

18th September 2019.

Dear Panel,

Regarding funding of Higher Education and your review. The figures provided in the government plan and annexe give no details as to what this covers. Though the panel's hearing with the Education minister on 13th September did mention that the 6m was made up of the £3.5m (the removal of HCA) and 2.5 m was the additional funding required as in P33/2018.

How have they arrived at the number of students to calculate any future funding? What analysis was undertaken when and by whom? How frequently is this updated.

Have they factored in different course costs and what balance have they given to these in their forecasted increases?

For instance from an FOI published in May is used then it would seem the more on island students we have the greater the cost.

Why that should be the case is curious, but we have to accept what information is given in an FOI is correct have they used that to determine costs?

How have they arrived at the increase each year?

Are the costs including those studying via other government schemes (Nursing) or is that under the Health budget?

What courses and bursaries (the postgraduate bursary, the undergraduate funding of professional courses, disabled student allowances, vacation and field study allowances, Distance learning) make up the numbers in their budget?

The numbers of students in Vets, Medical and Dentistry courses and at what cost, why do some of these courses have fees covered above the normal £9250, not all are on the critical skills list.

Some STEM degree courses charge higher fees (often £1500 per year more) at some institutions which begs the question if they are degree courses aligned to critical skills should their funding be increased.

What provision in the plan has there been to include RPI increases?

What provision in the plan is there for changes that may occur in the U.K. to increase fees charged to our students? We noted from the hearing of the 13th September mention was made of discussions with the U.K. however even if the U.K. was to lower fees for U.K. students there is nothing that says they should for our students.

Does any of the increase in funding go to Digital Jersey for providing level 6 degree courses? We note mention of part of UCJ IT courses are to be taught there.

In 2006 it cost £9,988,880 to fund Higher Education (Figs from States Accounts) . In 2017 the cost was £8,088,508. In 2018 when the scheme was updated the cost was £12,775,996. (Figs from recent FOI) There had been underspends in the grant budget of C.£1.2m for roughly 10 years, as fewer people each year after RPI qualified for a grant, or received less.

The cost of on island student funding has almost doubled 2018 from 2017.

However these figures do not take into account the removal of the Higher Child Allowance of £3.5m (from States proposal P.33/2018) so need to be removed from the £12.7m as that is now sitting in the Treasury accounts.?

We had more students in Higher Education in 2006 than we do now. Jersey lags behind most countries in the number of students in Higher Education. What should also be noted is that those in Higher Education has been rising elsewhere like the U.K., (Scotland does not charge fees to its students at all, Wales has another system again, and many of the EU countries do not charge either).

In Jersey our numbers have declined and we also lag badly behind in other areas like postgraduate funding, which has remained exactly the same in numbers of bursaries and also the amount awarded since 2000. Elsewhere there are student loans available, sadly our students are unable to access these.

The number of students in HE in 2006 was 1578 by 2018 it was 1133.

If we take the 2006 cost and apply Jersey RPI Dec 2005 the amount today to Dec 2018 it would be £14,244,305.30 if it had been kept up to date in just RPI terms.

The number of students is not taking into account the large increases in our population during this period. How many more students in percentage terms are in HE now compared with 2006 and what would those numbers be if we adjust for the rises elsewhere of students entering HE for the first time?

The cost of fees has trebled since 2006, and the cost of accommodation for students has outstripped RPI in the U.K. for several years.

It would seem from listening to a webcast a few months ago that they (Education) were unsure of many details of the funding, and how the scheme would work, and for how long, which is surprising as two States members, one either side were ministers last year when it was voted on unanimously and the Officer there was the same one that worked out all the numbers for the new scheme.

It seems from the recent hearing that they now have a better understanding.

The current scheme was not put forward by the Education minister of the day, but by the Council of Ministers.

We are in need of Skills in our island, we are importing them at an alarming rate, needing to provide key worker accommodation for critical workers etc to attract and retain them. The children who were 5/6 years old in 2006 will be the ones who are entering HE this September. Perhaps if our Higher Education Funding problems had been addressed years earlier, we may have by now had more of our locals in areas like Teaching and (Social work, Psychology, Social Science these are listed as one group in an FOI stats).

Just looking at the numbers in those areas in recent years Teaching in 2006, had 89 students, in Social work 127, but by 2015 Teaching had dropped to 55 and Social work etc. was 63.

It is regrettable of course that it took our government so long to update the old scheme and disadvantage many people from access to Higher Education at all with their inaction, and to those parents who spent life savings, pensions, sold homes etc (which is well documented) who were very unfortunate not to have had this scheme in place in time for them, many of them are members of our group and made a great effort campaigning over the four years to get this funding updated.

If any scheme is not kept in line with RPI it will become a problem, this current new scheme has not had any changes this year to reflect RPI. So by the time the new scheme comes into action in 2021 it this scheme is already three years out of date if it is not updated for next September.

If it is to be kept inline with RPI is this included in the 6m?

Recently we noted a group of campaigning independent students who were in receipt of Income Support raising the issue that Income support was not paid if a student didn't not access certain courses, 'critical worker' courses.

