

Group complaints are coming to kill us, but ombuds could save us

JIM DICKINSON | WONKHE



MEMBERSHIP SERVICES
CONFERENCE 2022

WONKHE
SUs

Complaints regime

1. Individuals with individual issues
2. Disagreement resolution
3. Crisis (too late)
4. Outside of university
5. Anchored in university's own arrangements/policies

Closed petition

Require universities to partially refund tuition fees for 20/21 due to Covid-19

The quality of online lectures is not equal to face-to-face lectures. Students should not have to pay full tuition fees for online lectures, without experiencing university life. The Government should require UK universities to partially refund tuition fees while online teaching is implemented.

Pushing 'the uni experience' has strengthened the case for refunds

Selling 'the uni experience' has helped put bums on seats and cash in coffers, but now it's providing grist for refund-seeking students, says Madeleine Davies

March 10, 2021

Madeleine Davies

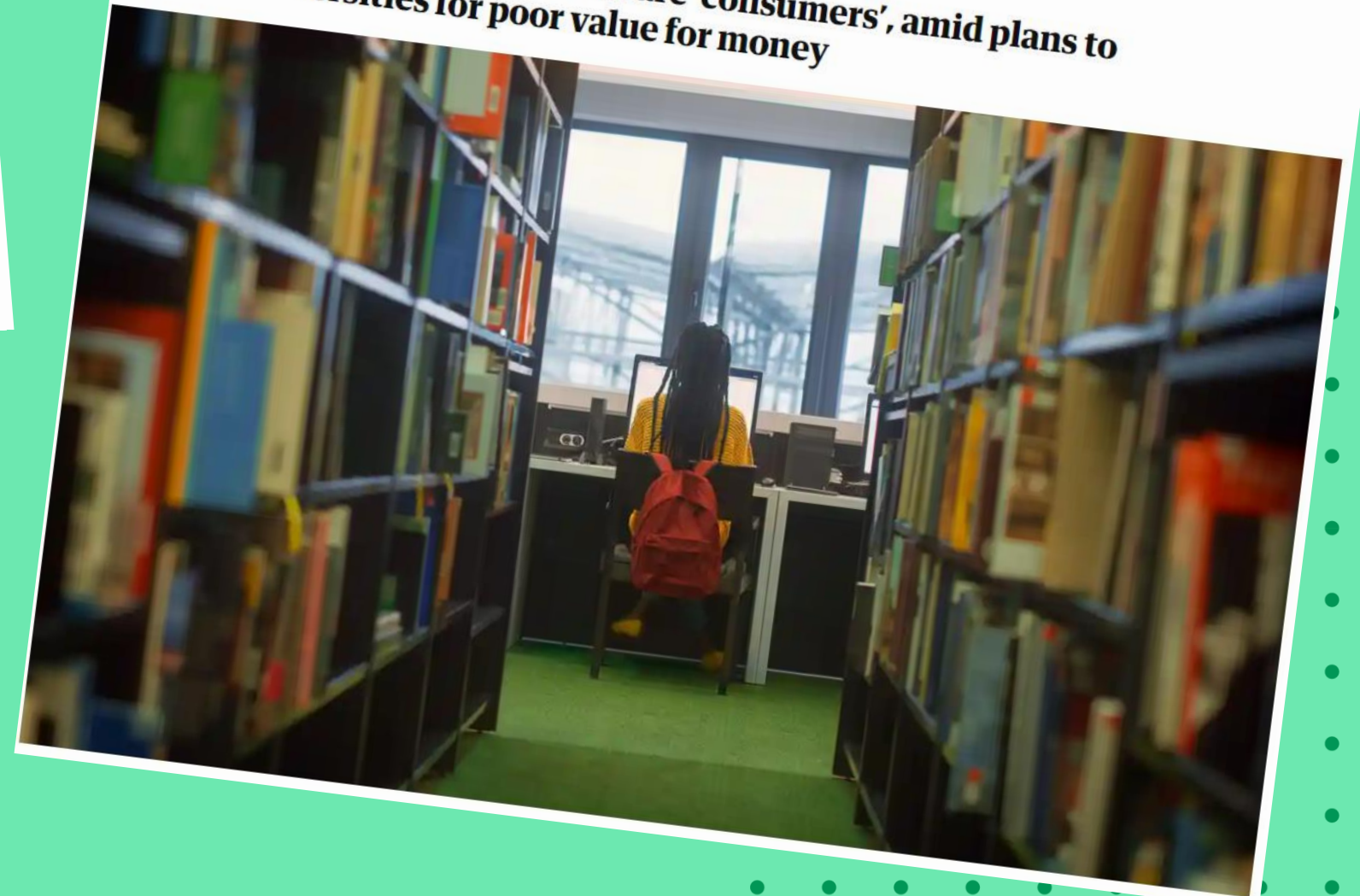
Back in May 2020, student Sophie Quinn gathered 330,000 signatures to a petition brought before the House of Commons Petitions Committee; disruption caused by a period of industrial action, followed by the first national lockdown, had led, she argued, to online higher education provision of variable quality, no access to campus facilities and lack of contact with staff.



Source: iStock

Students in England should apply for refund if unsatisfied, says minister

Michelle Donelan says students are 'consumers', amid plans to punish universities for poor value for money



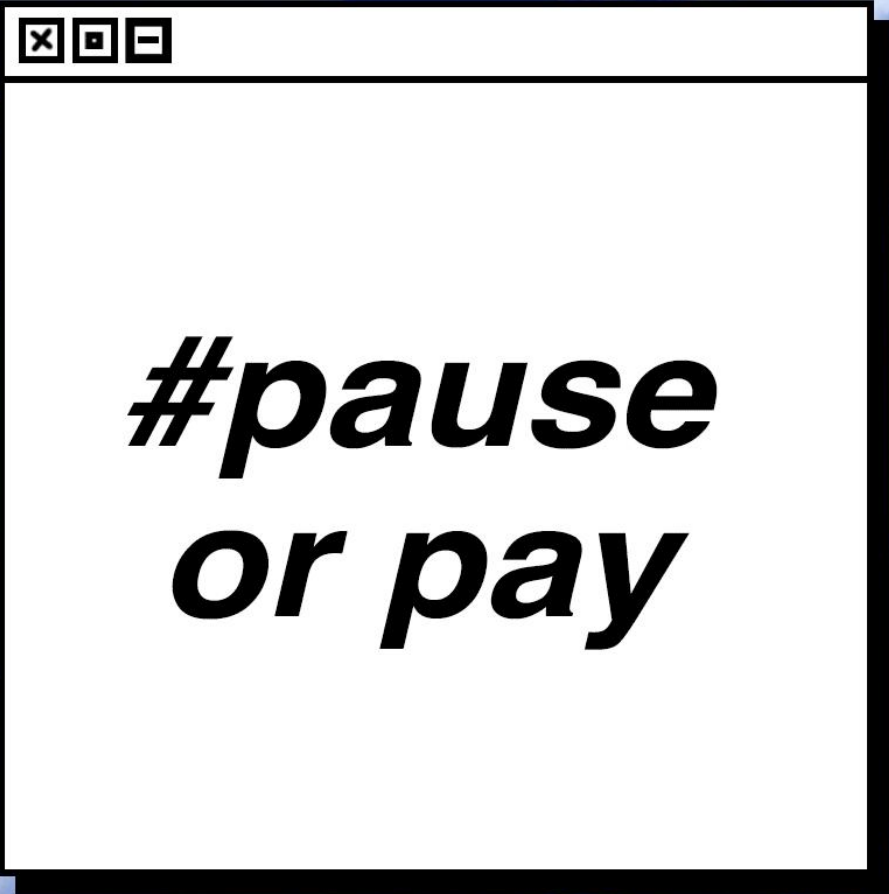


Royal College of Art

Dyson Building

SHOW
RCA

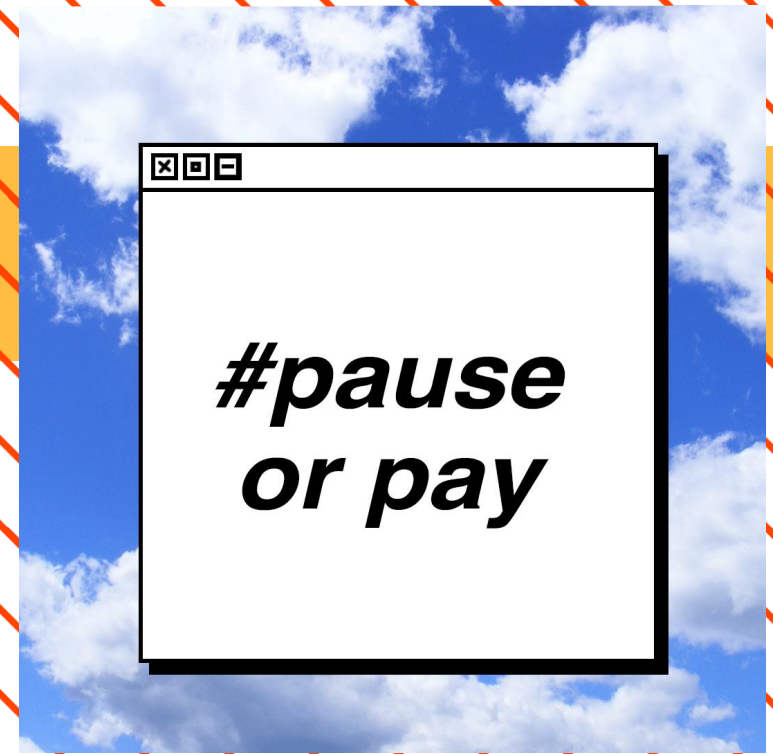




WONKHE

Art and design...

