieved. The same exercise can then be completed by your union next year so a comparison can be drawn showing how much you have won for your members.

## Monitor and evaluate

Measure your impact and learn for the future – from the beginning of your campaign.

- Measure outcomes and impact not just outputs.

The following table can be used to help you in monitoring and evaluation. Choose what targets you need to reach for each output and outcome, what indicator you will use and then how to create the data. Some examples are included.

### 4 | Monitoring and Evaluation table

Outputs	Indicator (if any)	Target	How to create the data
Out of Pocket stickers	Number of stickers	3000	Record numbers given out
Letters to Vice-Chancellor	Number of letters	300	Ask students to use online system
Outcomes	Indicator (if any)	Target	How to create the data
Course costs reduced	Students perceive a drop in hidden costs	Business management absorb core course printing costs	Annual SU survey
Support to pay course costs	Policy Passed at School Deans Committee	Archaeology provide means-tested support for 2nd year field trip	Minutes from Archaeology Deans Committee
Course costs transparent	Council discuss issue/ VP Commitment	Policy passed on what costs should be transparent rather than absorbed	Policy passed

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## Campaigns cycle

It's at this stage that you would re-evaluate – have you achieved all of your objectives? Do you need to re-plan and target your course costs campaign? Look at your previous objectives and analyse the issue. This is how the campaigns cycle works.

While it is important to have a coherent strategy, events rarely follow rational stages.

Expect the unexpected – take advantage of opportunities as they emerge, but do so if they will help you achieve your aim.

**Good luck campaigning!**

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### 5 | Campaigns Cycle



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# Promoting your campaign



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## Lecture shouts

This is often the best way to reach out to students, because it is personal, and because they will be a captive audience! Make sure you arrange the talk beforehand with the relevant staff out of courtesy. Don't speak for any more than two minutes – many students will lose interest after this time, and it isn't really fair to take a big chunk out of someone's lecture. It's often useful to print basic campaign information, such as the website addresses, locations of campaign stalls, on acetate or to put on the OHP above your head while you do the talk, or bring a slide on a USB drive – students can then write down the details – obviously arrange this in advance!

## Social media

It's free and the vast majority of your members will use some form of social media. The biggest draws in the UK are still Facebook and Twitter, but you know your membership best, so you might be looking at LinkedIn or blog platforms like Wordpress depending on who your members are and what they study.

Remember the *social* bit of social media - put some personality in to your messages. People respond to people more than organisations in most cases. Make it relevant to your students – perhaps you have more postgraduates, part-time or mature students; perhaps you have a number of programmes with high course costs like catering, fashion, architecture, fine art, teaching or healthcare. Talk with your membership, not at them.

You can schedule an entire social media campaign by using platforms such as Hootsuite or Tweetdeck. This won't take long at all, but make sure that your campaign team and colleagues will retweet and share your messages, and don't ignore interactions with your fans and followers.

## Engaging student media

This is an issue which all of your members will face to some extent. You could invite student journalists to come and interview you, they could host one of the debates we listed above and perhaps they could also put a link to the Out of Pocket totaliser on their site.

If you are planning an activity as a part of the promotion of the survey, or if you are arranging a stunt with lots of students, you may wish to put out a press release, offering your media groups a photo opportunity.

## Working with course reps and academics

Your course reps will be able to advocate at a local level and you may be surprised how sympathetic academics will be to the issue of costs. The second debate, assessment as a tool to design out costs, is the perfect focus of a course reps committee. Together reps and academics can work out how best to solve the problem of costs incurred through assessments at a local level.

Your role and the role of your other volunteers is to help push the dialogue between students, their reps, academics and the university so that the right problems are solved in the right way at the right level.

This is the year where the spotlight is on the pound in students' pockets, and this kind of activity is a practical and developmental way of improving student engagement and in removing financial barriers for your members.

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# Case studies



<sup>2</sup>LSU's presentation can be downloaded at: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/fundingourfuture/the-pound-in-your-pocket/hidden-course-costs/>

## Liverpool Students' Union recently presented their hidden costs research to the Senior Management Group at LJMU.<sup>2</sup>

### Conducting the research

- Gather different course costs using existing literature from other SUs and NUS.
- Identify a variety of courses that exemplify each of those types of course cost.
- Examine programme/ course handbooks to see what was mentioned about additional course costs (i.e. ones that aren't hidden).
- Interview students on those courses about any other costs that we haven't yet identified, and work out when they found out about the costs, for example before they started the course or when they arrived, finding out how "hidden" the costs are.
- Add together the additional costs to put a rough figure on it.
- Record on camera how this affected each student, to deliver a sense of the impact on the day to day student experience.



