

# CAMPAIGN FOR THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

## FACTSHEET 1: 5 Reasons to Defend Public Higher Education

The Government's policies for higher education remove direct public funding for undergraduate degrees in arts, humanities and social sciences and replace that funding by student fees supported by loans. They also pave the way for the entry of for-profit multinational corporations, such as Pearson International and the Apollo Group to provide undergraduate degrees.

### 1. Public higher education facilitates public debate and trust in expert knowledge.

Critical knowledge serves a public good that is guaranteed by the character of the university as an *institution*. Universities are not *aggregates* of individuals, they are *communities of knowledge*; that is, communities of scholars and researchers engaged together with issues of truth and validity. They are essential to the quality of public debate and a flourishing democratic public sphere.

### 3. Public higher education systems are cheaper and offer better value for money than a private system supported through student loans.

The British public university system currently outperforms other systems and comes top both for teaching and research. It is also cheaper than other systems, especially the USA which the Government seeks to emulate, with its elite high-fee private universities, cash-starved public universities, and sub-prime, for-profit universities.

### 5. Public higher education systems are inclusive and provide higher education as a social right.

Mass higher education is a product of democracy and has been delivered by public universities. Public universities have universalised the aspiration to higher education. Higher education provides benefits to individuals, but a system of publicly-funded institutions, where similar courses receive similar funding across institutions, reduces the unfair advantages of private, secondary education.

### 2. Public higher education is not only about training in employment skills. A university education is about more than technical training and serves local and regional communities as well as individuals.

While the 'student as consumer' is the Government's primary emphasis, the university is an institution with many functions. Research and teaching are separated in government thinking, with only their utilitarian value to individuals and employers acknowledged. What is proposed is a one-dimensional system in place of a complex and diverse system.

### 4. Public higher education is part of an intergenerational contract in which older generations invest in the wellbeing of future generations that will support them in turn.

The cost of higher education is being shifted from current tax payers onto future generations who will be indebted, face reduced employment prospects and poorer pensions. At the same time, the future cost of the new system of loans will also be paid for by the students as future tax payers.

These reasons and other arguments for public higher education are set out in the **Alternative White Paper: In Defence of Public Higher Education** available from the Campaign for the Public University's website: <http://publicuniversity.org.uk/2011/09/27/higher-education-white-paper-is-provoking-a-winter-of-discontent/>