- Art and Design Schools in the UK need to listen to their student bodies and offer current students flexibility that is accessible for all.
- Provisions must be made for studio-based learners in order to work towards a mutually beneficial agreement, whereby students receive quality education without jeopardizing the financial stability of HEIs (Higher Education Institutions).
- In unity, the government needs to play a role in financially aiding the higher education sector to reach an ideal solution for the future of education in the UK.



Demands

It is necessary that HEIs:

- Fight for the Two-Year Post-Study Work Visa Extensions to be brought forward for graduates.
- Support and safeguard international students with regards to visas, financial aid in lieu of work hour restrictions, and No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Guarantee a physical degree show for graduates - This includes provisions for 2-3 months of full access to workshops and studios or financial support to access external facilities.



Pause or pay?

Allow students to either:

PAUSE: Deferral Regulations to not disregard requests made based on impacts of the pandemic - It is a physical impossibility and dangerous to suggest a continuation of artistic activities outside the studio and the safety of a workshop.

PAY: Refund previous fees and discount upcoming fees to reflect the loss of teaching, studios, access to facilities, and industry networking opportunities - Which has been ongoing since the start of the pandemic restrictions. This refund should not affect contractual terms, pay rate, or workload of staff.



Online art school is not art school

This article is more than
1 year old



Syahadah Shahril and Ed Compson argue that the quality of arts education has been fundamentally affected by Covid-19, and call for action to set the situation right.

COMMENT | 19/02/21



Art school

“painting in our spare cupboards cannot replace working in our studio spaces, gilding metals in our bathrooms does not match access to specialist equipment, and countless zoom calls are no substitute for the physical and emotional skills developed while creating collaborative physical projects with fellow students.”

WONKHE ABOUT US · EVENTS · LATEST · JOBS · SUBSCRIPTION · SUs ·  

Online art school is not art school
Syhadah Shahril and Ed Compson argue that the quality of arts education has been fundamentally affected by Covid-19, and call for action to set the situation right.

This article is more than 1 year old
COMMENT | 16/02/21




Image: Shutterstock

Ed Compson
Ed Compson is an artist and facilitator. Royal College of Art, 2020 graduate and co-founder of Pause or Pay UK.

Syhadah Shahril
Syhadah Shahril is Campaigns Officer at Arts SU.

Tags: COVID-19 STUDENTS

During the pandemic, the response of creative higher education institutions to student complaints has signalled a central dominant position – that studio-based courses without access to studios are somehow of equal pedagogic and financial value to the same courses pre-crisis.

With zero or restricted access to “world-leading” equipment, facilities and highly skilled technicians, we’ve been told that the “quality” of our education has not been affected. **Pause or Pay UK**, a student campaign group representing thousands of students across 35 different institutions, fundamentally disagrees.

For the majority of studio-based learners, the pandemic has clarified something that ought to have been obvious – painting in our spare cupboards cannot replace working in our studio spaces, gilding metals in our bathrooms does not match access to specialist equipment, and countless zoom calls are no substitute for the physical and emotional skills developed while creating collaborative physical projects with fellow students.

Everyone involved may feel they have done their best. But their best is neither equivalent nor good enough.

Our education

Art and Design education is as much about occupying a studio space with other creative individuals and their work, and the resultant invaluable peer-to-peer learning and network building as it is about the teaching we receive from tutorials and lectures.



And Art and Design education is as much about building a portfolio of work that

Latest articles

- Fixed penalty notice: The Wonkhe University Car Parking League Table 2023
- Is OfS interested in extracurricular activity or not?
- How to prevent a medical student retention crisis
- Easy as one, two, three?
- What are Conservative leadership candidates saying about higher education?
- Who's getting more QR funding in England next year?
- Higher Education Postcard – Bangor University
- Arts and humanities in times of crisis

Art school

“painting in our spare cupboards cannot replace working in our studio spaces, gilding metals in our bathrooms does not match access to specialist equipment, and countless zoom calls are no substitute for the physical and emotional skills developed while creating collaborative physical projects with fellow students.”

WONKHE ABOUT US · EVENTS · LATEST · JOBS · SUBSCRIPTION · SUs ·  

Online art school is not art school
Syhadah Shahril and Ed Compson argue that the quality of arts education has been fundamentally affected by Covid-19, and call for action to set the situation right.

This article is more than 1 year old
COMMENT | 16/02/21



Image: Shutterstock

Ed Compson
Ed Compson is an artist and facilitator. Royal College of Art, 2020 graduate and co-founder of Pause or Pay UK.

Syhadah Shahril
Syhadah Shahril is Campaigns Officer at Arts SU.

Tags: COVID-19 STUDENTS

During the pandemic, the response of creative higher education institutions to student complaints has signalled a central dominant position – that studio-based courses without access to studios are somehow of equal pedagogic and financial value to the same courses pre-crisis.

With zero or restricted access to “world-leading” equipment, facilities and highly skilled technicians, we’ve been told that the “quality” of our education has not been affected. **Pause or Pay UK**, a student campaign group representing thousands of students across 35 different institutions, fundamentally disagrees.

For the majority of studio-based learners, the pandemic has clarified something that ought to have been obvious – painting in our spare cupboards cannot replace working in our studio spaces, gilding metals in our bathrooms does not match access to specialist equipment, and countless zoom calls are no substitute for the physical and emotional skills developed while creating collaborative physical projects with fellow students.

Everyone involved may feel they have done their best. But their best is neither equivalent nor good enough.

Our education

Art and Design education is as much about occupying a studio space with other creative individuals and their work, and the resultant invaluable peer-to-peer learning and network building as it is about the teaching we receive from tutorials and lectures.

And Art and Design education is as much about building a portfolio of work that

Latest articles

- Fixed penalty notice: The Wonkhe University Car Parking League Table 2023
- Is OfS interested in extracurricular activity or not?
- How to prevent a medical student retention crisis
- Easy as one, two, three?
- What are Conservative leadership candidates saying about higher education?
- Who's getting more QR funding in England next year?
- Higher Education Postcard – Bangor University
- Arts and humanities in times of crisis

Royal College of Art

- Mid-March 2000 – here's the changes!
- Designed to ensure students could complete and meet learning objectives.
- But LOs less important – skills from in-person, and exhibition all crucial
- Small group complains about what had been put in place – grows to 1,000 strong complaint by May



The beef

- Students weren't satisfied with changes made to course delivery;
- The group argued that it wasn't reasonable for the college to continue to charge the full cost of fees for its courses;
- They argued that significant decisions about changes were made without proper or reasonable consultation;
- They also argued that the changes made failed to adequately provide the kinds of practical opportunities and on-campus facilities and services that students reasonably expected to gain when they decided enrolled to study at the RCA.



The response

- The college argued that steps were taken to ensure, as far as was reasonable, that online provision enabled students to achieve learning outcomes;
- That reasonable steps had been taken to ensure that the quality of the student experience was maintained online
- That nonetheless, students who preferred to wait for campuses to re-open had the option to take an authorised leave of absence;
- As such, and in line with government guidance at the time, it was reasonable to refuse the group's request for a tuition fee refund.





Not so merry go round

- Students' union not involved
- Review of complaint by “different” people
- COP to adjudicator halved size of the group
- Consultation with group or need to obtain consent individually for changes?
- Option to take a “short term leave of absence” or to “withdraw from the college completely”
- Force majeure clause far too broad (again)
- Learning outcomes v learning opportunities...



Problems

For students on programmes involving “Printed Textiles”, students argued they might expect access to:

- “...fully equipped textile screen printing workshop, which included 2x screen printing beds for textiles, a digital textile printing suite, heat-presses, wash out booths, multiple screens at varying sizes, exposure unit, screen emulsions, jet wash, a holding cupboard [etc.]...”



Problems

A student on a Jewellery and Metal course commented that their course:

- ...requires specialised tools and spaces in order to work safely and efficiently, which is almost impossible and very dangerous to achieve at home. My practice requires heavy machinery such as the hydraulic press, a kiln, casting facilities, 3D scanning and printing, and using a blow torch...”



