

# Student Representation in the United Kingdom

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Quality Assurance Agency for  
Higher Education

## Some facts about UK Higher Education

**Every University is completely independent of the state and is responsible for the standards of its own awards**

- **166** Universities and colleges with authority to grant degrees
- **600** bodies delivering higher education courses (technical colleges, businesses, charities, overseas partners)

## Some facts about UK Higher Education

**2.4 Million** students studying higher education courses

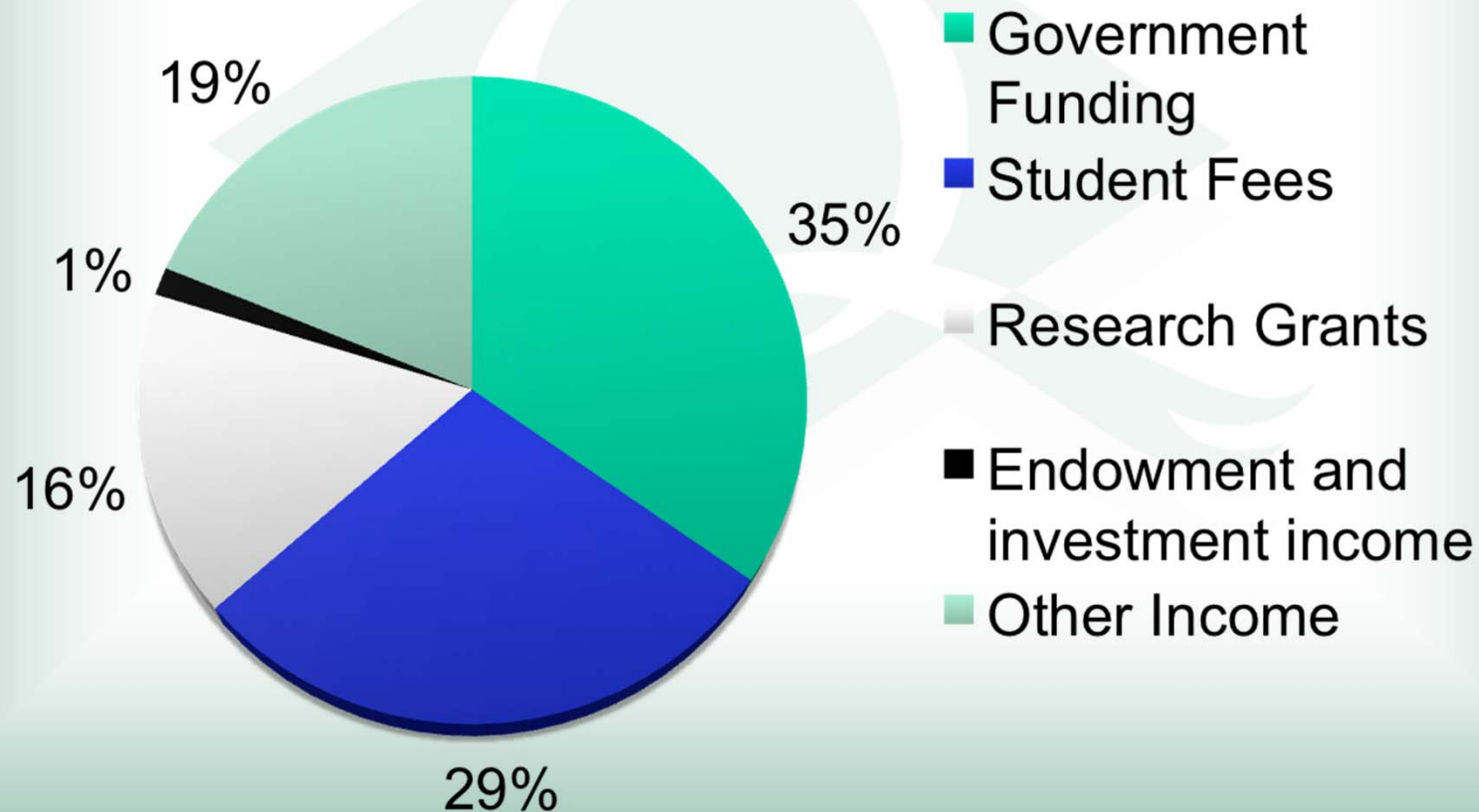
**1.8 million** undergraduate (1<sup>st</sup> cycle)

