

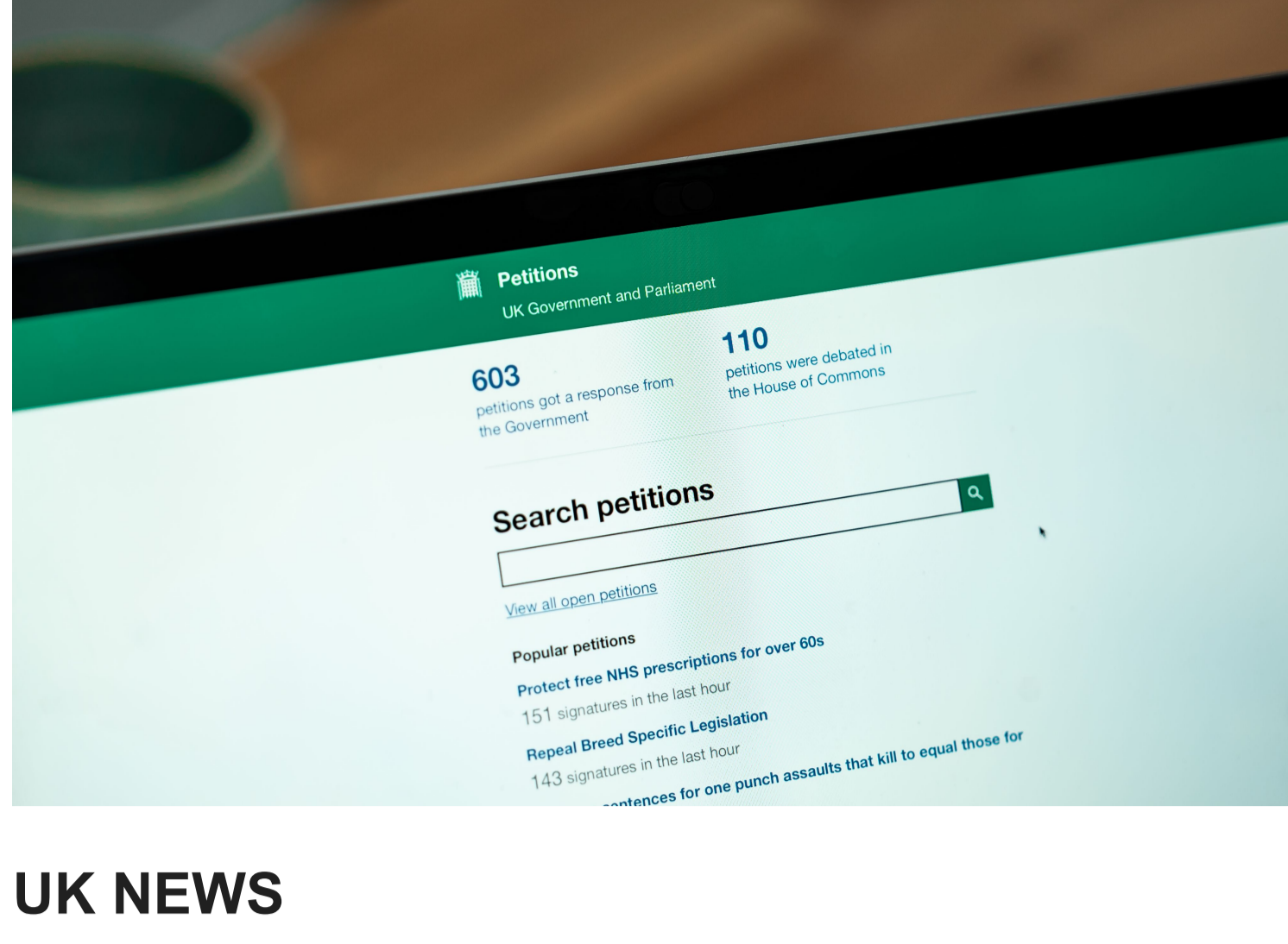
POLICY NEWSLETTER

Greetings one and all!

Huge congratulations to Leonie and Victoria for delivering an outstanding teaching awards ceremony last night! And good luck to the Societies team for their award ceremony on Tuesday!

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



UK NEWS

In higher education institutions there has been a further increase in the number of student suicides due to a lack of care towards students, particularly those suffering from mental health and social anxiety issues.

