

## **NO TO RENT HIKES**

**Proposer: Thai Braddick (Non-Portfolio Officer)**

**Seconders: Sophie Atherton (Campaigns and Democracy Officer)**

Summary: This is a motion to commit the Students' Union and the Student Officer Committee (SOC) to resist any future rent increases for campus accommodation. It argues that a rent hike would endanger disabled, estranged, postgraduate, international students and students from widening participation backgrounds who would be particularly affected by price hikes. It notes that the Students' Union has standing policy to campaign for "secure quality on and off campus accommodation at a reasonable price".<sup>1</sup> This motion emphasises this and commits us further to campaigning for fair accommodation prices.

### Union Notes:

1. The cost of living for students is constantly increasing, as recognised by the Union priority campaigns over the past few years.
2. The Union has put into action multiple policies to help students get by, such as the Foodbank, attempting to cut prices in union outlets and clamping down on hidden course costs.
3. One of the biggest, if not *the* biggest, expenditure for students is accommodation. UNIPOL found that the average accommodation in 2018/2019 took up 73% of the maximum student finance loan which is up from 58% in 2012/13.<sup>2</sup>
4. Research at NUS has found that there is an average £8,000 shortfall between living costs and income from loans and grants for students.<sup>3</sup>
5. The Welfare, Community, and Diversity Officer and Campaigns and Democracy Officer have engaged in rent setting negotiations since the beginning of their elected term.
6. UEASU recognises the importance of the state of accommodation addressed in motion 1982 - *A Housing Policy that delivers for UEA Students*. This motion commits to "Campaign to secure quality on and off campus accommodation at a reasonable price".

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<sup>1</sup> UEASU Motion 1982 - *A Housing Policy that delivers for UEA Students*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unipol.org.uk/acs2018.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/housing-is-in-crisis-it-s-time-for-rent-strikes>

7. The University has recently raised rent prices, and will continue to do so in future if not held accountable.

Union Believes:

1. There is no justifiable reason for the university to:
  - i. Make grotesque profits out of students through accommodation.
  - ii. Build more high cost accommodation without increasing the provision for low-cost accommodation
2. Not enough has been done to ensure that students from widening participation backgrounds are supported financially. <sup>4</sup> Poor and working-class people are being systematically discouraged from entering Higher Education through mounting pressures on finances from multiple sources.
3. Both UEASU and University have a responsibility to do all in their power to attempt to alleviate the financial burden experienced by students.
4. During the academic year 2018/19, the university has been unresponsive to 'conventional' and 'diplomatic' attempts to encourage them to cut costs.
5. An increase in prices forces many students to either push themselves further into debt or attempting to work even more hours, these both cause excessive stress and negatively affect student mental health, this is evidenced by a NUS study that found:
  - i. -36% worrying about their finances so much it is affecting their mental health. <sup>5</sup>
  - ii. -64% of students worry about their finances all the time or very often. <sup>6</sup>
6. It is one of the most basic duties of an SU to attempt to defend students' interests. This means Students' Unions must oppose Universities when they behave as if students are merely cash cows.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.economist.com/britain/2002/11/14/the-ruin-of-britains-universities>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.futurefinance.com/uk/blog/nus-insight-over-a-third-of-students-say-financial-woes-affecting-mental-health/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.futurefinance.com/uk/blog/nus-insight-over-a-third-of-students-say-financial-woes-affecting-mental-health/>

7. That when seeking to implement change, UEASU should employ a diverse array of tactics and should seek to lobby and campaign in tandem rather than choosing one or the other.

Union Resolves:

1. That UEASU must oppose these rent hikes.
2. To take all necessary action to try to prevent rent increases going forward.
3. To continue to demand that the university put their students before their profits and to specifically and clearly mandate all five sabbatical officers that they must oppose this and future rent hikes.
4. To implore the university to meet the 25% affordability factor set out by NUS in the UNIPOL survey.<sup>7</sup>
5. To mandate the relevant full-time officers to report on the details of rent setting meetings to Union Council and Student Officer Committee.
6. To mandate the Campaigns and Democracy Officer to continue campaigning to oppose rent hikes and raise awareness of costs on campus this year and next.
7. This campaigning should follow on from the launch of 'Your Money Counts' in Autumn 2018 to inform students of how much money the university makes from accommodation and give them some action they can take to help oppose the rent hikes. This campaign should be inclusive and accessible to a broad array of students.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unipol.org.uk/acs2018.aspx>