**600,000** postgraduate (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle)

**190,000** overseas students (75,000 from the EU and 115,000 non-EU)

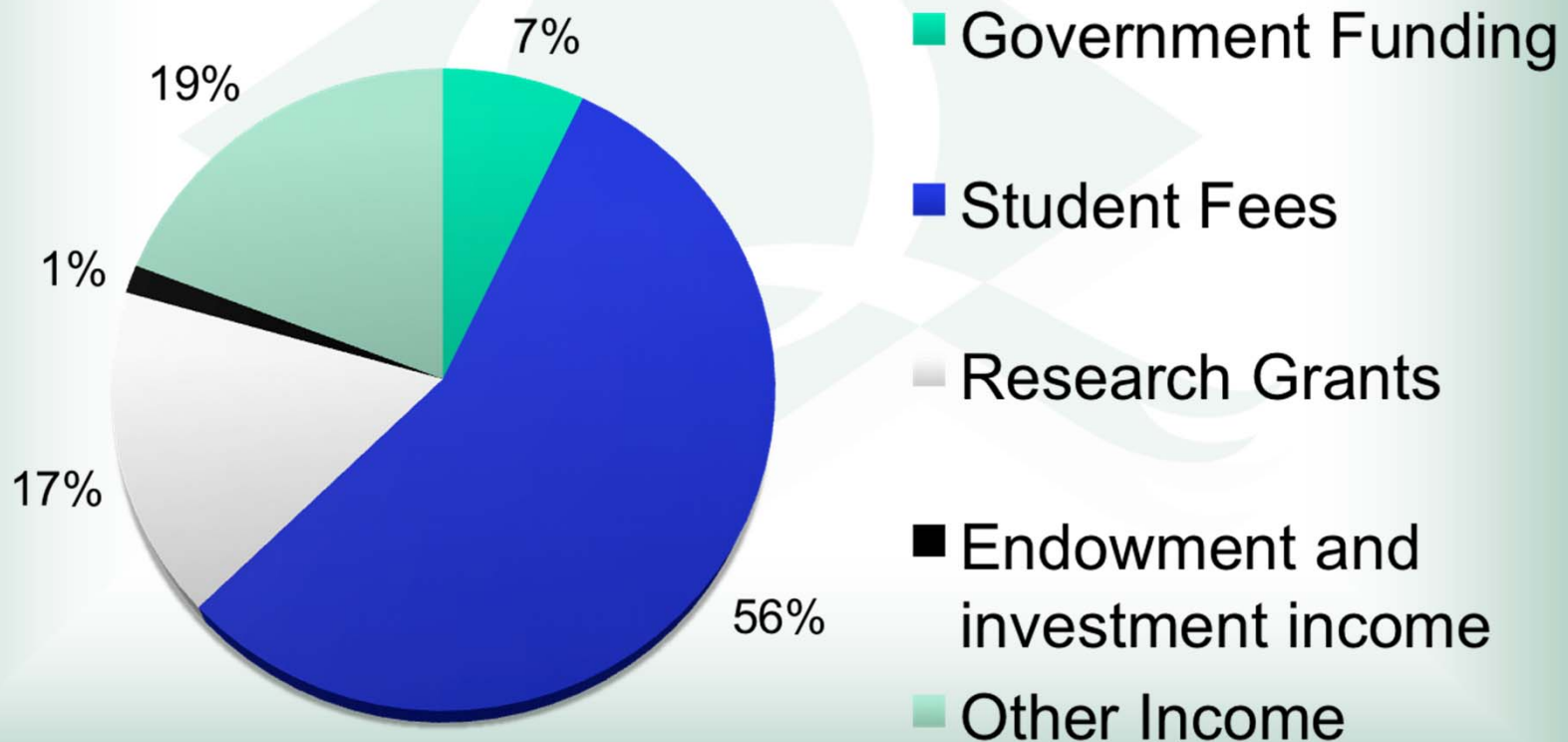
## Some facts about UK Higher Education

- Income **2008/9** = £25 million (€29million)



## Some facts about UK Higher Education

- Income **2011+** = £25 million (€29million)



## Some facts about UK Higher Education

**Quality Assurance** – based on the deeply held principle of *institutional autonomy*

Universities validate their own courses, there is **no** input or accreditation by the Government

QAA is responsible for reviewing strategic management at the University level **not** course/subject level

QAA also provides guidance and support to Universities

# Student Representation in the UK

- Based on the principle that higher education is about empowering students to take control and responsibility for their own learning
- QAA strategic statement:  
*“students are active participants in their own education and therefore can and should be directly involved in shaping their own education”*

## QAA's work with students



***Putting students at the centre of everything we do***



# Social Media

The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for the 'QAA Student Auditors' group. The group name is at the top, followed by navigation tabs for Wall, Info, Discussions, Photos, and Events. A sidebar on the left contains group management options like 'Message all members', 'Edit group settings', and 'The Quality Assurance Agency Student Auditor Facebook Group'. The main content area features a post by Maureen McLaughlin titled 'Institutional review consultation' with a link to www.qaa.ac.uk. Below the post are comments from Amran Hussain and Rebecca Watson, and a link to a news article about David Willetts' speech to Universities UK.