### Hints and tips for presenting research to universities:

- Our biggest piece of advice here is to just be as clear as you can about how you generate questions and collect data. Always give numbers up front.

- Talk about sample sizes and methods of data collection. Get in first with that sort of information and spell it out at the beginning.
- Be clear about how you designed the questions - were students asked to select from a list, or did you ask them to list the 3 most important things for example?
- If your material is still at an early stage with only a couple of students consulted, there is nothing wrong with coming in and saying: "This is where we are up to so far."
- We were asked where our list of costs had initially come from. This matters because the origins of the list will give it a different legitimacy depending on who generated it. So if the list came from the Union, it will show the University what the SU sees as extras. What the University sees as extras will be different. So, if you asked students to comment on a university list, the responses should be understood differently. If the students themselves were to generate the list without influence from the Union or the University, then that again would tell us something slightly different. All would be valid - but they are different.
- Don't underestimate how long this research can take and how long it can take to make it meaningful research for university management.

### Update – February 2012

The University have been very receptive to the campaign and called for a complete audit of any extra costs that a student may incur on their course. After initial discussions with LiverpoolSU, the University is now looking in to the possibility of covering all field trips that are integral to learning outcomes of that course, as well as supplying the students with all equipment that they need for their course, as well as any PSRB registration. Talks have been very productive and in future will explore the costs of core text books.

**For more information, contact:**

**Paul Abernethy (Vice President Academic Quality)**  
LSUVPAQ@ljmu.ac.uk or

**Gary Hughes (Policy & Campaigns Manager)**  
g.hughes@ljmu.ac.uk

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# Case studies

**Students<sup>su</sup> Union**  
University of the Arts London  
[www.suarts.org](http://www.suarts.org)





## **In 2010, SU Arts submitted a major piece of work to the University on the impact of additional and hidden costs on their students:**

Additional course costs are costs that students are expected to spend on materials, presentations, facilities hire, printing, events, exhibitions, and trips in order to pass their course.

Hidden course costs occur when students are not warned about these expenses and it comes as a surprise on the first day of their course, and continues to be a surprise throughout their course.

Such is the nature of creative courses that different students use different resources and spend different amounts – but every student does share something – they come to UAL without any firm idea of how much they need to budget for the year ahead.

We know that hidden costs affect those who are already under significant financial constraints, so if the University & College was more proactive – this would have a positive impact on student recruitment and retention.

There are differences in the factors that motivate students who are first and second generation entrants. First generation entrants (usually from lower SEC) are more likely to leave because of reasons relating to a lack of resources, whereas their second generation counterparts tend to leave because of losing interest in their course. Less pronounced but similar differences can be seen between minority ethnic and white students.

We have a commitment from our University that they will publish information, course by course, on additional course costs. They are now going through the process of negotiating the definitions.

## **Recommendations for May 2010**

Where materials fees are charged, 2010 pre-arrival information should include a section on what materials are provided.

- Where materials fees are charged, the 2010/11 course blackboard should include a breakdown of how this money is used.

- Students in 2010 entry should have access to a mini-site which prompts budget planning for their course. This will be based on information from current students.
- SUARTS & Student Services should work with ECCA to ensure the delivery of fundraising training from October 2010 onwards.
- The University should work with business to provide student sponsorship opportunities for degree shows.

## **Update 2012:**

*“The ability of courses to charge compulsory materials fees is coming to an end. The Rector has resolved that charging undergraduate students £9,000 a year alongside compulsory fees isn’t morally justifiable, as if somehow it was at £3,000 per year. They are trying to operate with some wriggle room, ensuring that the practise can remain, but that it needs to be explicitly signed off by students. There are some benefits to students collectively purchasing materials at the start of the course – and we’ll only support it if students know where the money is going, they can see the savings and there is a clear link to improving learning outcomes.*”

*The Institutional Audit in 2012 will be used to shine a light once again on course costs – asking the University to justify and prove that hidden costs don’t have a material impact on progression, retention or academic success. There is a link between attainment and disposable income in art & design courses, and whilst that remains the case, any union with creative courses should think about what they are doing to address this.”*

