



**Greetings one and all!**

Spring has officially sprung! Daylight savings, election season is (almost) over and Easter closure is coming up! 🐣

This newsletter will come to your inboxes every 6 weeks and provide you digestible policy news bites from the higher education sector. If you have any questions regarding the content of the March Policy Newsletter our inboxes are always open.

In solidarity,  
Caroline and Kashi x



**National Union of Students (NUS)**

On March 15, 2023 NUS hosted their annual National Conference and the LSESU sent four student delegates including our general secretary, Tilly! Our NUS delegates submitted a policy proposal entitled: "Should the NUS actively support Universities' affiliations with Stonewall? They also voted for other universities' policies and for students nominated to be part of the Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) and the National Scrutiny Council (NSC) — student democracy in action!

LSESU submitted evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Students inquiry into the impact of the cost of living crisis on students. Over 70 Student Unions submitted evidence on the struggles students are facing.

The APPG published its final report in March 2023, making a series of recommendations. [Click here to read the report.](#) The report includes many of the recommendations regarding NUS' [Cost of Living Campaign](#):

**The APPG has recommended that the UK Government:**

- Provides additional hardship funding through universities
- Increases student maintenance loans and protect loans from inflation forecast errors
- Consider re-introducing means-tested maintenance grants
- Increase the lower household income threshold for the maximum student loan

**For universities, the following recommendations are made:**

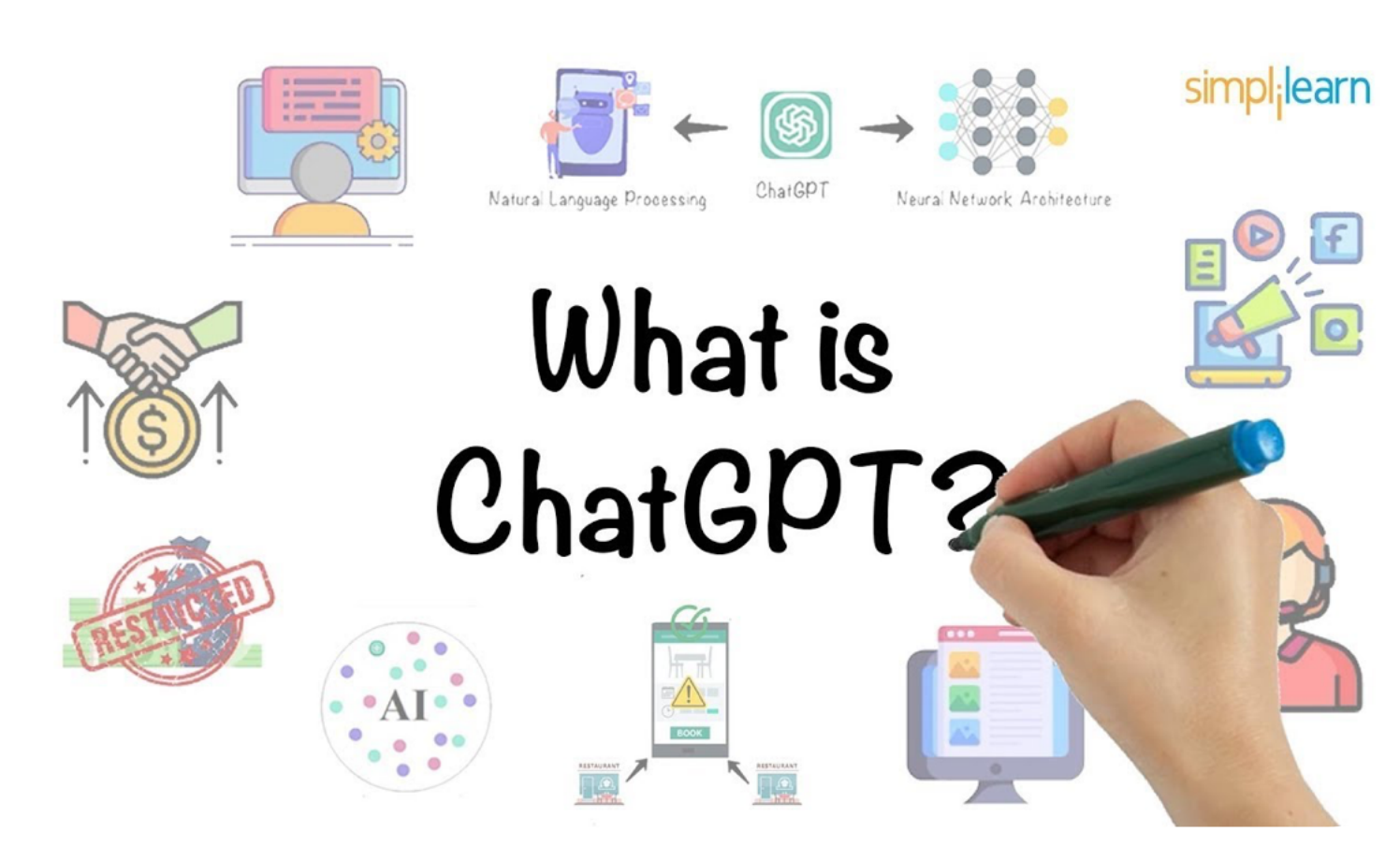
- Increase student awareness of financial support
- Review application processes for support and remove barriers
- Share information on cost-of-living initiatives
- Provide specific support for students working long hours in paid employment