Campaigners say around 100 students take their own lives every year in the UK, hence the 'ForThe100' hashtag and argue that: "a duty of care is owed to students, and the government should legislate for this. Higher education providers should know what their duty is. Students must know what they can expect. Parents expect their children to be safe at university."

The petition was launched by a group of parents and siblings of some of the students who took their own lives while at university attracted 128,293 signatures and highlights that no general statutory duty of care currently exists in higher education.

It hopes to change the culture and conversations surrounding mental health and help future students. The petition aims to put pressure on the government and NHS to provide more support for universities so they can effectively manage the increase in the decline of students' mental health.

After repeating the government's position about universities having a duty "not to cause harm by careless acts or omissions" and adding that they have legal duties relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and equalities legislation, the Universities UK (UUK) briefing went on to say: "We believe that existing duties provide a proportionate and practical regulatory framework for student safety and health."

The parliamentary debate on 5 June will allow MPs from all parties to discuss the petition and put their concerns to government ministers but will not involve a vote on changing the law, which will require additional legislation.

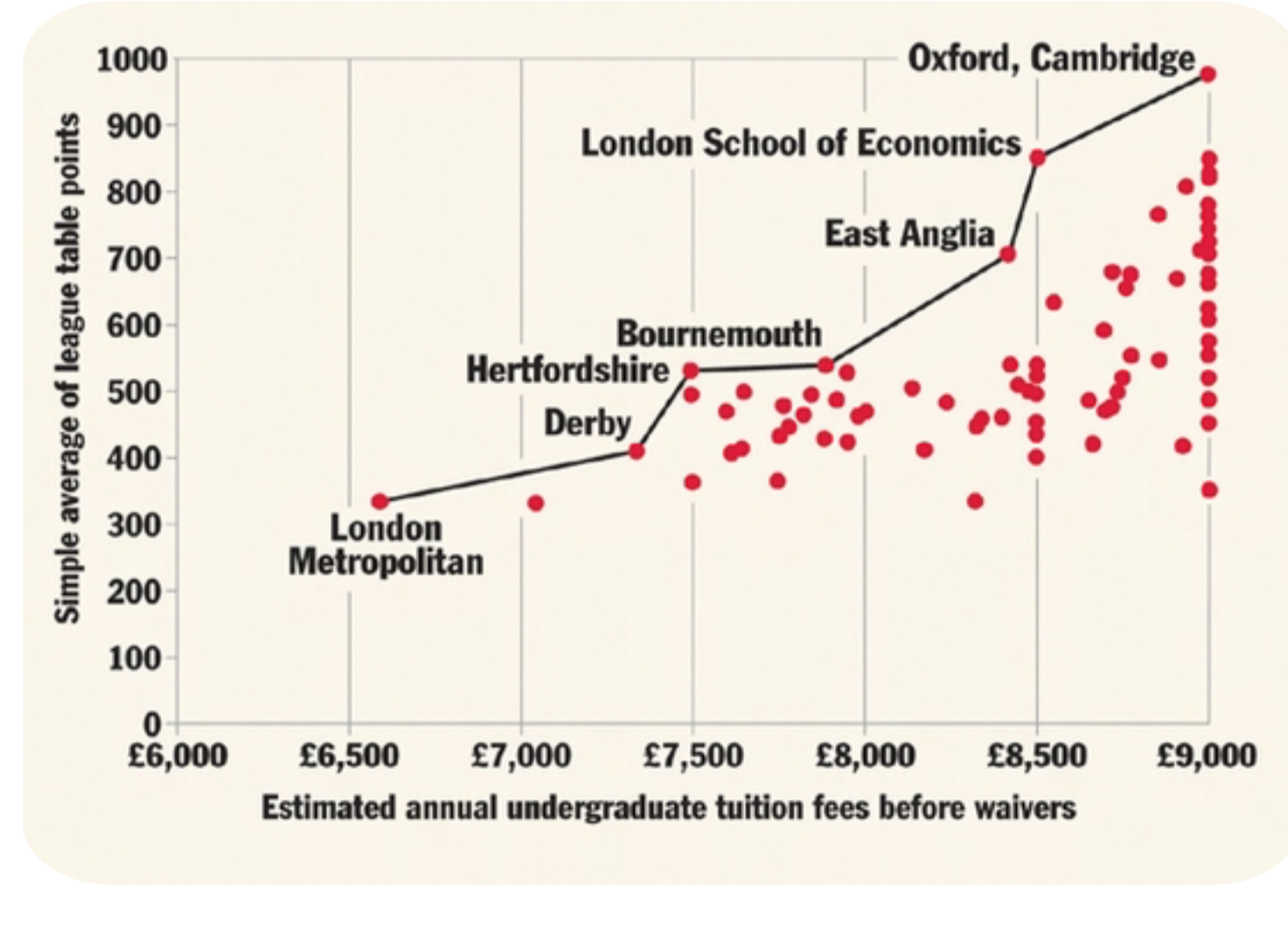
You can read the full article [here](#).