It was said by the Assistant minister that they could access online courses as they had not managed to be selected on to the Social Work degree course offered locally. However, for low income students the OU online style courses are paid at 80% of the cost. They still need to fund the additional 20%. Maintenance is not paid for these courses. The OU charges higher rates for Jersey students. Has this been challenged by the Education department?

It seems nonsensical to support students through an Access course whilst paying them income support, as happened to these students, when an Access course is designed to access any course not just a Social Work course or any critical worker course. You have to question by creating a critical worker status does access to other courses now mean an Access course is redundant except for those who can afford to study ?

Despite requesting, 'Ask us once' does not appear to be working very well, no one has managed to provide for us where in the Income support regulations it can be found that only critical skills courses can be counted as 'work' or where the various age groups that are in the policy guidelines can be found in regulations.

We can only find the policy guidelines which are not Statements of Law, and that has been the only information provided by the Social Security.

As a group our focus has always been on funding of Higher Education, however, we have also wanted access to Higher Education to be available and fair for all, so we have taken note of the effects of Income Support on access.

Where has the governments strategy to life long learning disappeared to in these cases? Is it now only for those in our society who can afford to study, and for those who wish to study a very limited option of courses?

Do the local college when accepting students who receive Income Support clearly explain the complications and restrictions on what limited courses are available?

On the 10th September Deputy J Maçon Assistant minister at both Social Security and Education responsible for Skills Jersey and Higher Education said in response to an oral question that an analysis and numbers had not been provided to Deputy G. Southern because there were no two year degrees offered in Jersey. This is factually, absolutely incorrect. There are, and the Deputy has promoted them on many occasions too! Further, these two year Foundation Degrees can be topped up to a full Honours degree and are promoted as such in literature and prospectuses produce by Highlands college (UCJ). Upon completion the student could have the same qualification as critical worker defined courses.

There are also condensed three year degree courses taught over two years.

It is troubling if analysis isn't done, or if it is done if the level of it is so poor in answers given in our States Assembly, that you then question the reliability of the (very limited information on figures given) numbers and information provided in the government plan.

There had been no information given on the status of the report on the Post 16 review until the hearing in the 13th September.

Apparently it is soon.

Though none of any of the work that had been done on this report or what changes will be made, is mentioned in the government plan, and the very limited numbers provided in the annexe.

We can only guess this is because the report has not been published.

So how do you arrive at what the costs will be for the next four years? How can you possibly scrutinise it without knowing what the whole plan is?

Human Rights is an area our Children's Commissioner is focusing on, it should be noted that not all students who access Higher Education are over 18 and so do come under her powers.

Also to be noted is that there will be parents who wish to access Higher Education, however by placing barriers to access this means they are unable to access better paid work.

Education benefits not only them, but us all if they are then out of need of income support and become taxpayers, it also sets a good example of why education is important to their children too.

Has any work been done on how much this could save if we had more people in Education and off Income Support. If it has been, is it included in the figures provided in the government plan?

We have said in the past and mention it again now that the Human Rights aspect checked by law officers of any scheme should also be looked at on the impact in other legislation, for example Income Support, and Critical Worker status where that is used in relation to Higher Education funding, but also when any amendments are made by order. Seemingly orders are not checked by law officers for compliance.

Human Rights (Jersey) Law 2000.

*Article 2
Right to education*

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions

16 Statements of compatibility

- (1) A Minister who lodges *au Greffe* a *projet de loi* must, before the second reading of the *projet* –
 - (a) make a statement to the effect that in the Minister's view the provisions of the *projet* are compatible with the Convention rights (a "statement of compatibility"); or
 - (b) make a statement to the effect that although the Minister is unable to make a statement of compatibility, he or she nevertheless wishes the States to proceed with the *projet*.
- (2) The statement referred to in paragraph (1) must be in writing and be published in such manner as the Minister making it considers appropriate.

As a group we have always campaigned on a basis of 'fair and equal access to Higher Education for all who have the ability and desire', this reflects what is in Human Rights law.

It is a concern if the use of Critical Worker Status increases and is to be used as a basis on who can access Higher Education in the future and on what courses and on what level of Education.

This critical worker group will have access to housing on very beneficial terms.

From the hearing on the 13th September it appears some students who have a first degree already can be funded again for another degree if it is say Nursing.

Yet we have another group of students who are restricted by access to a course by personal family circumstances who can't access a course in the U.K., and locally not at all, as another department places a restriction on that, and who do not have a first degree.

(UCJ promotes heavily that their courses mean those not able to leave the island can study and that it is cheaper etc.)

This hardly reflects the government strategy of lifelong learning, and or fair access.

The previous council of minister had looked at restricting access as a means to reduce costs and decided that it didn't fit with that strategy and that it would make it overly complicated, and expensive to operate.

The more criteria that is placed on access and who can access education the more issues there are likely to be, and the less likely it complies with Human Rights legislation.

<https://en.unesco.org/news/what-you-need-know-about-right-education>

https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CESCR_General_Comment_13_en.pdf

Student Loan Support Group Jersey.