**Universities of the United Kingdom (UUK)**

**Violence at university: new survey available for universities and SUs**

A research partnership led by City, University of London, has developed a survey that can be used to understand students' experiences of all forms of violence and victimisation while studying at university. The survey is now available for other higher education institutions to use. The survey can be a useful tool in helping universities and SUs understand how students may experience violence and harassment in their specific context. While it is not a survey focusing on prevalence of violence, it can give a better understanding of the nature of issues students face, and help universities and SUs take a more targeted response. The survey can be found [here](#) and is free to use for all HE institutions.

If you would like to make use of this survey please contact the research team via [Carrie Myers at City University](#). This will help the team to further evaluate the survey and inform possible future stages of their work.



**International**

**Chat GPT - The Future of AI in Higher Education**

The use of technology and specifically AI has been an increasing issue within higher education and discussions around plagiarism for some time now. More recently Chat GPT has caused a commotion due to its use in academic assessments.

**What is Chat GPT?**

Chat GPT is an AI tool that can be accessed via a website. It can be used to produce texts by providing a brief or instruction in a text box, after which the tool provides a text immediately.

ChatGPT has not been designed to provide correct information. Rather, it has been designed to mimic human-made texts by putting words together in a way that the programme has seen in the texts it has been trained on.

**What risks does Chat GPT pose to academic assessments?**

Chat GPT has received lots of attention after students globally have used the platform to create essays and other university assignments. The reason why this poses a risk to academic regulation is because Chat GPT, unlike many other AI tools, produces high-quality texts that until recently did not alert the TurnIt In anti-plagiarism system.

**What is the response to Chat GPT by the Higher Education sector so far?**

TurnIt In has come out with an AI Innovation Lab, a tool detecting AI generated texts. Further, universities internationally have reacted by banning and limiting the use of the tool as part of their anti-plagiarism and academic regulation policies.

**There's a crisis of academic casualisation and precarity at the LSE. Insecure and short-term contracts are rife. We're social scientists, so we decided to research how serious the problem is. Check out the twitter thread [here](#).**

**University and College Union (UCU)**

**Strike Update:**

The last scheduled strike occurred on March 22, 2023 and UCU have not announced any further strike dates for the rest of the academic year.

There's been negotiation talks but why are UCU continuing to strike?

The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), which represents university employers, made the UCU a pay offer worth 4 to 5 per cent, which the union has said is insufficient.

**Pensions:**

In the pension dispute, the UCU is demanding employers revoke the cuts and restore benefits. The union says the package of cuts made last year will see the average member lose 35 per cent from their guaranteed future retirement income, and for those at the beginning of their careers, the losses would be hundreds of thousands of pounds.

**What does Jo Grady — UCU general secretary — say about the strikes?**

*"The employer chose to put out their pay offer and make it clear that it is final and that universities can implement the initial element of that pay offer [...] this is not a pay offer that has been agreed with us as a union, or any of the other unions involved in the negotiations.*

*"The reasons we've added this additional date is to focus the employers mind as talks come to a conclusion this week and especially early next week. They need to have on them the maximum amount of pressure."*

**What is the UCEA's current response?**

The UCEA says any increase in pay "puts jobs at risk", and has defended its pay offer.

**LSE Policy Spotlight**

Going forward, we will be highlighting and raising awareness about a different LSE policy for each upcoming newsletter. In these spotlights we want to ensure we all are up to speed with policies that not only affect students we work with but also might directly relate to us and our colleagues.

This time we will be looking at the Disability policy. Disabilities are protected under the 2010 Equality Act and additionally often covered by internal policies. This is important as different institutions will have unique contexts within which students and staff need to be protected and accommodated.

The LSE Disability Policy sets out guidance for staff only, signposting to a separate student policy, however the page that is titled "Student Disability Policy" leads to this [site](#) referring to the LSE disability policy... which is the staff policy.



Needless to say, this is not a transparent or clear pathway for disabled students to access information about their rights and regulations within LSE. Hopefully this will be addressed soon but in the meantime if you have any students asking you about LSE's disability policy [this](#) would be the ideal page to signpost to for now.

**Demand anti-Apartheid Measures at LSE & sign the open letter [here](#).**