Universities of the United Kingdom (UUK)

UUK have released a briefing note on best practice for student accommodation. Due to the rising inflation and renting markets becoming increasingly competitive, students will be specially affected by precarious housing conditions. In this brief UUK have put together a range of data and recommendations for senior leadership of universities to consider. This includes creative and innovative solutions exemplified through case studies across the UK.

For example, University of Glasgow is working with a tech start-up to create an app for students that makes the renting process more transparent and accessible. "The app will put students in touch with verified landlords, (...) while also handling paperwork, increasing security."

To read more about different case studies click [here](#).



University and College Union (UCU)

STRIKES

On April 3 of this year, UCU received an extended mandate for further industrial action until 30 September 30, 2023. On April 5, 2023 they notified employers of a marking and assessment boycott (MAB) due to start on 20 April: this was confirmed on 17 April following an e-ballot of UCU members.

TUITION FEES

In May 2023, Keir Starmer U-turned on the Labour Party's pledge to abolish the current student tuition fee policy in England. UCU responded by saying:

"The current tuition fee model is broken. It has saddled students with decades of debt, turned universities from sites of learning into labyrinthine businesses obsessed with generating revenue and surpluses over all else, and led to staff pay and working conditions being degraded causing unprecedented industrial unrest."

LSE Policy Spotlight

EDI Policy

In this newsletter's LSE policy spotlight we will be looking at the [EDI policy](#). The EDI policy statement was developed by LSE's EDI team, who work with stakeholders across the school to ensure that LSE is adhering to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion standards and practices. EDI standards are universally set and protected under the 2010 Equality Act, which ensures that people with protected characteristics are not discriminated against.

The current [EDI Policy Statement](#) is very brief and states 4 core principles:

- 1) To advance diversity of student recruitment, equity of attainment, and an inclusive community
- 2) To promote inclusive teaching, education and engagement
- 3) To promote diversity amongst the School's staff communities, and an inclusive staff experience
- 4) To achieve an inclusive School environment, which promotes equality of respect and opportunity for all members of the School's diverse community.

The policy is advised to be read in conjunction with the [2017-2022 EDI strategy](#), which offers aside from the same 4 core points some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on how the success of these 4 goals will be measured. There are a few gaps to be identified in the policy.

- The policy lacks any definitions or explanations of terminology, which may be difficult to understand for students and staff unfamiliar with EDI.
- The review schedule is set to be renewed every 3 years, however the current version that can be found online seems to be Version 1, published in 2017.
- Whilst KPIs have been included in the strategy, none of them are measurable and lack concrete goals. This means identifying the success of implementing the policy is hard to hold to account or view with transparency for students and staff.

Given that a new strategy is due to be released as the previous one was set for the timeframe of 2017-2022, this will hopefully reviewed and remedied.

