

Dear Minister,



I am writing to you on behalf of students across Britain regarding the Cost-of-Living Crisis and the detrimental effect it is having on them. As elected sabbatical officers, we are deeply concerned regarding the little action being taken to support students during this crisis. As the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Skills, Further and Higher Education) you can help alleviate our concerns and put plans and actions into place to help students survive. We need you on board now more than ever.

This crisis is massively affecting students, who often live away from home and rely on funding from the Student Loan Company (SLC) and/or part-time jobs to get them by. With rising inflation now hitting 10.1% (ONS) and projected to hit 18.6% (BBC) by January 2023, action must be taken now to ensure students can not only survive but live. 75% of students are worried about their finances and 42% of students say the money they receive from the SLC is enough, on average students say they would need an additional £395 extra a month to feel confident they can complete their degree. We urge the government to review the student maintenance loan system as the eligibility threshold has been frozen since 2008, meaning middle- and working-class families from a low earning background are worse off in real terms. UKRI announced that the stipend it offers PhD students would increase by 10% in October. We need to see funding for all students following suit including maintenance loans for undergraduates, postgraduates and college students. The maintenance loan levels have not increased with inflation levels; the thresholds must increase to allow for students to not only survive but thrive within their studies. Energy Bills are set to hit an all-time high of £3,500 a year for the average household which will push 2/3 into fuel poverty by January.

Students are being left out of the picture of concern and accommodation prices have increased by 61% in the last decade alone (Unipol). The effects of this are already being seen across the student population, NUS UK reported that 52% of students are spending less on food and 42% are spending less on heating. Due to the rising cost of living and inflation 1 in 3 students are left with £50 or less each month after paying their rent and bills. Prices in shops rose by 5.1% and fresh food prices rose by 10.5%, adding to the pressure on students who are already struggling to cope with their rent and energy bills (British Retail Consortium).

Existing support packages, such as the £650 Cost of Living Payment, excludes students, meaning struggling students must turn to alternative means. 33% of students are using credit cards, 29% have taken loans from family, 24% are using buy now pay later schemes and 12% have taken out bank loans. Students' Unions across the country are calling for a raise in student finance packages and a tailored cost of living package for students to help them survive this crisis.

Students are being let down with a lack of information available and no word from the current government. We plead with you to utilize your connections with the current government and future Prime Minister to aid students and not let them fall through the cracks, and ask that you **open communication with local and national elected student representatives to lay out a Cost of Living Crisis Plan for students.**

We ask that:

- The government releases a tailored cost of living plan to students, which lays out the support that will be given, engages with the available research and data on

students' experiences of the cost-of-living crisis, and meets with students' union officers, both local and national.

- The government reviews current maintenance loan thresholds and raises thresholds more accurately in line with inflation rates to allow students to continue their studies.
- Create a tailored rent and energy package for students to allow priority and focus to be on their studies and alleviate strain and struggle.
- Support local authorities to offer free transport to students, to ensure we can get to campuses this Winter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erin Meharry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erin Meharry
President of Liverpool Hope SU
SU Lead on Cost of Living