Problems

A student on Ceramics and Glass course wrote that:

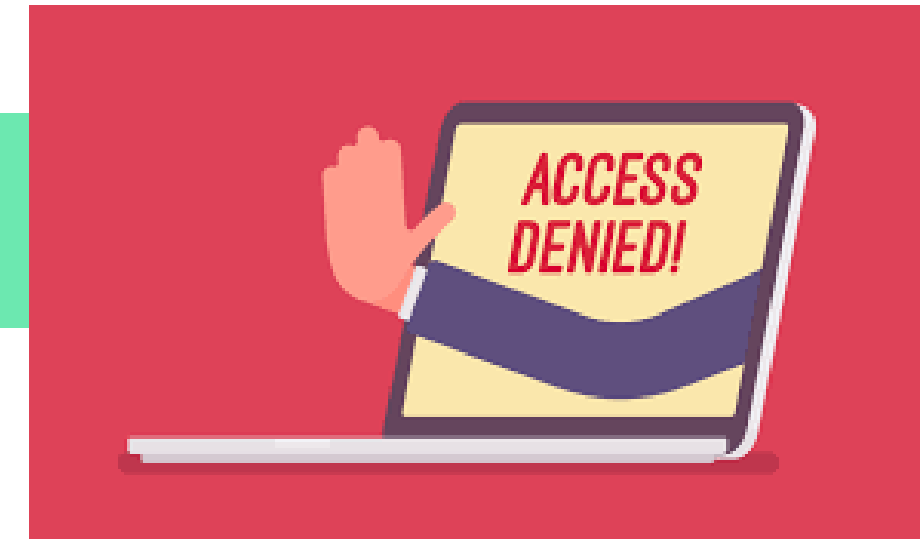
- ...there is a lot of support from tutors given the situation, but there is only so little they could offer [...] a relative standstill to studio making (coming from a ceramics and glass course) with no access to resources for making clay...”



Problems

A student on a programme involving 3D software complained that:

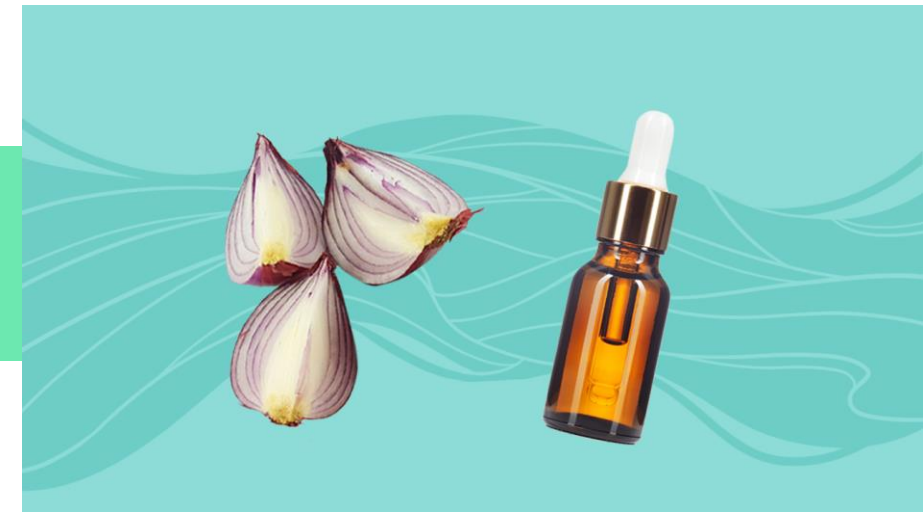
- ...it has been quite frustrating. I have tried to follow online learning courses for 3D software but because my laptop isn't built for using such software and I don't have access to better machines I fell behind each time and I just had to quit and then look up answers myself online..."



Remedy

Following a very complex process that was led by the volunteer student...

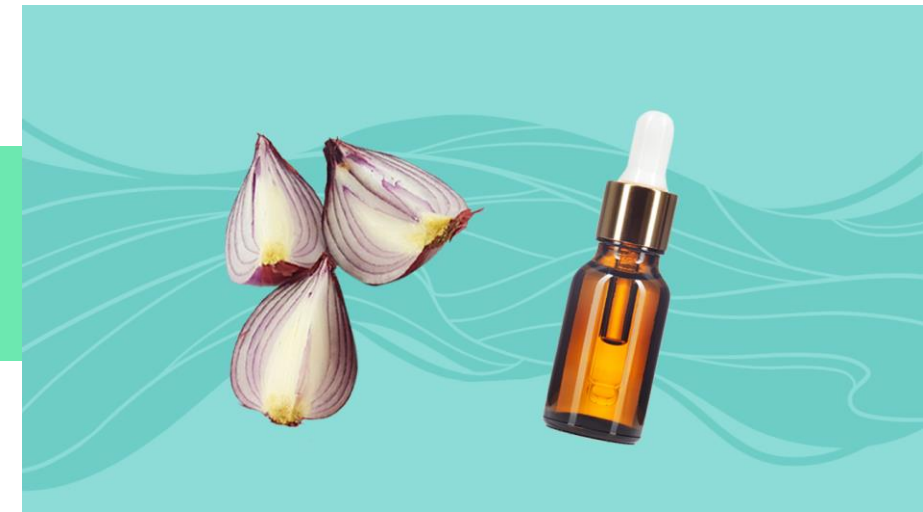
- Those on programmes where students would not normally expect the need to access specialist facilities and services in order to complete their course of study, and where lack of access did not make a difference to the students' experience of the programme – an apology.



Remedy

Following a very complex process that was led by the volunteer student...

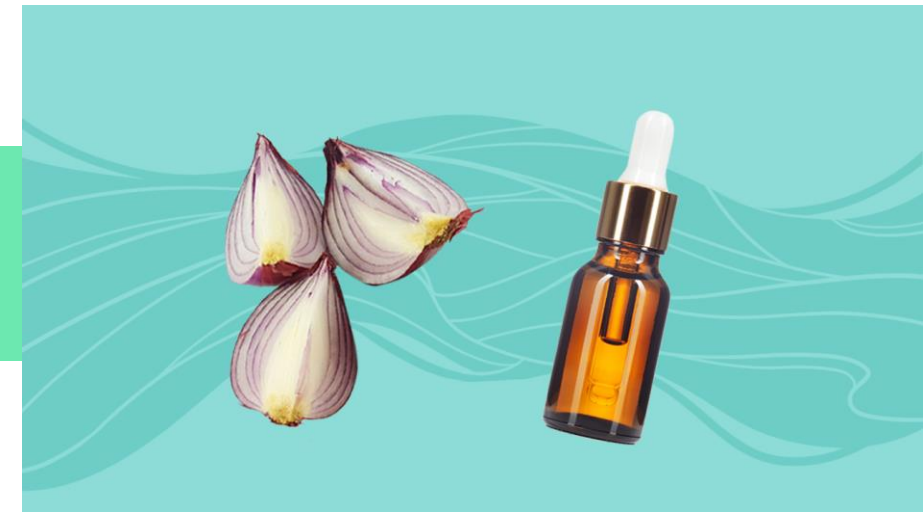
- Programmes where students would have expected access to facilities and services but where these are largely incidental to the normal aims of the programme but nevertheless, the lack of access to facilities and services made a difference to the students' experience of the programme – an apology and £500.



Remedy

Following a very complex process that was led by the volunteer student...

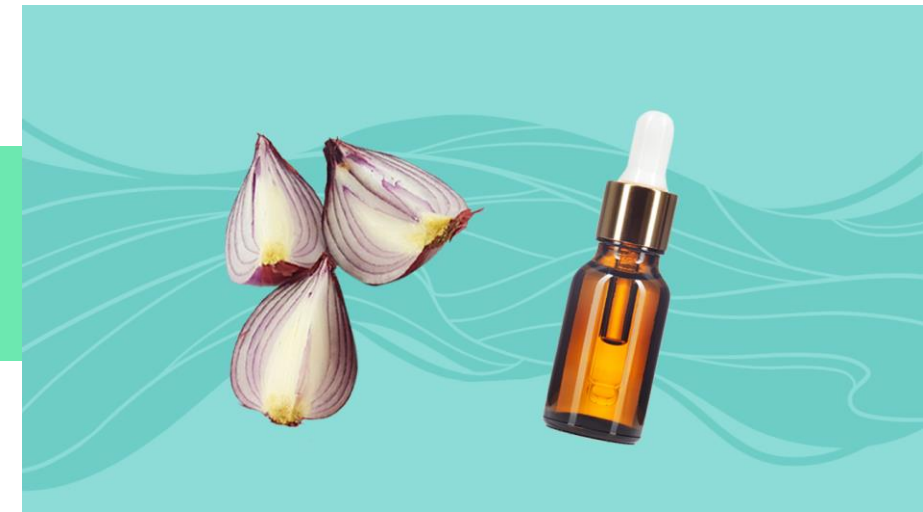
- Programmes where students would have expected regular access to facilities and services but despite efforts there was a shortfall in learning opportunities – a formal apology and £1,000;



Remedy

Following a very complex process that was led by the volunteer student...