Office for Students

New Equal Access Regulation

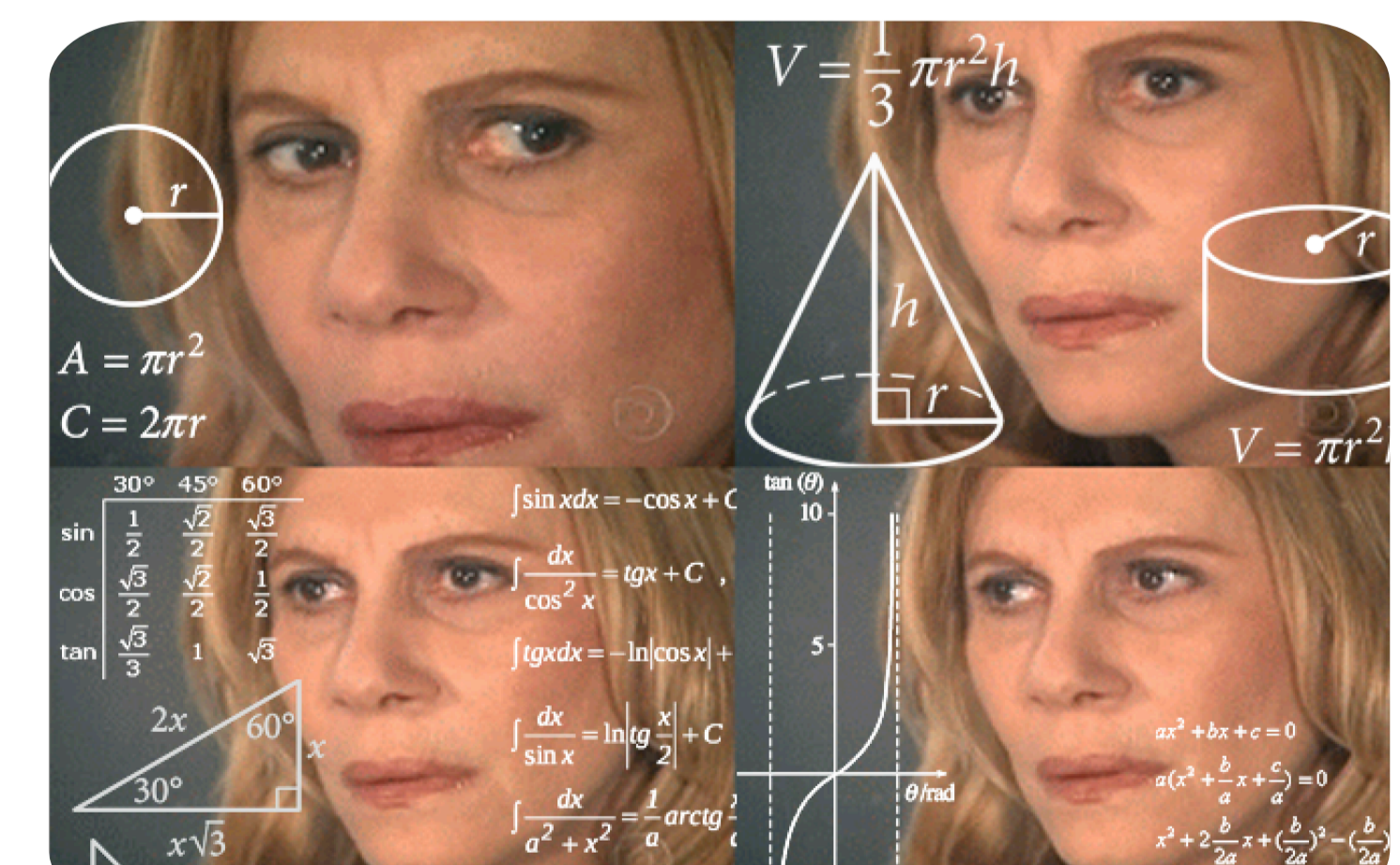
The Office for Students has released a new regulation to come into effect this summer and be gradually rolled out until next year. The regulation sets out that each HE provider should publish an "Access and Participation Plan" if they want to be able to charge more than the basic amount of tuition fees, which LSE falls under.

An "Access and Participation Plan" is supposed to "clearly set out the key risks to equality of opportunity that current and prospective students are facing, and how it will address these."

Which students are aimed to be protected under this new regulation?

- Students in receipt of free school meals.
- Students with certain characteristics, including care experienced students, students who are estranged from their families, and students from Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- Students with a protected characteristic identified by the Equality Act 2010 who do not experience equality of opportunity because of that protected characteristic.
- Students who experience multiple barriers to higher education or who are identified when looking at intersections of characteristics, such as male students who are in receipt of free school meals.

The latter point is an unconventional choice of example for intersectionality, however the thought was there.



Given LSE's high fees, especially for postgraduate degrees, it will have to submit an Access and Participation Plan to OFS. However, in a consultation with HE providers it was decided that the roll out will be gradual and therefore not all HE providers will have to submit this by this summer. LSE will be working towards submitting their plan early 2024 with Emma McCoy leading the Access and Participation Plan Steering Group.

As there are certain criteria in place for LSE to adhere to such as a student consultation period before the submission of the plan, LSESU should keep track of the developments and apply extra pressure to ensure that students are adequately consulted.

This implementation overall signifies a positive direction for equal access to education and hopefully will formalise the need to cater to marginalised students' needs more.

To read more about the guidance by OFS click [here](#).

For more information on the HE consultation on this guidance click [here](#).

A message from our new CEO, Ben Whittaker: "We're all policy people!"

