

# RIISING TOGETHER FOR BETTER PAY

HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2023/24



**University of Brighton**

UNISON | Branch Newsletter

May 2024

## Welcome to this month's newsletter!

July's general election should, in theory, have significant implications for the future of the higher education sector. As we've pointed out before, and many news organisations are starting to pick up on, the prospects are not good. The £9,250 fee has remained static for so long that soaring inflation now makes it worth a fraction of its original value, and this fall in real-terms funding for most universities is potentially catastrophic.

Some institutions have temporarily solved their financial problems by recruiting more and more international students, raising fees to astronomical levels, but this could all come crashing down if the "hostile environment" for those accused of being more interested in immigration than education continues. The restrictions over bringing family members here whilst studying has already had a major effect on postgraduate recruitment from outside the UK.

In all likelihood, Tory plans for universities are irrelevant, given the state of the opinion polls and the chances of them getting in again, but if this disaster were to fall upon us all, we'll have to deal with a government determined to clamp down on i.e. close down, all those courses deemed to not be in the best interests of students. That means all those not generally studied by the rich to go on and "succeed" i.e. make loads of money providing such useful pursuits as stockbrokers or entrepreneurs. A Tory victory could mean a significant drop in the number of students across the sector and the very real likelihood of the University of Brighton closing, given that so many Tory MPs have always had it in for institutions such as ours.

But what would a Labour victory mean? So far, Labour MPs have been very careful not to promise anything. Starmer initially promised an end to tuition fees, alongside other progressive policies, but then ditched them all in a swing to the right, and now justifies the lack of any real commitment to universities (or anything) on the nation not being able to afford it. If Labour win power and continue to emphasise the "Change" motto with no real policy initiatives, then one guaranteed change will be the financial viability of universities getting worse.

The reality is that there's a very real need for all public services to be properly funded, and funded to make up for at least a decade of decline...



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Millions of people are crying out for a chance to get rid of the Tories and vote in a Labour government that will change things for the better and switch resources away from the rich and powerful, towards working people.

Unfortunately, a lack of any clear plan to do this suggests that a future Labour government will not solve any of the problems faced by working people.



Bridget Phillipson, shadow Education Minister - what's the plan?

There's been nothing about solving the financial issues of universities, never mind abolishing tuition fees, which was demonstratively popular amongst voters in 2017.

Bridget Phillipson, interviewed by UNISON's magazine, ignored questions of funding for teachers' and education workers' pay, and no Labour MP is saying what their party would do to bring the pay and wellbeing of workers back to where it should be. Instead, "fiscal responsibility" comes first - code for making sure nobody touches the wealth of the already wealthy, so that they can grace us with jobs and homes, but only if they get a significant return on their investment.

Of course UNISON members overwhelmingly want to see a Labour government, but we want one that supports UNISON's policies - proper funding for public services, and supporting those who provide them. Without a commitment to this, which would need to involve taking wealth away from the rich, there's a real danger that members won't vote, but more to the point, UNISON members will need to fight a future Labour government to achieve what we want. The likelihood of the latter scenario seems much more to be the case.



Matt Western, Shadow Universities Minister - on a UCU picket line - will your government support workers?

*Ivan Bonsell (personal capacity)*

### Are you in our WhatsApp Community?

**Our branch has a group for messages to members. Ideally, we want all members to join it so that we can send out urgent messages when we need to.**

**If you'd like to join, just email your name and phone number and we'll add you to it.**



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