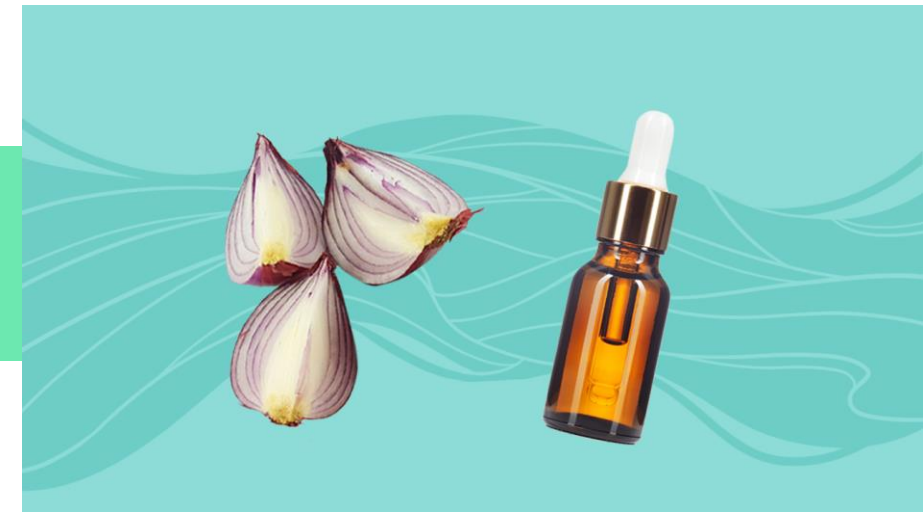
- Programmes where students would have expected regular access to technical facilities and services, and other specialist spaces or services, where RCA was unable to put in place measures to deliver learning opportunities without a substantial impact upon how those learning opportunities would normally be delivered on the programme – a formal apology and £2,000.



Remedy

Following a very complex process that was led by the volunteer student...

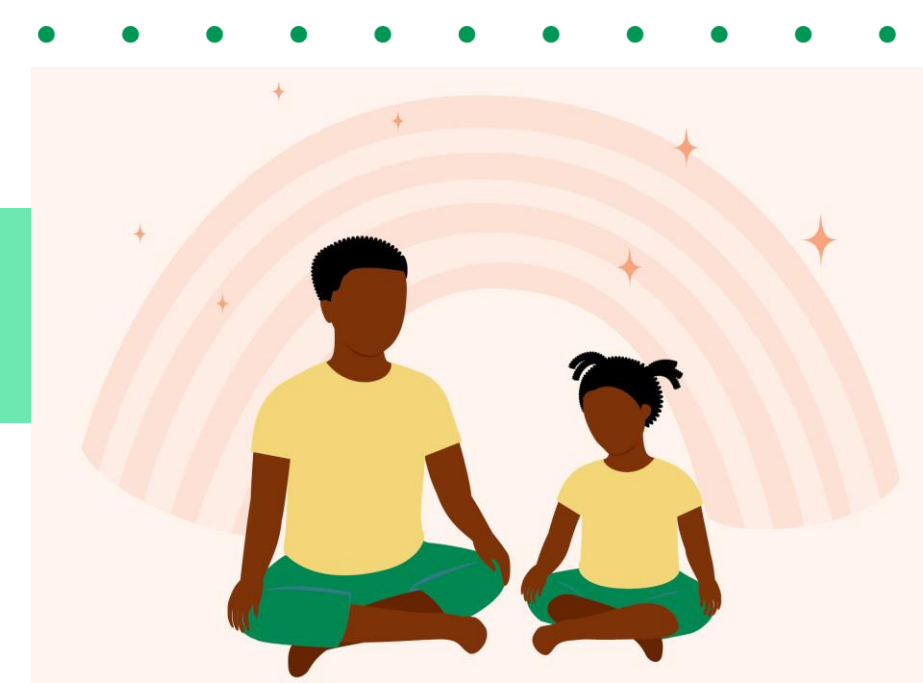
- And all of the above getting an additional £550 for the distress and inconvenience caused by the delay in the college's handling of the complaints process.



Mindful...

OIA said it was “mindful” of the college’s argument that:

- ...an award of [a higher scale] will materially impact on our abilities to deliver planned activity in the next 12 – 24-month period, including for some of the students who were students at the time period covered by this complaint.”



Mis-sold Msc Computer Science course refunded

Students complained course failed to deliver

Tuesday 15 Mar 2022 Emily Hewat



Image Credit: Emily Hewat

A recent report has highlighted that students who were enrolled on the University of York's online MSc Computer Science course have received refunds since the course failed expectations. An OIAHE report dated 4th February 2022 has verified that students have been missold the course and has justified the refund for students. Nouse has accessed this report and has used direct evidence taken from it. Nouse has also spoken to a student who wishes to remain anonymous about how the course did not live up to their expectations.

The group complaint was made by 28 students and the complaint was received by the OIA on the 28 April 2021. The course first opened in April 2019 and OIAHE report states that most of the students in the group complaint started the course between April 2019 and November 2019.

A key issue with the course is that it has been over subscribed to which has led to accusations in a Student Group chat room in October that York is "cashing in on their reputation." (link can be found [here](#)) The courses have an intake every 2 months and initial figures were based on 25 students per intake, so 150 per year. The first intake was 165 students, which exceeds the annual expected intake.

Big questions

- What about those that fell by the wayside at RCA?
- What about those that didn't ever sign at RCA?
- What if those that didn't sign weren't happy but didn't sign for other reasons?
- What about every other student on a creative arts course around the UK
- What about every other student on a course with a practical component



Big questions

- Why did it take over two years?
- Why did a volunteer student have to lead it and bone up on CPL etc?
- What if the provider was more defensive because of the group thing?
- Why wasn't the SU involved?
- How is it OK for the “review” internally just to involve different people?



In groups, try to fix...

- What about those that fell by the wayside at RCA?
- What about those that didn't ever sign at RCA?
- What if those that didn't sign weren't happy but didn't sign for other reasons?
- What about every other student on a creative arts course around the UK
- What about every other student on a course with a practical component
- Why did it take over two years?
- Why did a volunteer student have to lead it and bone up on CPL etc?
- What if the provider was more defensive because of the group thing?
- Why wasn't the SU involved?
- How is it OK for the "review" internally just to involve different people?