Ben Westhead – President

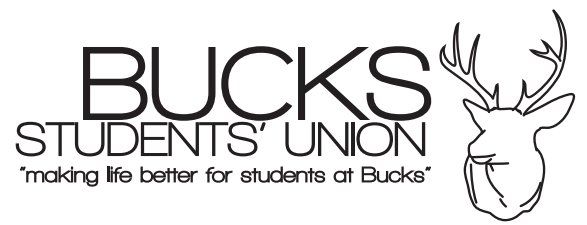
### **For more information, contact:**

**Ben Westhead (President)**  
education@su.arts.ac.uk

**Dave Lewis (Student Engagement Manager)**  
d.lewis@su.arts.ac.uk

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# Case studies



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**Bucks Students' Union included hidden costs in their Education Campaign pack in 2009 as one of the ten discussion points which the union wanted to raise with the university and the membership:**

## **All hidden costs to be calculated and published before the start of the year**

Students are coming to University having to pay large sums of money to join the course of their choice. Many students are not aware that there are costs beyond tuition fees and exactly how much this will be until they are already at university.

The Union believes that Bucks should collect this information from around the institution and publicise it by sending it out with the offer letter that students receive.

Misleading information can also raise student expectations and have a serious impact on student satisfaction. An example of such information is the very public statement in the Sunday Times Good University Guide that no students pay for course materials or field trips when this is simply not the case.

The Union does not feel it necessary to expand our argument on what is essentially a simple yet fundamentally important plank of our campaign. Our prospective students and those we accept onto courses deserve to know the honest truth about the cost of higher education at Bucks.

The outcome was that the institution agreed to place all hidden costs on the course profiles on the UCAS website. Course teams and departments were required to submit this information to Recruitment and Admissions and upload the information alongside the benefits provided by the Big Deal in order to provide a balanced picture.

*"We have actually noted the need to review the accuracy of this information and test it against current student perception. We know anecdotally through open days and feedback to the recruitment team that students appear to like it."*

Ash Coles – President

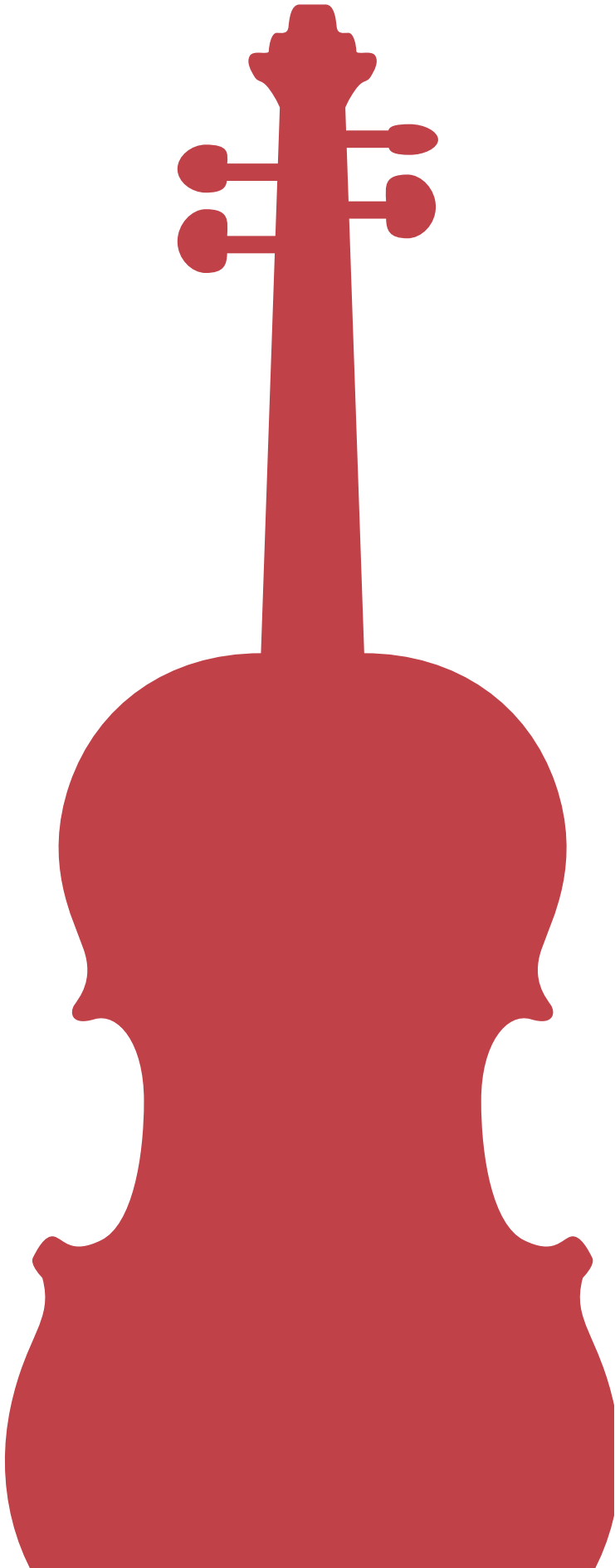
For more information, contact:

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# Model letter to VC/Principal



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Dear .....

Every year, students at ..... University/College find themselves out of pocket by having to pay for extra resources and activities in order to carry out their studies. These 'hidden costs' are on top of any tuition fees and are often not advertised to students when they apply for a course.

Students at ..... University/College think this is unfair and ask you to commit to the following:

### **Advertise all course costs at the point of application**

Students should be told how much it will cost to complete their course before they apply for it. It's unfair to require students to be able to absorb unexpected course costs that they were never warned about.

### **Cover all mandatory costs**

When students are paying so much for their education in tuition fees, it is unreasonable to expect them to also pay for items and services which are essential in order to complete the course. .... University/College should absorb these mandatory costs as a part of the fees you are already collecting. Mandatory costs include uniforms, Criminal Records Bureau checks, Bench fees, transport to placements, catering kits and field trips.

### **Means-tested support for additional costs**

All students should be able to benefit from opportunities available to enhance their studies. For high cost activities – it could be a field trip abroad, or the use of expensive materials in assessments – students should have access to means-tested funds to enable this. Additional costs include field trips, art supplies, non-core text books.

On behalf of the students at ..... I ask you to respond to these concerns and identify ways in which the University/College can eliminate hidden costs.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

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# Model council motion

## – Hidden Costs

### This council notes

1. Students currently pay £3000 per year in tuition fees.
2. From 2012, students will be paying up to £9000 tuition on graduation.
3. Research in one institution has shown a correlation between access to resources and the drop-out rates of first generation students.
4. Students surveyed at **this institution** have collectively spent £\_\_\_\_\_ above their tuition fees on services, resources and materials necessary to take part in their course.
5. The biggest expenditure at **this institution** was on **ITEMS**.
6. At the **COMPARATOR INSTITUTION**, these costs are paid for by the institution.

### This council believes

1. It is unacceptable that students are still being asked to foot the bill for components of their education whilst they are already paying so much to the institution.
2. It is even more unacceptable that such costs are often unmentioned in prospectuses or visits and that students are expected to get on with it with little choice.
3. The added financial pressure which arises from such costs can affect students' performance as they cut corners and work more hours to pay these hidden fees.
4. In the worst cases, students are forced to drop out of their course and in such cases the institution could be described as guilty of being in neglect of students' wellbeing.
5. All costs should be published up front in prospectuses and in handbooks as per the mandatory, necessarily incurred and optional costs model already in use in Wales by HEFCW and NUS Wales and which NUS are lobbying for.

6. Such costs should be reviewed institutionally and at course level to ensure that where possible they are absorbed into the tuition fees.
7. Where large costs exist which cannot be absorbed by the institution, there should either be an equivalent activity at no cost, which does not discriminate against a student's ability to participate or perform; or there should be a means-tested support mechanism to ensure everyone has the opportunity to take part and perform.
8. In some disciplines, it could be possible for a student to spend more money on resources and materials to get a better grade. This is unacceptable.

### This council resolves

1. To deliver a campaign which will abolish hidden costs on campus.
2. To lobby the Vice Chancellor/Principal to commit to a review of all additional costs and to support the following three principles:
  - All costs should be published up front
  - Where possible, such costs should be included in students' tuition fees
  - A support fund should be established for remaining costs, which should also be promoted prior to application.
3. To support course reps to work with their departments in order to deliver these principles and in particular to design assessments which eliminate the risk of additional costs.
4. To lobby this institution to guarantee that students are not able to pay for higher grades by simply investing more in resources and materials.



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**HIDDEN COSTS** 



national union of students