Student Representation in the United Kingdom

Derfel Owen

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

QAA

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
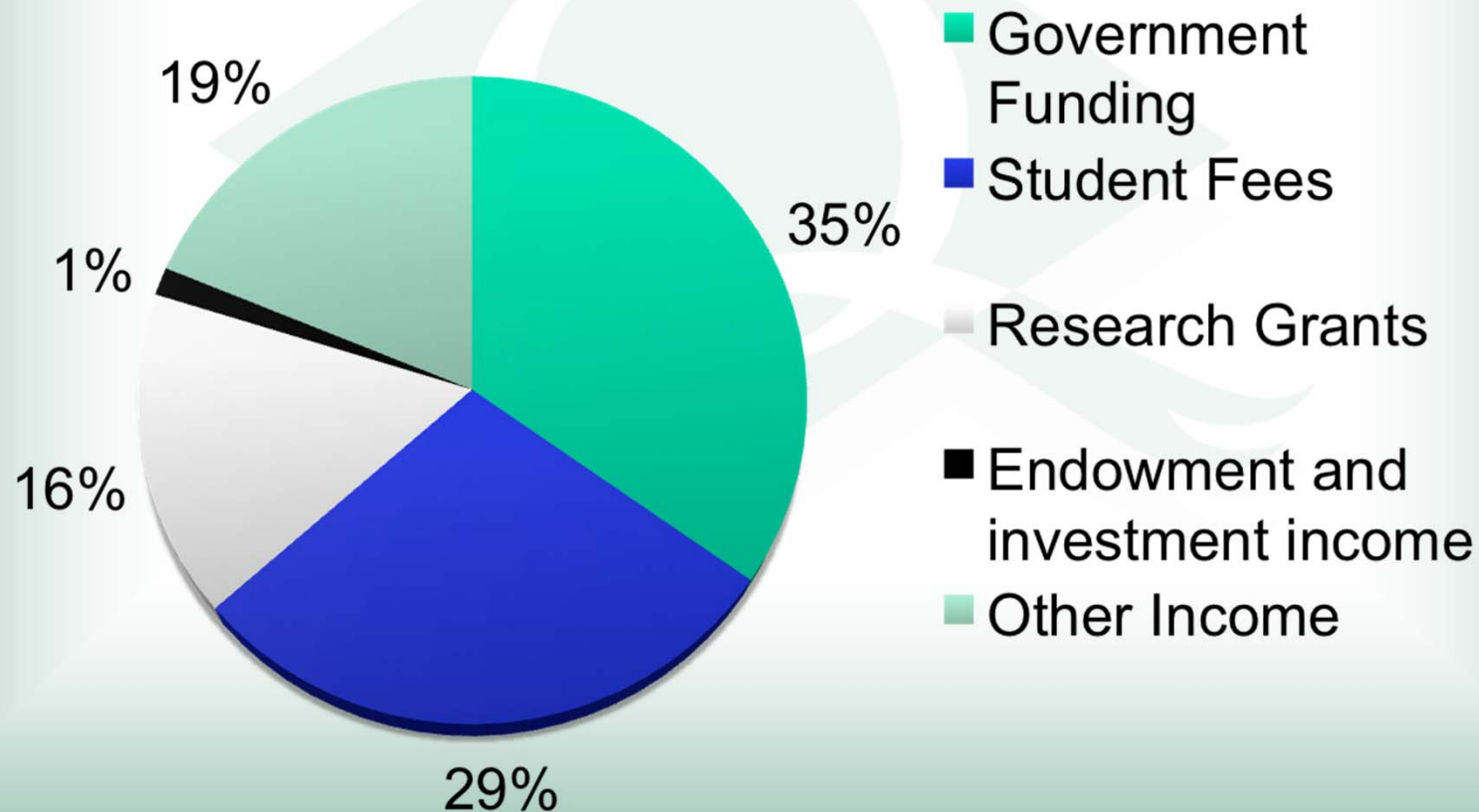
2.4 Million students studying higher education courses

1.8 million undergraduate (1st cycle)

600,000 postgraduate (2nd and 3rd cycle)

