

Tuition fees to rise at a faster rate than academics' salaries



By [Oscar Bentley](#), Editor (2018)
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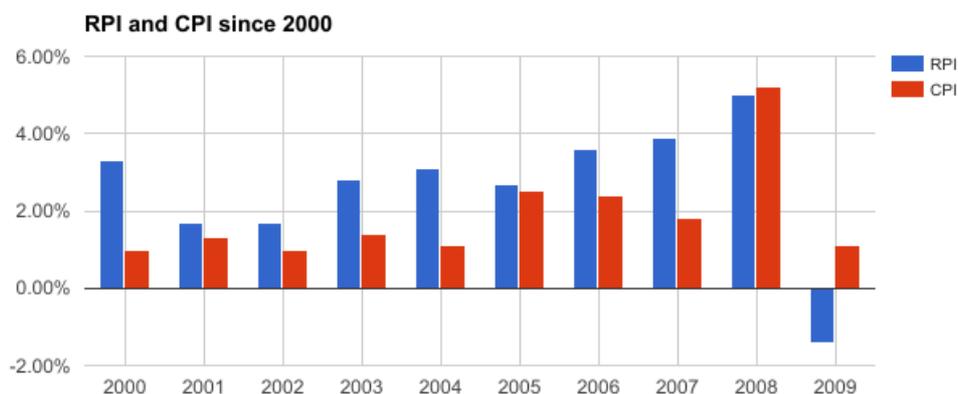


Image: UCU

Academic pay is rising at a lower rate than student tuition fees due to a difference in relative inflation rate calculations being used, Nouse has learned. While Academic pay has only increased by 1.1 per cent, tuition fees are set to increase by 2.1 per cent over the coming year.

The difference is to do with a discrepancy between the Retail Price Index (RPI) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI). While both measures calculate inflation by looking at the increase in price of a basket of goods and services such as food and fuel by comparing the price difference to that of a year ago, CPI fails to take into account home running costs including rent or mortgage and council tax, whereas RPI does. RPI also calculates the price change through an arithmetical mean, as opposed to CPI's geometrical mean. This results in RPI rising as a greater rate than CPI.

While the Government has set tuition fees to inflate in line with RPI, academic pay is set to inflate in line with CPI, a per centage point lower. However, up until the incoming cohort of freshers in the next academic year tuition fees were capped at £9 000, whereas academic salaries have seen a modest annual rise.

In October University management was contacted by Geoffrey Wall, president of the York executive branch of the University and Colleges Union (UCU), requesting that either York lobbied the Universities & Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) to raise the current 1.1 per cent CPI pay increase offer to that of a 2.1 per cent RPI offer, or decrease planned tuition fee rises for UK/ EU students in 2017-18 from £9 250 to £9 150, bringing their increase in line with that of academic pay. The University's response was "complex and detailed but not essentially persuasive", Wall added. Wall commented that: "Across the sector, new buildings and sixfigure senior management pay are clearly the priority. Academic pay is being insidiously reduced as a percentage of total expenditure", and that students "are right to question the priorities at a moment when their increasing fees are not going into enhancing their teaching."

In response to the discrepancy, University Registrar David Duncan stated: "Annual salary increases are

determined through national bargaining between UCEA and the recognised trade unions – UCU, Unison and Unite. They take into account the various measures of inflation but also other issues such as affordability, pensions costs and incremental drift. “The University of York has no direct control over UCEA’s negotiating position, though we do feed into this through an annual consultation. We are currently considering what we think will be affordable in 2017.”



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