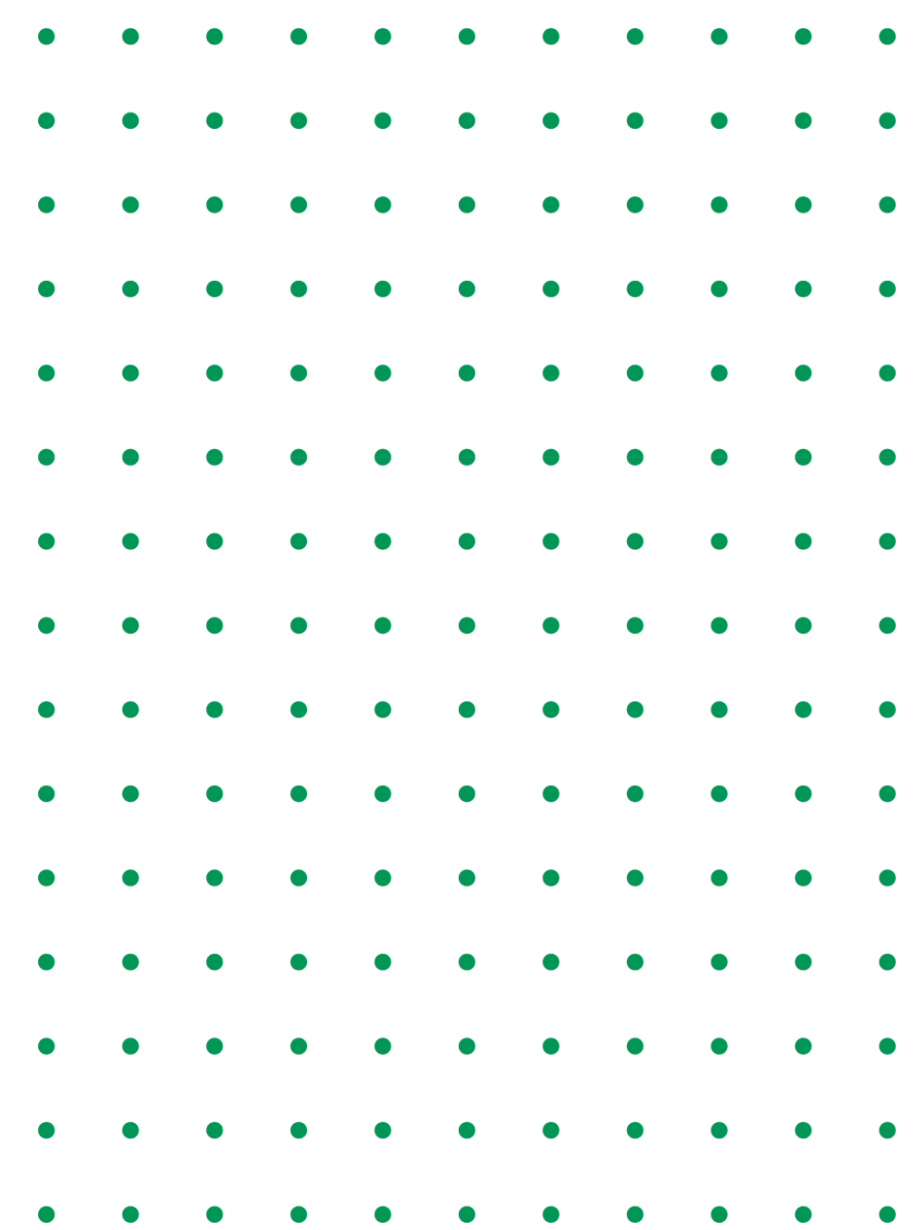
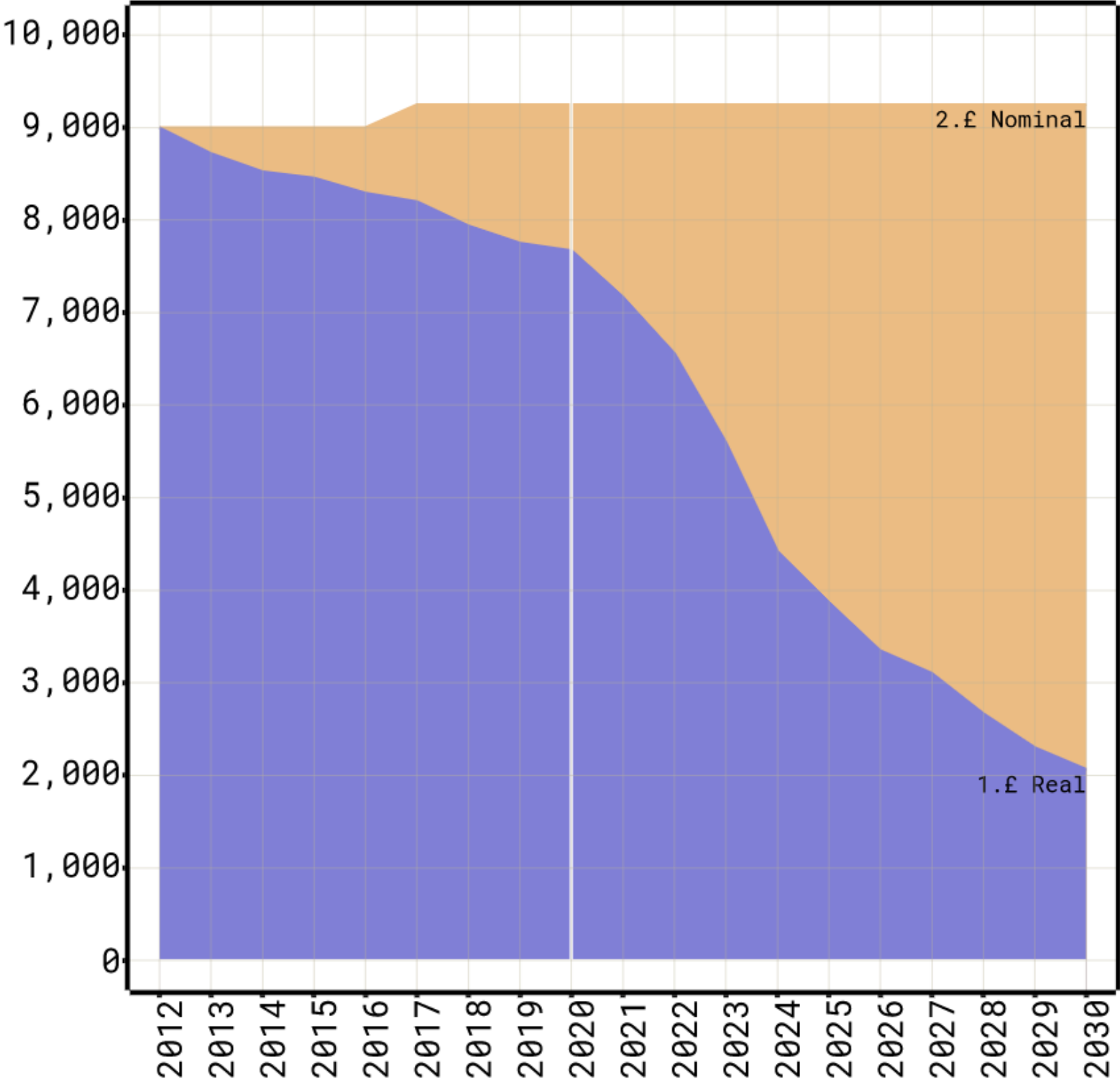


FIGURE 2 THE ENGLISH FT UG FEE CAP, NOMINAL AND REAL

English FT UG tuition fee cap, nominal and in £ 2012 RPI, with 2021 onwards like 1972 onwards

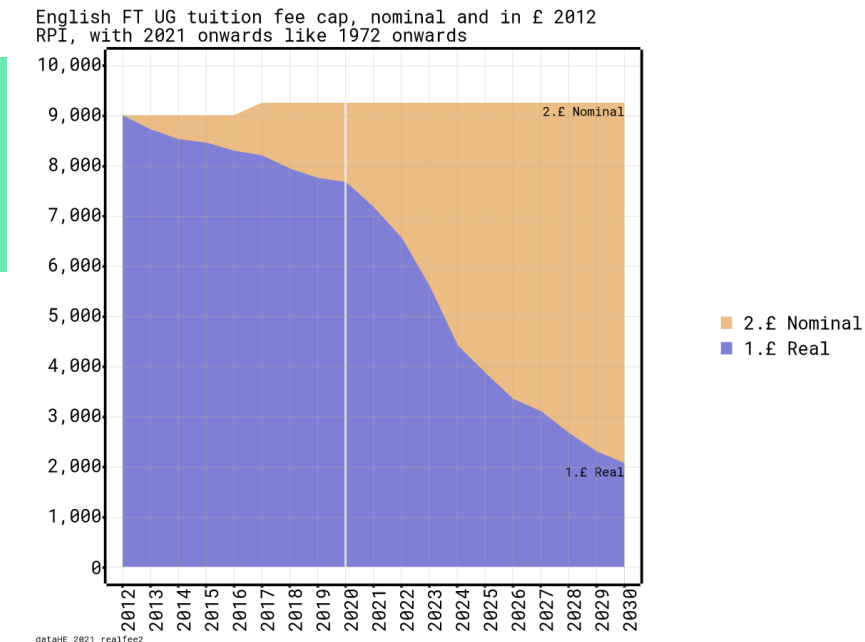


2.£ Nominal
1.£ Real

Inflation, 70s style

- By 2022 real funding has fallen to £5,600, a 38 per cent cut from 2012.
- Two years later in 2024 the real value has slumped to £4,400, a 51 per cent cut.
- By this point universities are needing to teach two students with the resources they had for one in 2012.
- If universities made it through to 2030 in this scenario, they would find their real funding per student had dropped to around £2,000, less than a quarter of the 2012 resource.

FIGURE 2 THE ENGLISH FT UG FEE CAP, NOMINAL AND REAL



Coping with a declining unit of resource

- Engage in value provision
 - Principally via validation or franchise partnerships, or remote campuses
- Increase no of international PGT students
 - Student experience, entry standards, support, agents?
- Identify modules, pathways or programmes that are expensive to teach and/or recruiting low numbers (portfolio review)
 - Closure or collapse into bigger pools to manage demand fluctuation/pressures
- Are students protected?



GLOBAL BANKING SCHOOL LIMITED PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28 FEBRUARY 2021

