



WONKHE

FREE TASTER

Making sense of higher education

A first look at Wonkhe's new ten-module programme, with time for your questions.

Thursday 2 July 2026 • 12:00



Crystal balls (and fish)



Hunting & fishing



HUNTING

Identifying objectives and a plan to achieve them – strategic planning.

This is a session about **fishing** – identifying the big (national) things that are coming so you can assure yourself that the SU is ready to respond.



FISHING

Responding when opportunities and threats come along – forecasting.





ofgem

**ENERGY
PRICE CAP
ANNOUNCEMENT**

A yellow graphic with a white wavy top edge. It features the 'ofgem' logo in an orange pill shape. The text 'ENERGY PRICE CAP ANNOUNCEMENT' is in large, bold, black capital letters. Decorative elements include black lightning bolts and white circles with black arrows pointing towards the text.

O1

Cost of living this winter

A winter price shock – but maintenance is frozen

- Energy, fuel and food all rising into term (food inflation 6–10%); maintenance locked at +2.71%, below CPI
- Students hit hardest – minimum income need (~£21k) is roughly double the maximum loan

Universities are cutting support as need climbs

- Bursary cuts up to 27% of providers (from 15%); hardship cuts to 13%; OfS settlement down ~£200m
- SUs quietly absorbing the gap – an invisible, uncoded subsidy

Food banks are becoming permanent campus furniture

- 63% of universities run a food bank, 59% issue vouchers – two-thirds fronted by SUs
- Free food being curbed; ~half of students say hunger has hit their studies, four in ten too cold to focus

The decisions that shape next year could be being made now

- University budgets set May–July; autumn Budget and energy support designed on targeting that misses students
- Issues: Hardship/bursary lines, contract-check energy clauses, fix cost-of-living information





Matcha	3.00	25	50
Cold Brew	2.50	5	4.00
Hot Tea	2.25	50	4.50
HOT CHOCOLATE			
8oz	12oz	16oz	
2.50	3.50	4.50	
+50¢ HOUSE SYRUP			
vanilla / caramel / peppermint			

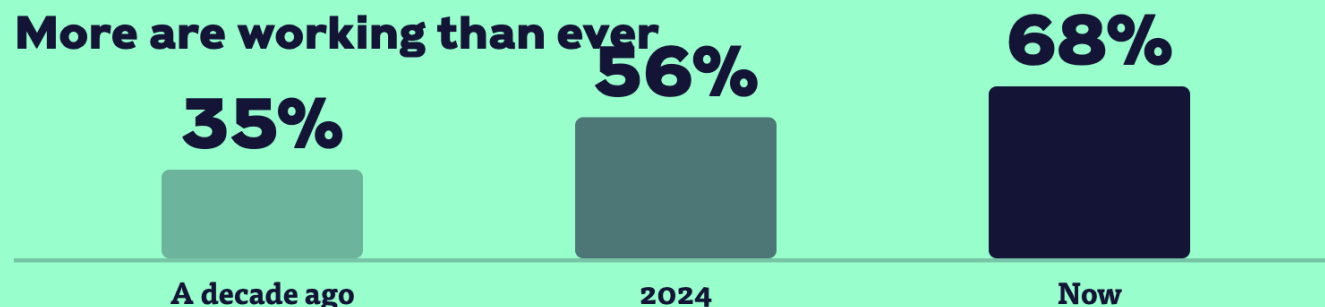
BEVERAGE	
ORANGE JUICE	2.00
LEMON JUICE	2.00
ICED TEA	3.25
SMOOTHIES	3.50
strawberry / apple / mix fruits	
ITALIAN SODA	3.00
MINERAL WATER	1.75
sparkling	
SWEET & PASTRIES	
FRESH BAKED DAILY	

Students at work

Paid work has become a necessity, not a choice – and it is reshaping student life

TERM-TIME PAID WORK · FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES

More are working than ever



18 hours
average paid work each week

29% work more than
20 hours a week

WHY STUDENTS WORK

66% work just to cover
basic living costs

1 in 4 work to support their family

ATTENDANCE FALLS AS HOURS RISE



ATTAINMENT AND RETENTION

20% more likely to gain good
honours when under 20 hrs

40% of those working 20+ hrs
have considered withdrawing

IT IS NOT JUST THE HOURS – JOB QUALITY MATTERS

Good managers and well-matched roles kept students on track for good grades – whatever their hours.

