



## Draft Education International Policy Statement on Tuition Fees

1. Participation in higher education for all those who are qualified is a right enshrined in Article 26 of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and in the 1967 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*:  
*Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.*
2. Higher education is a public good that benefits all of society by contributing to social, cultural, democratic and economic development.
3. It is therefore the responsibility of states to promote and to guarantee the right to higher education by providing public funding that is sufficient to cover the full costs of education. Higher education is most equitably financed through public funding supported by a progressive income tax system.
4. Tuition fees are private user fees that can distort the academic mission of higher education institutions by transforming students into consumers and teachers into service providers. The competition for fee-paying customers amongst institutions undermines the core instructional and research mission of the university and shifts resources into commercial marketing, fundraising, recruitment and public relations.
5. Tuition fees have a disproportionately negative impact on women, minorities, indigenous peoples and economically-disadvantaged groups.
6. The introduction and increase of tuition fees in some jurisdictions have led to rising student debt levels. This has a negative economic impact as many graduates are forced to defer or forgo major purchases in order to meet their loan repayments. High levels of debt also negatively affect students' decisions to enter socially important but underpaid occupations. Consequently, the primary form of direct student financial assistance, including living allowances, should be needs-based grants.

7. In many jurisdictions international students are charged extraordinarily high tuition fees. This has a serious impact on the vast majority of students from less developed countries who are unable to afford these fees.
8. Tuition fees should not be charged students. Where tuition fees exist, governments should commit to gradually reduce fees with the eventual goal of elimination. Student financial assistance programs should provide opportunities for all academically qualified individuals to participate in higher education.
9. Governments and institutions should ensure that all barriers to participation, including financial ones, are removed.