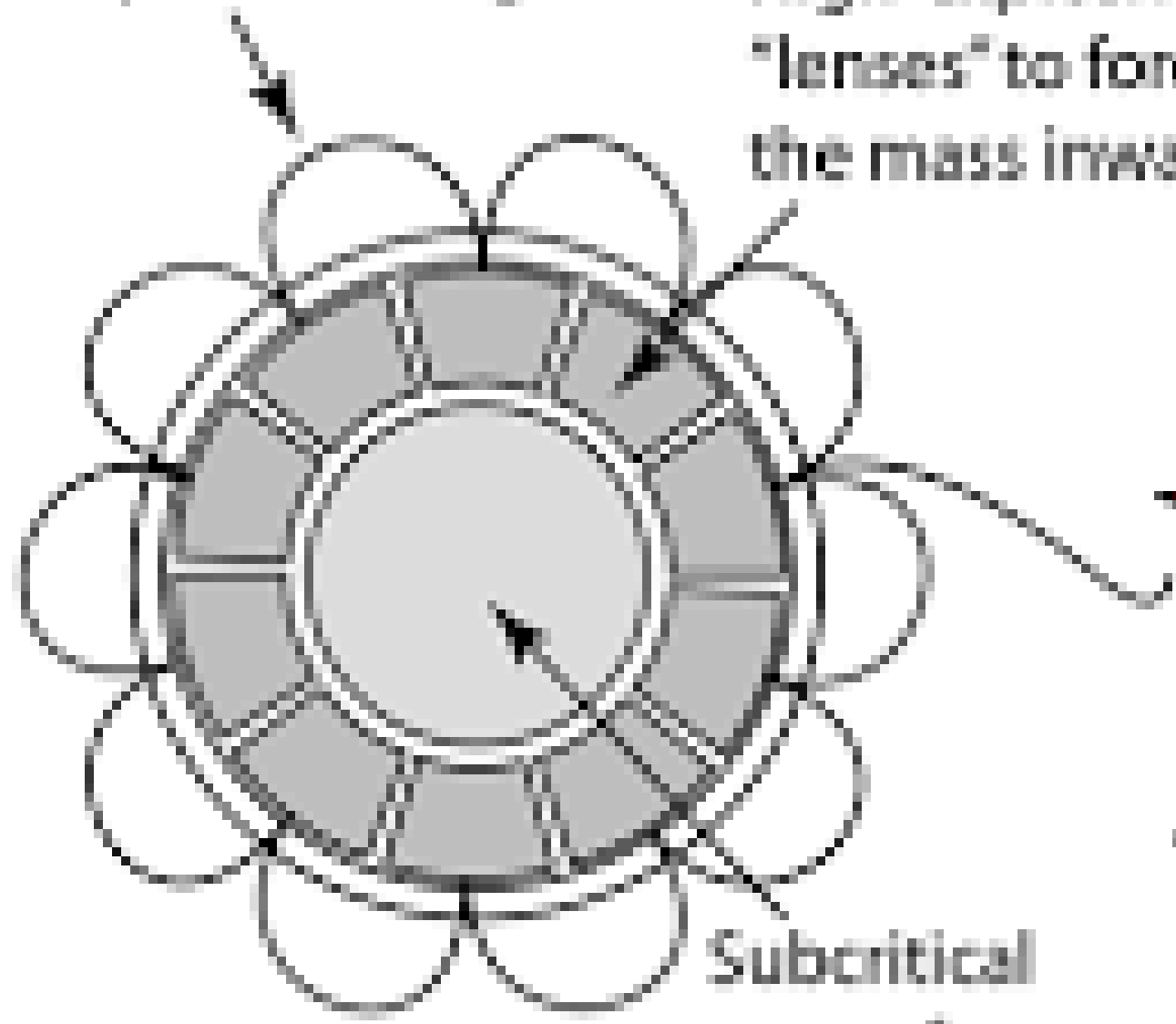
		2021 £	2020 £
Turnover	3	30,377,883	10,204,610
Cost of sales		(15,105,900)	(5,103,660)
Gross profit		15,271,983	5,100,950
Administrative expenses		(9,861,602)	(3,222,228)
Operating profit	4	5,410,381	1,878,722
Tax on profit	8	(899,789)	(370,673)
Profit for the financial year		4,510,592	1,508,049

There are no items of other comprehensive income for either the year or the prior year other than the profit for the year. Accordingly, no statement of other comprehensive income has been presented.



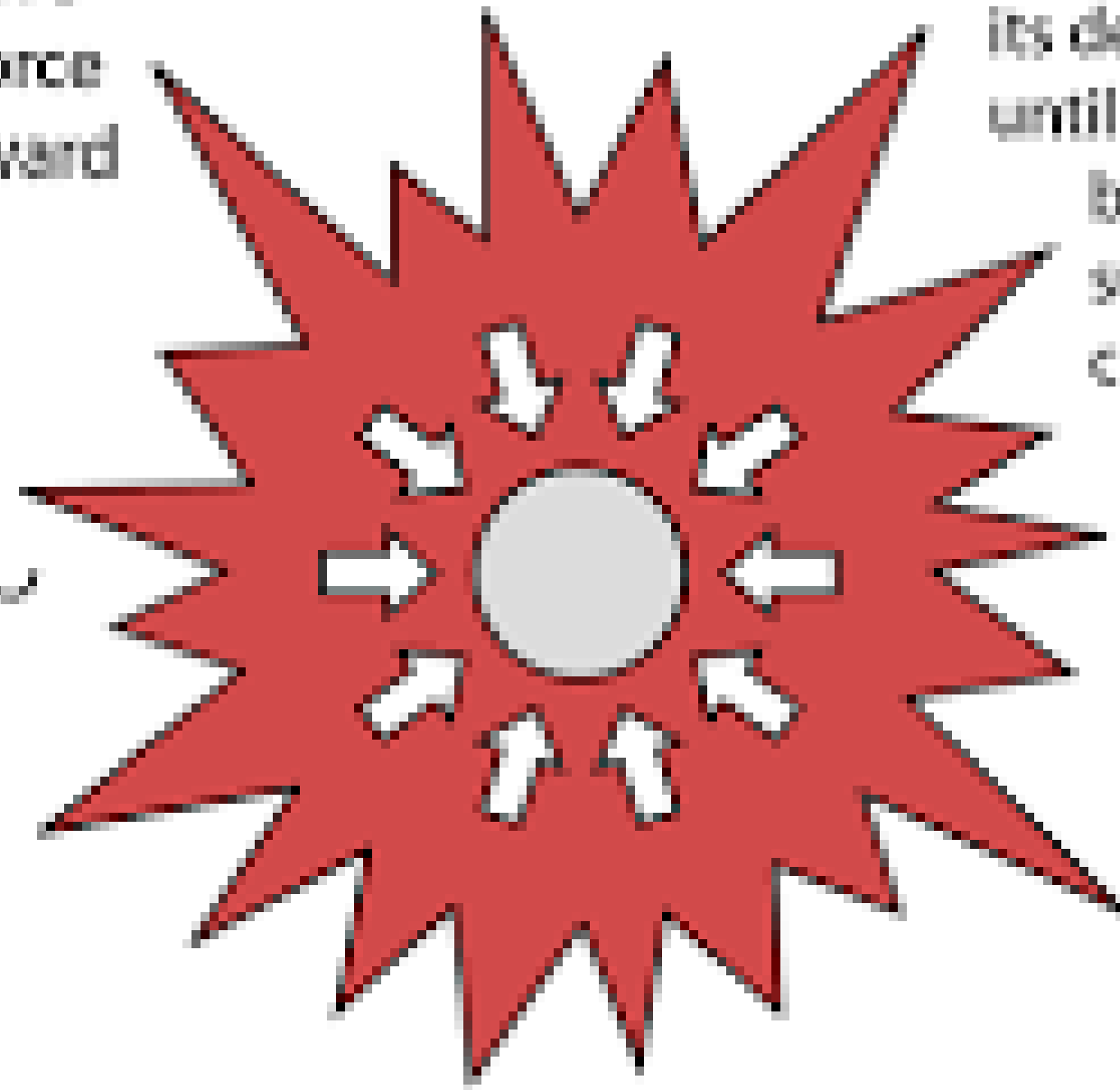
Wires for simultaneous detonation
of high-explosive charges.

High-explosive
"lenses" to force
the mass inward



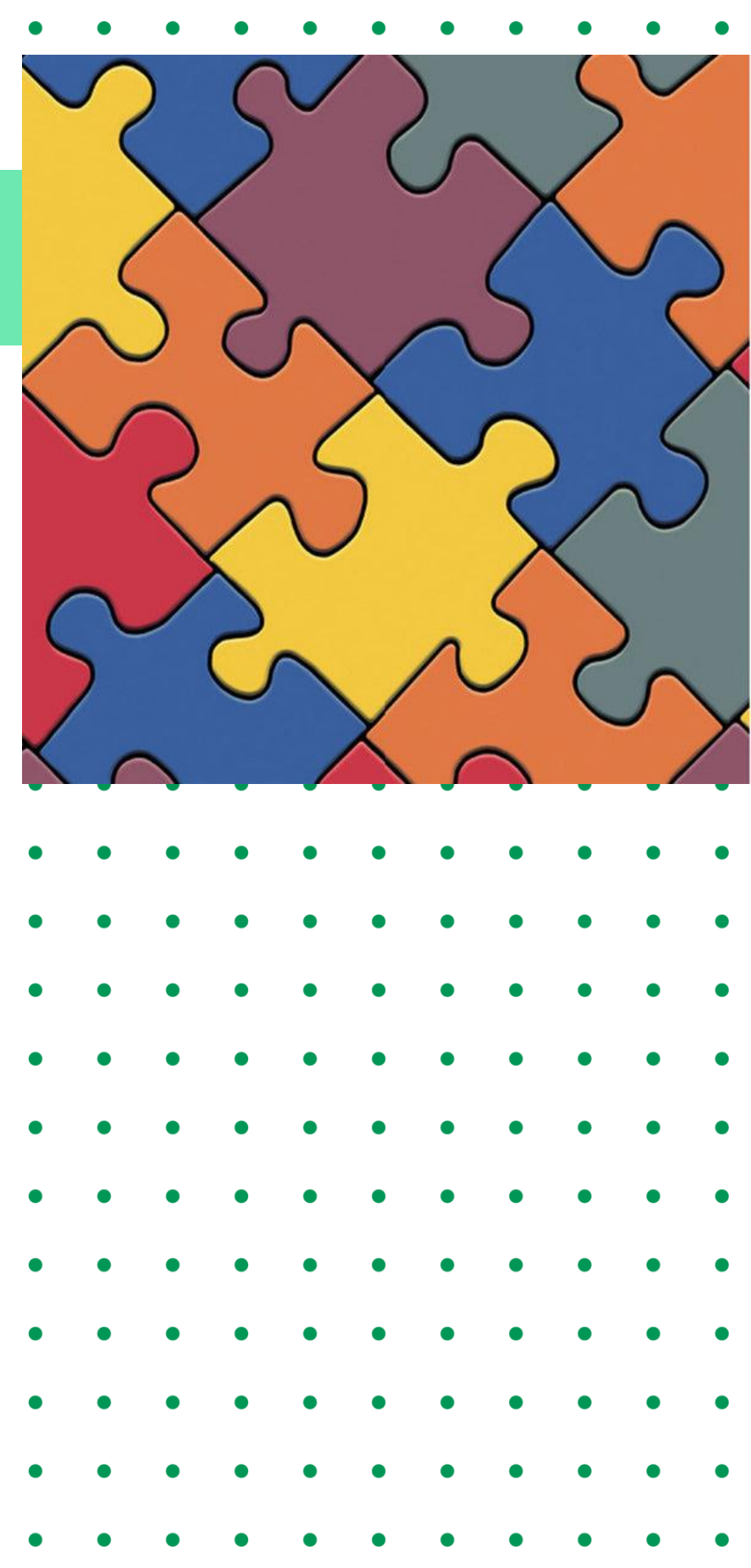
Subcritical
mass of
plutonium-239

Explosion drives
fission material
inward, increasing
its density
until it
becomes
super-
critical