+10% more likely
good manager

+9% more likely
right-fit role

02 Students at work

Student working has surged into something structural

- Term-time working hit ~two-thirds (68%) by 2025, up from 45% in 2022; average paid hours roughly doubled to ~9/week
- It's need, not lifestyle – best-supported students still work 20+ hrs/week for basics, and 20+ hrs = ~20% less likely to get a good degree

But demand for work now outstrips supply

- ~90% of applicants expect to work in term time (34% over 16 hrs), yet only ~65% of current students manage it – too few jobs, plus timetabling and workload
- A third pick a course/uni because the timetable allows work; earnings now equal the maintenance loan as a funding source

Students will get blamed for rising NEET numbers

- The Milburn review ties youth inactivity to a thinning entry-level market; students and graduate-route holders circle the same "chairs"
- But its Labour Force Survey data can't see students – purpose-built surveys show working high and climbing fast

The graduate route is the pressure point – and it's being cut

- International students work more, not less; ~350–450k graduate-route holders sit mostly in entry-level, not graduate, jobs
- Route cut to 18 months from January 2027; the graduate NEET rise is concentrated among international graduates

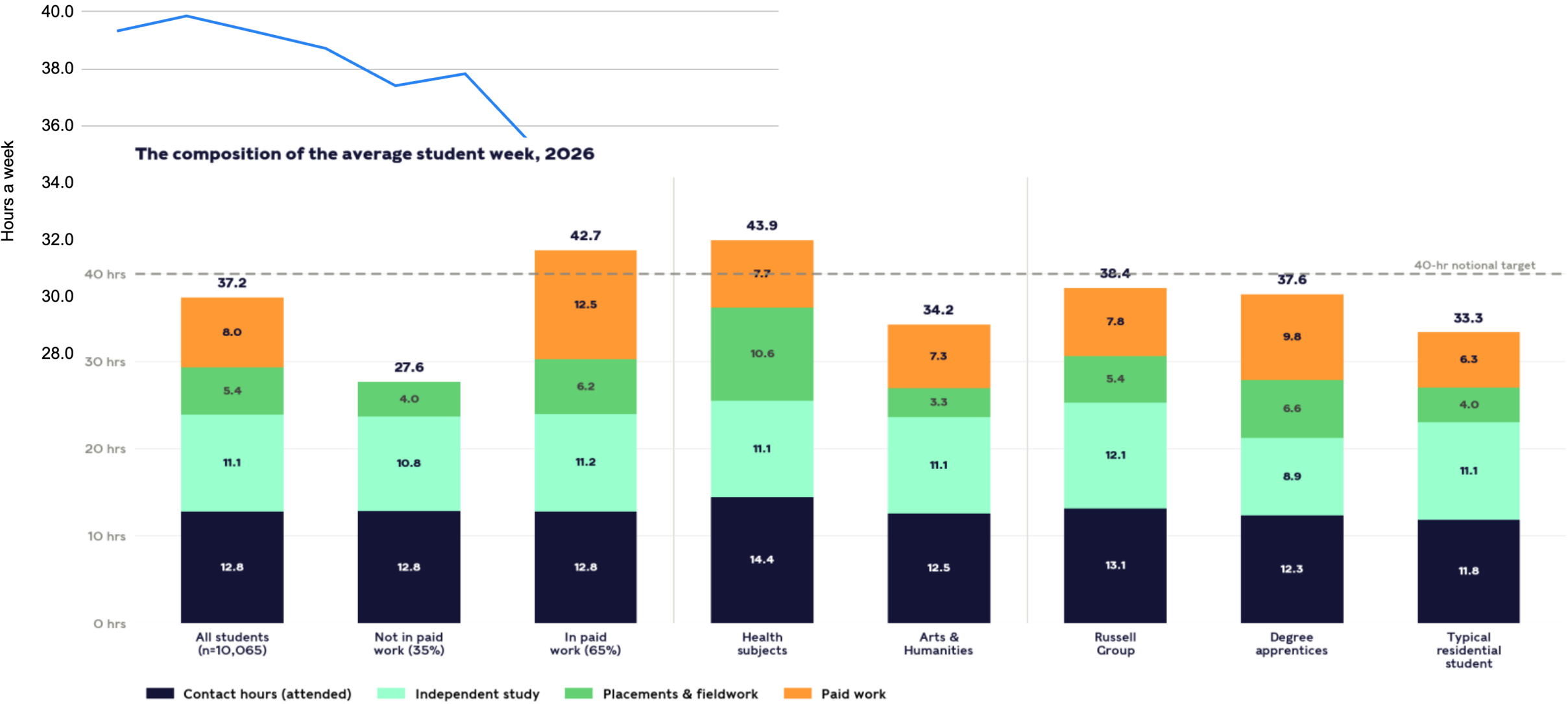
Zero hours contracts

- Zero and low hours contracts are all but being banned, you get guaranteed hours based on your average over 12 weeks
- But the proposals haven't factored in term-time working and jobs may end up scarce

The lever – and the SU role

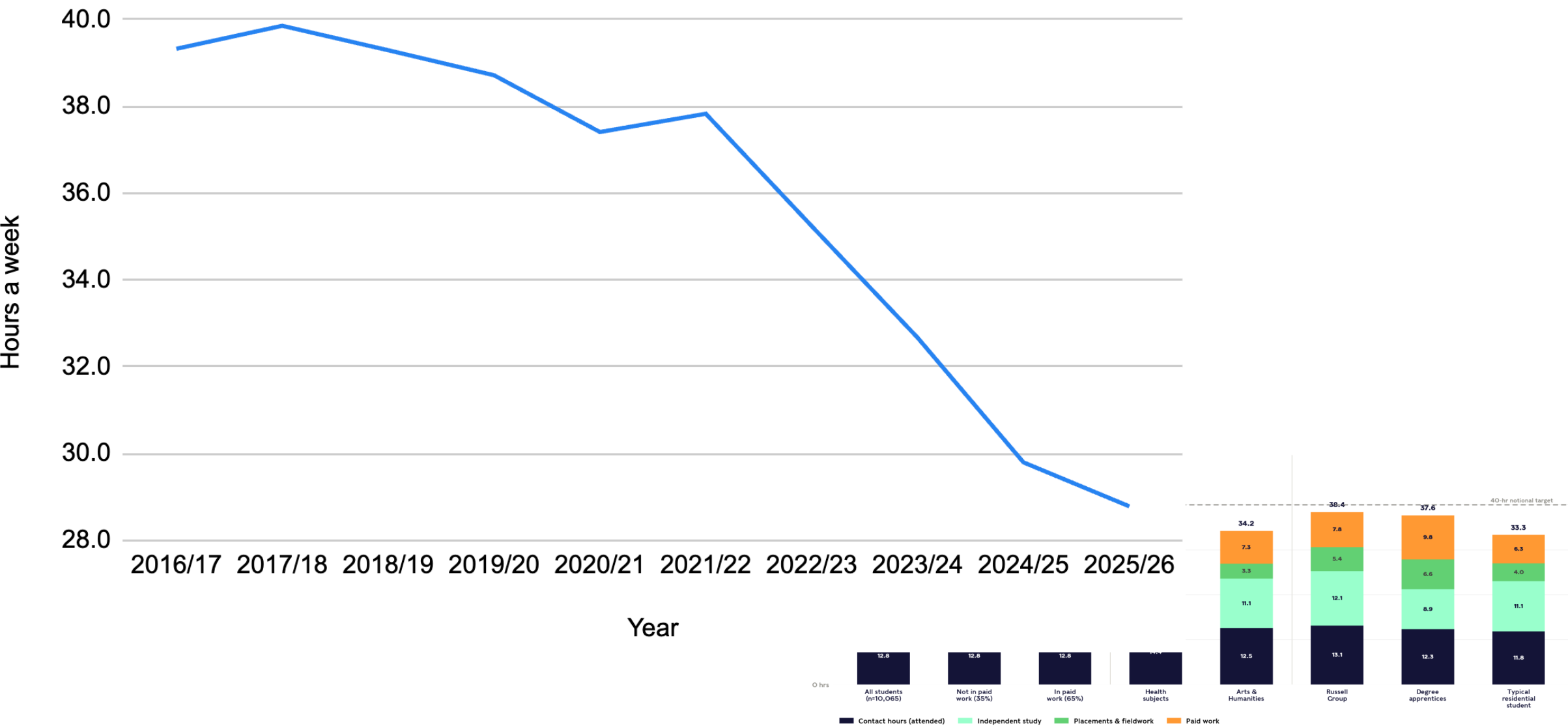
- Restoring maintenance is the one self-inflicted, in-reach fix – but it reaches only home students, so it's partial
- SUs: map the local job market, rights-at-work advice, a student jobs strategy/good-employer charter, timetable reform, watch guaranteed-hours risk

