

4.17 Deputy R.J. Rondel of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the U.K. universities which have agreed to charge 'local' fees:

Would the Minister please inform the Assembly which U.K. universities have agreed to charge local fees and which others he anticipates could be added to the list?"

The Deputy of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

In previous years the Islands have negotiated a single scale of fees to be applied to all universities throughout the U.K. This year we are required to negotiate an appropriate tuition fee for Channel Islands students with each university individually, and each university is free to set its own fees in accordance with its costs and its perceptions of its status and of what it feels the market will stand. However the U.K. Government has capped rates for U.K. domestic students, but universities can charge students less if they wish. My department took a proactive approach and wrote to all universities emphasising the similarities between our students and those of the United Kingdom and requesting them to tell us if they did not intend to charge us at the same rate as U.K. students, in other words the domestic rate. The letter from us included a deadline of 19th November, after which date we would assume that we would be charged at the U.K. domestic rate. A small number of universities have indicated that they intend to charge our students in excess of the U.K. domestic rate and the reason for the delay in publishing this list is so that (a) we can try to dissuade them and (b) in case other universities intending charging the domestic rate and seeing others intending to charge more, should decide to change their minds in hindsight. However, I do appreciate that parents and students need to have this information soon so that they can jointly decide which course and university to choose, and that cost will be a major consideration for many families. I can confirm therefore that a list of universities charging in excess of the U.K. domestic rate for courses and associated costs for courses will be published on the States website by 20th December, and the list will be updated as more information becomes available. I can assure Members, parents and students that my department will continue to work with the institutions on this list to try to reduce their costs in line with U.K. students.

Deputy R.J. Rondel:

I would just like to thank the Minister for his open and honest answer and understand the sensitivity of the negotiations. I look forward to hearing hopefully a positive outcome on 20th December so that many parents' concerns are put to rest.

4.17.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Would the Minister not agree that while cost is important he should perhaps be looking at universities in terms of the quality of their academic courses offered rather than purely looking at cost?

Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Universities are now in a free market. This means that if they feel they can charge more because they have a higher quality course then indeed they are entitled to do so. It is up to students and parents, as well as the department with our current principles, to make a call on which university they wish to send their child to. I should not perhaps call them children after all they will be 18 years old, so which university to send their "young adult" to.

4.17.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Would the Minister not consider that perhaps we should be keeping in mind that our better qualified academic students that are high flyers, should perhaps be getting more support than the run of the mill or perhaps people who really should consider other vocational courses, rather than university?

The Deputy of St. John:

Our current system takes account of so-called high flyers going to more expensive universities. It is catered within the current system. With regards to whether students should be looking at vocational or other kinds of further education, I do agree with the Senator and that there should be perhaps a little bit more focus within the careers advice within our secondary schools to prepare young adults for the world of work where appropriate.