

Dear Tom Hunt,

I hope this letter finds you well.

As an elected Sabbatical Officer from the University of Suffolk, I am reaching out to request a meeting to discuss support for students struggling with the cost of living crisis. As you will know, the cost of living crisis is already having a significant impact on the community, and this is particularly true for the students I represent. With inflation now passing 10% (ONS), we must now act so that students can not only survive but thrive through their university experience.

Here in Suffolk, we have a growing student population contributing to the economy of the county, however right now students are feeling disenfranchised and are unable to participate in community life and a staggering 96% of students are cutting back (NUS national data).

What are they cutting back on?

- 52% are spending less on food
- 42% have cut back on heating
- 42% have cut back on transport
- 41% have cut back on healthcare
- 77% have cut back on socialising
- 69% have cut back on clothes

11% of students across the country are using food banks, 46% can no longer afford course materials, 33% are using credit cards, 29% have taken loans from family, 24% are using buy now and pay later schemes, and 12% have taken out bank loans. One third of students have considered dropping out of their studies due to finances, whilst 1 in 3 students are left with less than £50 a month after paying rent and bills. 90% say it is affecting their mental health. All of this is before the winter months when energy costs and inflation are set to rise even further, with little support on the horizon.

We are currently working with the Vice-Chancellor and University about what we can do for students and would like to meet with you to discuss ways in which you can use your voice in Parliament to secure additional support for the students in your constituency such as:

- Tie student maintenance support with inflation
- Stress test all cost of living support schemes to ensure they work for students
- Reform Universal Credit to include fair access for students
- Cap student rent to prevent a student homelessness crisis
- Provide funding to education providers to deliver improved hardship funds
- Adjust maintenance loan thresholds to reflect changes to family income

We intend to keep our students updated on our Cost-of-Living campaign and will be making this communication public. We look forward to your response and working with you on this to improve the lives and experience of our students.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Gooch

President of Education, BA (Hons) Special Educational Needs and Disability Studies

University of Suffolk Students' Union

