

F15 Higher Education Fees for Part-Time Students
Watford

(Motion Carried with no amendments.)

Mover: Cllr Belinda Brooks Gordon

Summation: Baroness Brinton

Conference notes that:

- i) 40% of present undergraduates are part-time students and this may well increase with the introduction of the new student funding scheme from 2012.
- ii) Part-time students are more likely to come from the most non-traditional and hard-to-reach groups and are vital to achieving the Government's aim of widening participation at our universities.
- iii) Most part-time students study at their local university or further education college while living at home, and many continue working part-time (often on low incomes) during their courses.

Conference welcomes the Coalition Government's proposals to extend the system of loans and financial support to part-time Higher Education students from 2012, recognising that:

- a) The previous Labour system discriminated against those who choose (through necessity or work or family commitments) to study part-time, having forced them to pay their fees up front.
- b) Under the new Government proposals, from 2012 part-time students will have equality with full-time students for financial support for fees for the first time.

Conference notes the principle in the Coalition Government's higher education funding proposals that courses are free at the point of study, and that students are not expected to start to make contributions to re-pay their student debt until they finish their course.

However, conference further notes with concern that:

1. The regulations propose that part-time students must start to repay their student debt three and a half years after the start of their course, when no part-time degree student will have completed their studies. This means that part-time students would be paying back their loan before they have finished studying.
2. By contrast, all full-time students on extended four year degrees will only have to repay after four and a half years.

Conference therefore calls on the Government to review these proposals so that no part-time student is treated less fairly than a full-time student.