

POLICY PROPOSAL



TITLE: CUT THE RENT CAMPAIGN

PROPOSED BY: CLEMENTINE BOUCHER

SECONDED BY: CHLOE SMIDT-NIELSEN

The policy proposal needs to be put forward by two people who have to be registered students at Bath

INTRODUCTION

Considering that:

1. The cost of student accommodation provided by the University of Bath – and universities around the country – has risen dramatically in the past decade, along with tuition fees, cost of transport, and the cost other basics supplies for students.
2. The government scrapped maintenance grants for students last year and rent takes up the majority of our maintenance loans.
3. The vast majority of students are being pushed into debt, and higher education is being made less accessible for the poorest people in society.
4. As public funding of universities has been cut, university managers have sought to raise revenue from student housing by a) increasing our rent even more; b) building only more unaffordable 'luxury' accommodation instead of refurbishing accommodations that need it the most; c) dramatically raising student numbers, leading to overcrowding and to the situation we have seen in recent years when students have been made homeless for lack of accommodation; and d) leasing out university land to private companies, such as the Unite Group, who on average charge 60% more than public accommodation providers.
5. These 'solutions' most likely to be adopted by our university are all things that will be extremely detrimental to student welfare and well-being. A 2016 NUS study showed that student mental health issues caused by financial problems are exponentially on the rise since 2012, at a time when mental health services aren't being properly funded.

REASON FOR CHANGE

Set out the principles behind your approach to the situation and what you think should change and why.

1. The increase in our rent and resulting unaffordability of living for students are caused primarily by cuts to public funding to our university. However, senior management have not consistently opposed these cuts and the privatisation agenda they are a part of, and they have prioritised luxury accommodation and increased revenues over affordable student housing. Therefore, it's up to us students and our SU to take a stand for affordable living, and to 'Cut the Rent'.

2. 'Cut the Rent' Campaigns that have taken place in UCL and Goldsmiths universities were extremely successful and led to a million pounds worth of compensations being given back to students, and the rent actually being cut in one of the most expensive cities in the UK (although Bath is 5th this year).

3. The SU has already pledged to start a Housing campaign but not much has been achieved this year unfortunately. Housing is an issue that affects all students and should be put at the top of the list of priorities for SU Officers. The SU campaign failed to take off in part because of a lack of student involvement. A 'Cut the Rent' campaign like the ones seen in UCL and Goldsmiths, where students were more involved, would likely be much more successful.

THE PROPOSAL

This section should set out succinctly, clearly but comprehensively the position which it is proposed the Students' Union should adopt and any actions which the SU should be required to undertake.

1. The SU should release a public statement linking together the rise in rent, private accommodation, student homelessness, lower quality accommodation with the cuts to funding in our universities and the wider Higher Education reforms geared towards the privatisation of our universities. The statement should include a clear opposition/ denunciation of these changes from the part of the SU.

nb: this policy concerns student accommodation provided by the University of Bath only, not wider private student renting.

2. The SU should pledge to make reducing rent prices and fighting for better quality and more affordable accommodation an utmost priority. In order to make that pledge a reality their campaign should clearly incorporate a stance against cuts to university funding and the building of private student accommodation.

3. The SU Officers on University Council should make these requests formally to Council as it's the governing body of the university.

3. The SU campaign could involve giving real-life talks and workshops to inform students about the wider issues of rent and accommodation, and to hear their complaints concerning housing. It should learn from the successful 'Cut the Rent' campaigns that were held in UCL and Goldsmiths. It should also strive to involve students as much as possible.

4. The SU should support (both in terms of publicity and resources) any student-led housing campaign taking place on campus.