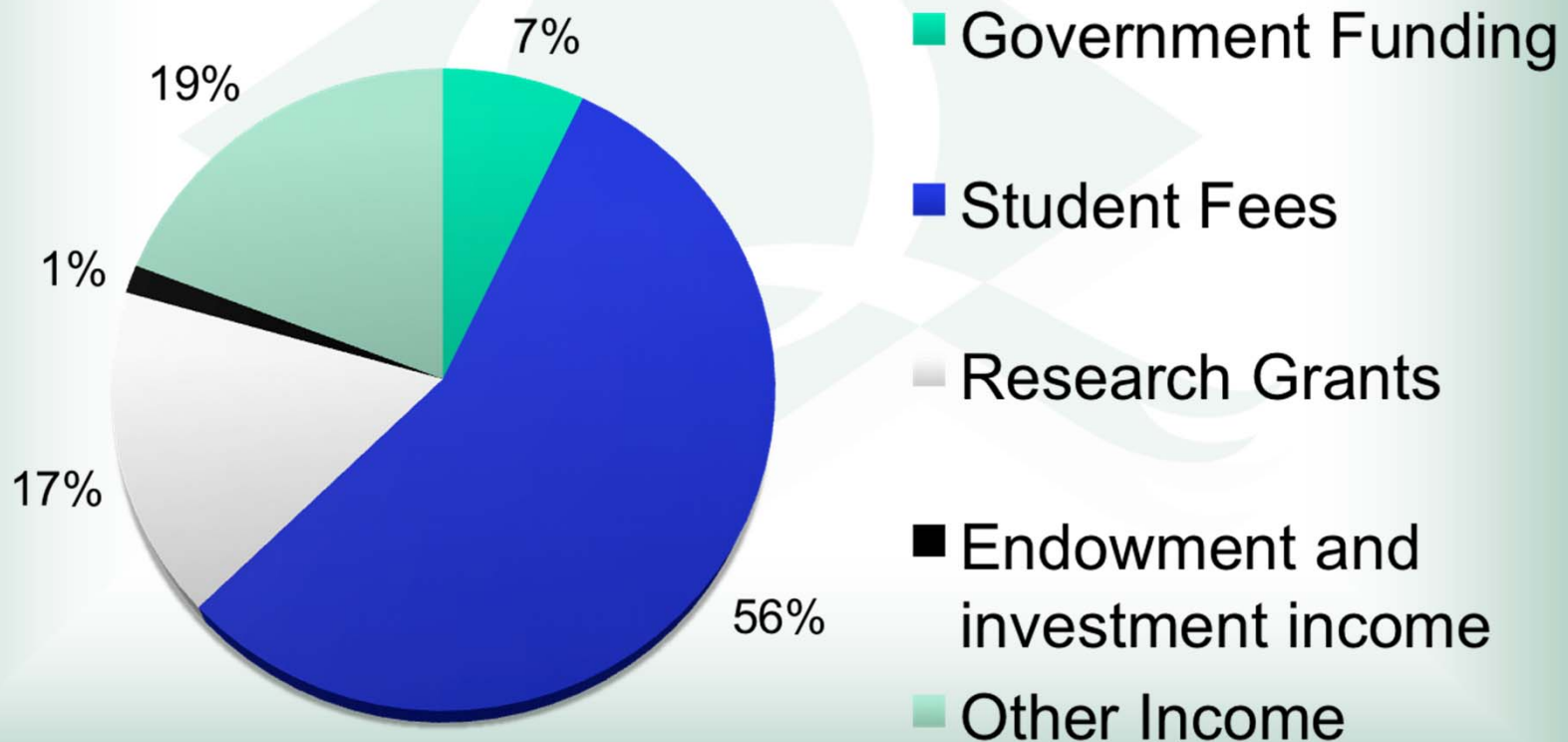**190,000** overseas students (75,000 from the EU and 115,000 non-EU)

Some facts about UK Higher Education

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

Pie chart:
- Government Funding — 35%
- Student Fees — 29%
- Research Grants — 16%
- Endowment and investment income — 1%
- Other Income — 19%

Some facts about UK Higher Education

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

Pie chart:
- 7% Government Funding
- 56% Student Fees
- 17% Research Grants
- 1% Endowment and investment income
- 19% Other Income

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

Social Media

www.youtube.com/qaatube

Reviews

Students Reviewers since 2009

Review teams always have 3 meeting with students

Students' Unions provide separate independent evidence

Governance

Student Member of QAA Board

Student Sounding Board

Training and Guidance

Work with NUS

Guidance films and booklets

Training events

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.