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile for QAA (@QAAtweets). The profile includes the QAA logo, the name 'QAA', and the handle '@QAAtweets'. The bio states: 'The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education - independently monitoring academic standards and quality in UK higher education.' and provides the website URL 'http://www.qaa.ac.uk'. The page shows a 'Following' button and navigation tabs for Timeline, Favorites, Following, Followers, and Lists. The timeline displays three tweets from QAA, including announcements about a consultation on proposed changes to the Academic Infr... and the publication of an Information bulletin.



# Social Media



A screenshot of a YouTube channel page for QAA (QAAtube's Channel). The main video is titled "Using student feedback to improve the quality of learning". The video player shows a progress bar at 2:16 / 3:36 and a resolution of 360p. Below the video, there are options for "Info", "Favorite", "Share", "Playlists", and "Flag". The video description reads: "Why is student engagement important? From: QAAtube | December 15, 2009 | 257 views. A brief video exploring the reasons why senior managers in universities think engaging and involving students is important." To the right of the video, there is a list of related videos, including "Annual Subscribers' 92 views - 5 months ago", "QAA Institutional audit - What is it? 440 views - 1 year ago", "APQN Information Package Workshop 174 views - 9 months ago", "Why is student engagement 257 views - 1 year ago", "The benefits and opportunities of 67 views - 1 year ago", "QAA Institutional Audit - Top Tips 53 views - 1 year ago", and "Annual Subscribers' 92 views - 5 months ago". Below the video, there is a "Channel Comments (2)" section with two comments from "ademitch" (6 months ago): "Quaaango today. Gone tomorrow ?" and "Thankyou so much ...for curing my insomnia :-)". There is also a "Recent Activity" section which states "There hasn't been any recent activity." The channel profile information includes: "Profile", "Channel Views: 9,601", "Total Upload Views: 1,569", "Joined: December 11, 2009", "Last Visit Date: 1 month ago", "Subscribers: 13", "Website: http://www.qaa.ac.uk", and "About Me".



**QAA**

[www.youtube.com/qaatube](http://www.youtube.com/qaatube)



# Reviews

Students Reviewers since 2009

Review teams always have 3 meeting with students

Students' Unions provide separate independent evidence



**QAA**

# Governance

Student Member of QAA Board

Student Sounding Board



**QAA**

# Training and Guidance

Work with NUS

Guidance films and booklets

Training events



The image is a screenshot of the QAA website's navigation menu. It features a search bar at the top right and a list of menu items on the left, each with a corresponding link to a page of content on the right. The menu items include: About us, News and events, Publications, Types of review, Standards and quality, Supporting developments in HE, Working in partnership, Degree awarding powers and university title, Complaints in HE, Vacancies, FAQs, and Contact us. The right-hand side of the menu lists specific content such as "Integrated quality and enhancement review: England", "Case studies - producing the student written submission", and various case study links for developmental and summative reviews.

# The National Union of Students



**Represents 6 million students in the UK**  
higher and further education

Income is drawn mainly from subscription by students' unions (up to £50,000 per year)

The **only** representative voice for students in the UK and is recognised by the Government.



n u s

President – Aaron Porter







- **History**

- Established in 1922 to campaign against war
- All Universities had signed up by 1924
- Gradual evolution into the 1960s when it began to campaign for student rights
- Created a commercial operation in the 1970s (Endsleigh Insurance, STA Travel and NUS Services)



- Campaigned vigorously against the Conservative Governments in the 1980s and 1990s



- History continued . . .
  - **1994 Education Act** tried to abolish students' unions. NUS campaign reversed the position and secured legal recognition and requirement for Universities to fund them
  - 1998 – 2010 NUS' leading campaigns have been about funding and student fees for higher education. They have **failed** to convince Labour and Conservative/Liberal Governments that students should not have to fund their education



- Research and Development
  - NUS has a team of almost 100 staff supporting its work
  - Research teams provide analysis of student trends and input into major policy changes
  - Key areas are:
    - Education Policy
    - Student Welfare
    - Students' Union Development

## Local Students' Unions

- 1994 Education Act states that every university must recognise and fund its students' union
- 166 higher education students' unions working in partnership with their university to represent students

