

Our universities are just a part of Broken Britain

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This is [from the Guardian](#) this morning:

Funding model for UK higher education is 'broken', say university VCs

Vice-chancellors urge review of tuition fees in light of caps on overseas students and rising costs



Students at Bristol University. Higher education funding is forecast to drop to its lowest level in real terms since the 1990s, says Universities UK. Photograph: Adrian Sherratt/Alamy

University Vice Chancellors (who, as a group, are by far the biggest winners from the current system of university funding) are saying the system is broken.

Tuition fees have not worked for UK-based students.

The penal charges after leaving university are making people question whether it is worth going.

The funds from overseas students are threatened by new migration law changes.

The viability of many universities is in serious doubt. Many are in fairly persistent deficit now.

So, yet again, the Tories have proven that imposing a private financing model on a public utility not only does not work but will bring it to its knees.

Of course, if you believe in education for an elite, this is the result you have always sought. I suspect that many in the Conservatives will be happy with this outcome.

But let's look at it another way. Firstly universities are a massive export earner for the UK. If we wish to undermine this export business when most others are already failing the Tories are going the right way about doing so, but this makes no economic sense.

Second, imposing charges on students is bad enough. Imposing penal interest rates on supposed loans taken out to fund education for the benefit of society is madness: it is all about redistributing income upwards from those who have not got parents who can cover their full costs when at university to those who have.

So most certainly this system is broken.

But then so too are universities themselves, where the commodification of the university often seems of greater importance than the supply of education. The over-administration that is a characteristic of the NHS under similar pressures is also to be found in the university sector. That also needs reform.

But are the VCs right? Of course they are. Universities are just joining the rest of education, healthcare, social care, and so much more in broken Britain. All the Tories have proved is that if you set out to break the country, then you can. The trouble was, they never had any idea what should be put in place of all they wrecked.