President – Aaron Porter

Higher Education

Further Education

Students' Union Development

Society and Citizenship

Welfare

- 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 <u>recognition</u> and requirement for Universities to <u>fund</u> 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 <u>recognise and fund</u> 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

University Senate/Council

Faculty/School Boards

University sub-committees

Course Committees

Sub-committees

Informal staff/student liaison

Working groups

Informal liaison
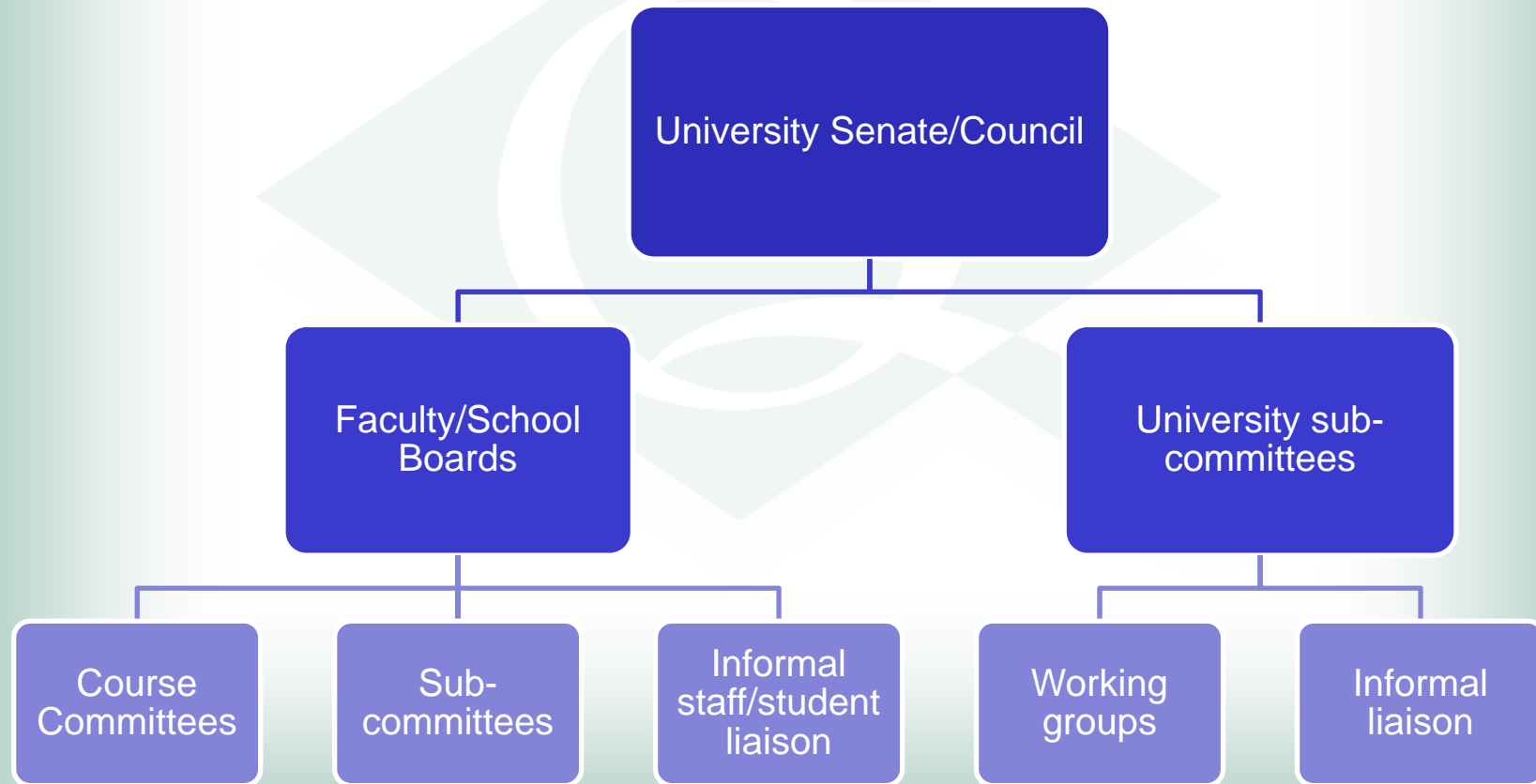
Student Representation at University level

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=X0ghQj
ofwRQ

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

Time poor/other commitments

"26.5 hours a day"

3 days waiting for a book to be returned!

1.5 hours commuting online

7 hours

2.5 hours

4 hours looking after

3 hours studying

kids

1.5

TV

+ 6 hours working!

3 hours in class

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=lFZ0z5Fm-Ng

How do we meet these challenges?