# Local Students' Unions

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4FHmq6FKYI>



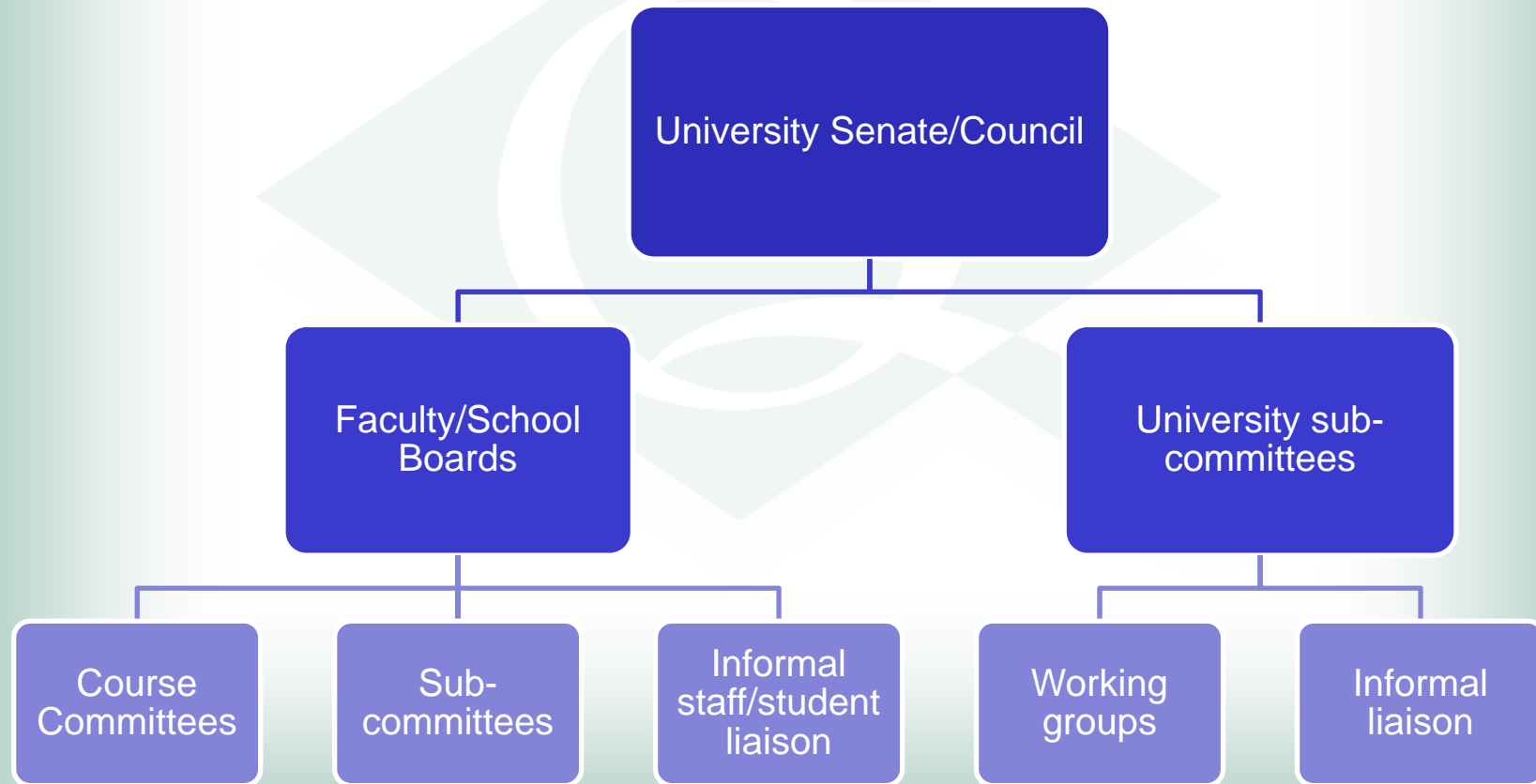
# Local Students' Unions

- Very large range of services:
  - Bars
  - Shops
  - Cafes
  - Sports clubs
  - Social groups
  - Welfare
  - **Advice and support for complaints**
  - **Representation**

## Local Students' Unions

- Between 3 and 10 students elected to lead the work
- Staff employed to organise day to day management and provide support

# Student Representation at University level





# Student Representation at University level

Training provided by the students' union

Student representative often paid for their time

Current focus is on getting student more involved in designing and shaping their own curriculum

# Current and future challenges

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0ghQjofwRQ>



# A vision of students today

## Consumerism

*“I pay \$100 for text books I never open”*

*“My neighbour paid for class but never turns up”*

*“I read 49% of my allocated reading, but only 26% is relevant to my life”*

*“I’ll be \$20,000 in debt after graduation”*

# A vision of students today

Less personalised

*“Only 18% of my lecturers know my name”*

*“My average class size is 115”*



# A vision of students today

New Technology/Developments, rapid changes

*"This year I will read:*

*8 Books*

*2,300 websites*

*1,281 facebook profiles"*

*"I will write 42 pages for class this year and over 500 emails!"*

*"When I graduate, I will probably have a job that doesn't exist today"*

# Social Networking

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFZ0z5Fm-Ng>





**How do we meet  
these challenges?**