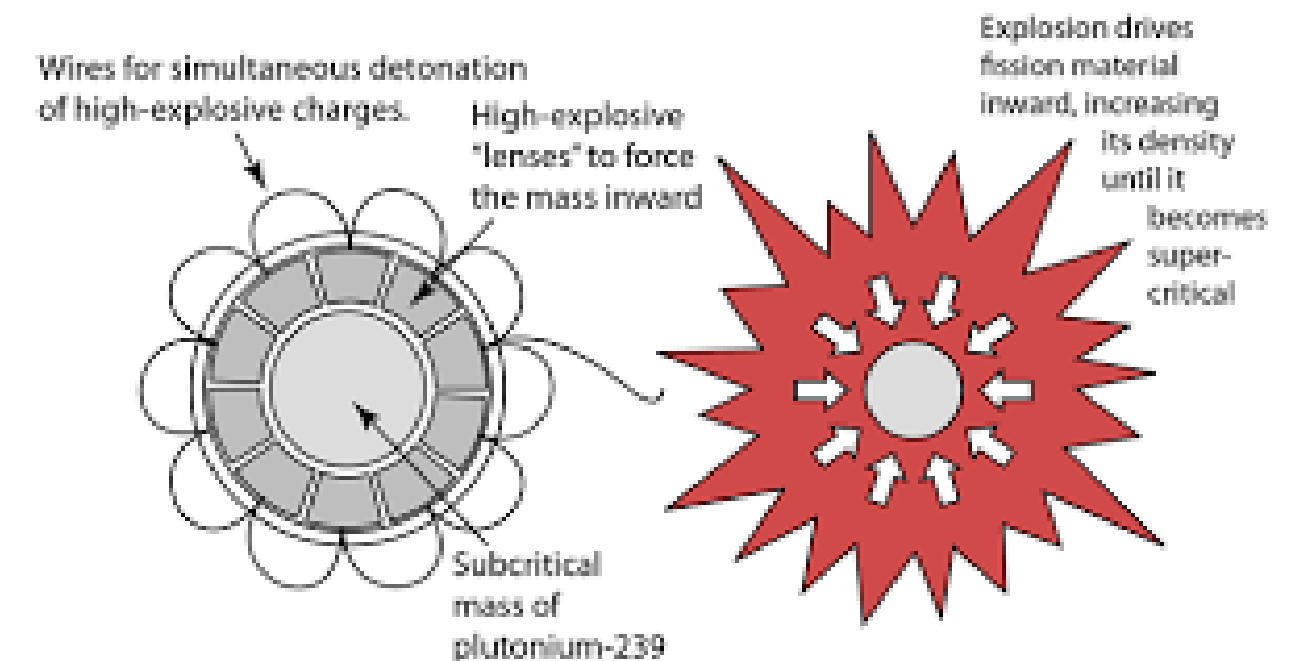
In 5 years' time...

- It's very hard indeed to reduce service provision, staff or quality by year group.
- If a student came to an open day today, they're unlikely to be getting the promised or implied student experience by the time they graduate.
- If that is allowed to happen – ask yourself why and if there's anything you can do to stop it.



Little issues

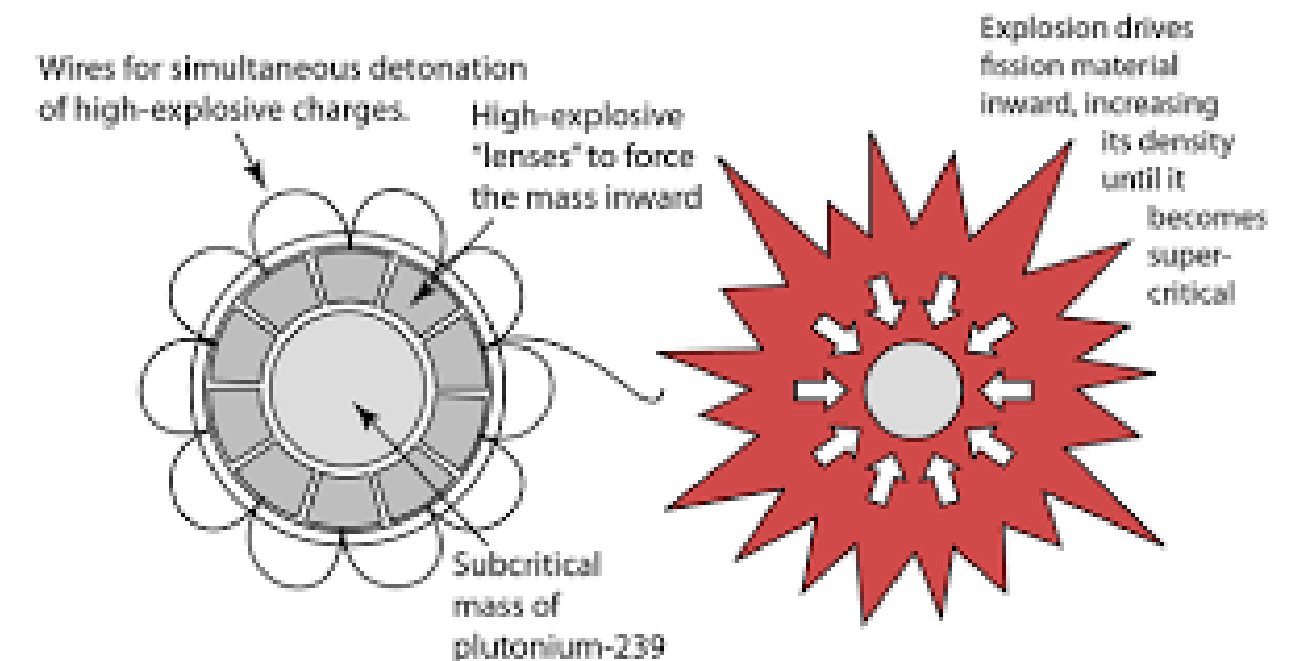
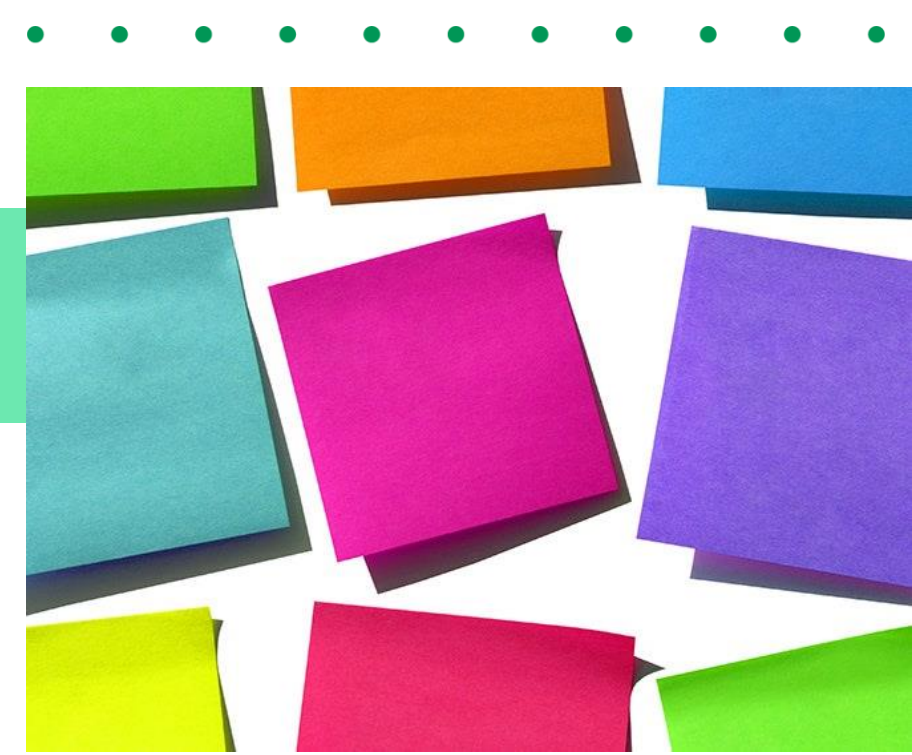
- Lack of space on campus
- Feedback poor or late
- Personal tutor system more of an ambition than a policy
- Additional costs necessary to complete the course
- Email responses from academics



Little issues

Whose job?