Hours a week vs Year



Source: HEPI/Advance HE SAES 2026. Trimmed means (contact excl. 0 and above 40; independent study excl. 0 and above 50; placements excl. above 50; paid work excl. 0 and above 30). Typical residential student = does not commute, lives in halls or shared accommodation.

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03

A new duty to treat students fairly (OfS Condition C6)

A real "treat students fairly" duty arrives

- From autumn 2026, universities must actually treat students fairly – not just "have regard to" consumer-law guidance
- Seven principles, a list of things they must do, a list they must never do, and key documents on one findable webpage

It matters because the current deal leaves students powerless

- Only ~half can describe their rights (44% of undergraduates); 36% wouldn't complain because they doubt it changes anything; 18% have heard of OfS
- Learned helplessness – students who follow the proper channels watch nothing change

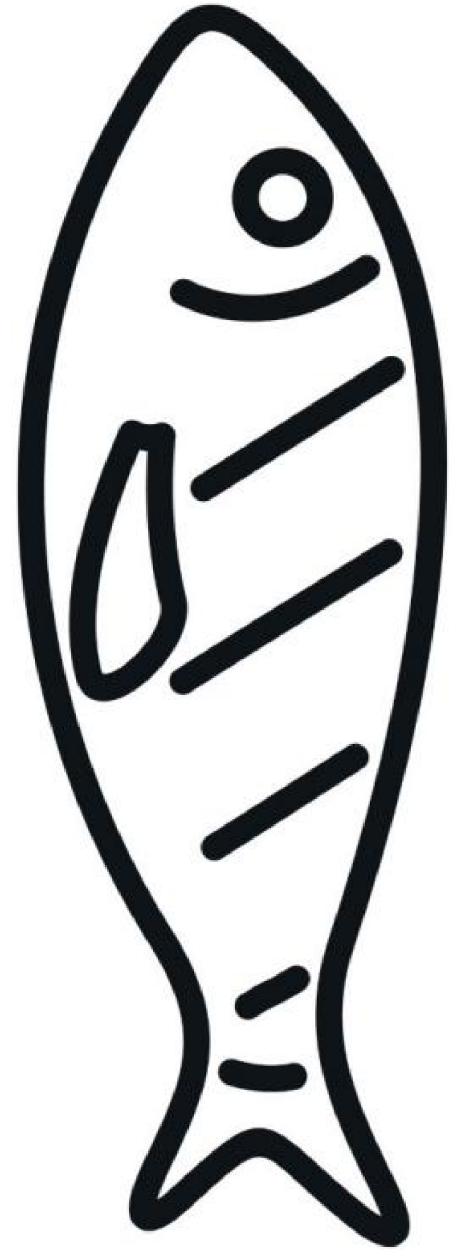
But the rule is aimed at fixing providers, not empowering students

- It targets provider conduct, not the demand side – no active rights education, no usable individual remedies
- Publication self-certifies; small cumulative course changes slip the threshold



Preparing for the fish

- At any one time, what is the “list” of fishing issues for you, your area and/or your organisation?
- What are the scenarios you can develop on how the items on the list could impact your organisation or your students and staff?
- How can you allocate these amongst the team? What more do you need to know?
- What else can you do to prepare for those scenarios, involving all?
- Are you confident that you are “prepared” for when they come along?



Crystal balls