- Course reps?
- Advice?
- Voice?
- Academic societies?
- Sabbs?
- Individuals?



B Conditions

Where the condition contains requirements that relate to learning resources, a provider is expected to fund the provision of these resources, without additional charge beyond the course fee, where this is a reasonable step to take to ensure that the cohort of students registered on a course receive sufficient resources for the purpose of ensuring a high quality academic experience and success in and beyond higher education. A provider may determine the approach it takes to making such resources available to students, for example, by loaning resources to students for the duration of the course.

In relation to “physical and digital learning resources” the following is an illustrative non-exhaustive list of matters relating to ‘physical learning resources’ that would fall within the definition:

- a. Appropriate laboratory and technical resources for STEM subjects.
- b. Appropriate studio, performance, and technical resources for creative subjects.

B Conditions

In relation to “physical and digital learning resources” the following is an illustrative non-exhaustive list of matters relating to ‘digital learning resources’ that would fall within the definition:

- a. Appropriate hardware. Students have, or have reliable and consistent access to, the hardware that allows them to effectively access all course content. Hardware is of the specification required to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged in relation to their peers.
- b. Appropriate software. Students have, or have reliable and consistent access to, the software they need to effectively access all aspects of course content.

B Conditions

Robust technical infrastructure. Technical infrastructure and systems work seamlessly and are repaired promptly when needed.

Reliable access to the internet. Students have reliable and consistent access to an internet connection. Reliability and bandwidth of the internet connection are at a sufficient level to ensure that a student is not disadvantaged in relation to their peers.

A trained teacher or instructor. Students have a trained teacher or instructor who is equipped to deliver high quality digital teaching and learning.

An appropriate study place. Students have consistent access to a quiet space that is appropriate for studying.

B Conditions

- a. Academic support includes support to help students with course content or on placements, to identify and address knowledge or skills gaps, and make decisions about future study choices. It includes, for example, mentor support that disabled students may need to support their learning.
- b. Support needed to underpin successful physical and digital learning and teaching includes support to help students make best use of digital learning.
- c. Support relating to avoiding academic misconduct includes support for essay planning and accurate referencing, and advice about the consequences of academic misconduct.
- d. Careers support includes the information, advice and guidance students need to identify their capabilities and the way in which these may be suited to particular careers, and to articulate these in a way likely to result in successful job applications.

So what?

- Do students know
- Do we know
- Research on gap can help collective representation
- Research on gap can also help case for individuals
- What if the strategy was



Complaints regime

1. Individuals with individual issues
2. Disagreement resolution
3. Crisis (too late)
4. Outside of university
5. Anchored in university's own arrangements/policies



Six rights activities

1. Establishment
2. Discovery
3. Extension
4. Defence
5. Enforcement
6. Promote

Information from Linnaeus Union



Ombuds?



Ombuds?



Ombuds?



Ombuds?



- “Elected” (appointed by a vote by council)
- All six rights activities
- Key personality in each faculty – fixer, preventer
- Reports and policy development

- <https://student-ambassador.ku.dk/about/>

Student ambassador



- The purpose of the student ambassador is to strengthen students' legal rights and advise them in relation to their encounters with the University of Copenhagen (UCPH).
- In the performance of his/her duties, the student ambassador is independent of UCPH, including students, employees, the management and the board.
- The student ambassador may not make decisions. The student ambassador may not act as a parallel or competing investigating authority to an existing investigating authority.
- Students may contact the student ambassador, who can advise on complaints procedures, submission of complaints, complaints deadlines, etc. Complaints about the administration at UCPH may not be submitted to the student ambassador.
- If specific and finally concluded matters have given due cause, the student ambassador may carry out a general investigation of an administrative authority's general processing of a subject area, however subject to the restriction on the student ambassador to post-investigate specific matters, cf. 5 (3) above.
- The student ambassador's investigation is concluded with a report, which is sent to the relevant bodies and managers at UCPH, including the rector. (2) The investigation is published by the student ambassador in anonymised form.

Gothenburg

- The ombudsmen are here to help students who encounter problems in their education. We advise, help and guide students on bachelor, advanced and phd level.
- The ombudsmen's main tasks are:
 - To help students who encountered problems in their education.
 - Investigate the issues of student character.
 - Support for students who face the Disciplinary board at Gothenburg University
- If you are unsure about it is the ombudsmen you should talk with, you are welcome to ask us!
- The ombudsmen also assist the student unions with questions about laws and regulations that affect the university's function.

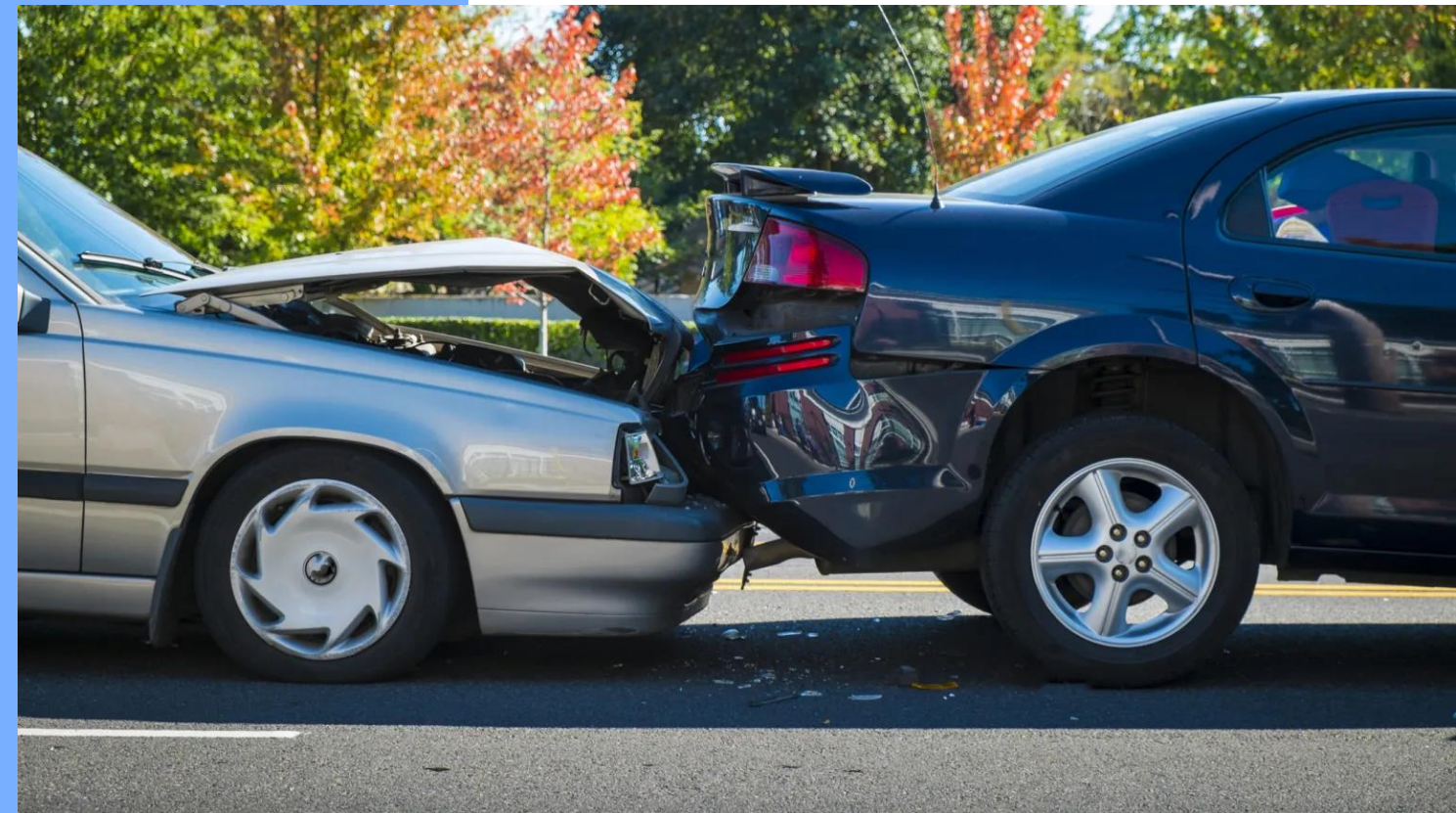


Questions

- If we could start again, what would we do to improve rights understanding and enforcement on a more often, more granular level?
- What are the barriers?

Group complaints are coming to kill us, but ombuds will save us

JIM DICKINSON | WONKHE



MEMBERSHIP SERVICES
CONFERENCE 2022

WONKHE
SUs