

Tertiary Education Policy

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Introduction

A well educated population is vital for the social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing of Aotearoa New Zealand. The Green Party believes that access to tertiary education is primarily a public good. This policy also acknowledges the reciprocity between the public funding of tertiary education and the social obligations of tertiary graduates. We believe that burgeoning student debt negates that sense of reciprocity (see our [Research Science and Technology](#) policy).

New Zealand has low levels of social mobility and tertiary education has been identified as a key factor to improving intergenerational and social mobility. Therefore, policies which remove barriers to tertiary education and promote universal access are vital.

Our [Education](#) policy sets out the Green Party's position on early childhood, primary and secondary education.

Definitions

EFTS - the Equivalent Full-Time Student calculation is used to estimate student numbers for funding purposes. For example 1 EFTS may consist of two half time students.

Vision

The Green Party envisions a tertiary sector that is well-resourced, vibrant, innovative and responsive to the needs of students and the changing needs of our society, together with an education sector that recognises the cultural diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand. Tertiary education is part of the web of educational opportunities which help all New Zealanders fulfil their potential and deepen their understanding of the world we inhabit.

Key Principles

The Green Party affirms that:

1. Tertiary education including trade training and apprenticeships should be made equally accessible on the basis of capacity and affordable to all.
2. Education is not just the acquisition of job skills. Education is in the public interest which enhances social and democratic participation, contributes to a more skilled and successful society, promotes lifelong learning and community well being.
3. Education should be equitable, of high quality and focussed on the needs of the students.
4. Involvement of Tangata Whenua is vital to ensure provision of tertiary education

- services appropriate for Māori.
5. The education system should respect and reflect cultural diversity and the diverse needs of those of different ages, outlooks and abilities.
 6. Cooperation, not competition, will be fostered between all education providers.
 7. Tertiary educators should be valued as professionals, who are supported in all educational activities including research.
 8. Tertiary sector research is autonomous and should receive active support from Government where it contributes to the public good.

Specific Policy Points

1. Loan repayment

Student debt has reached crisis level and acts as a barrier to entering education for many New Zealanders. In order to address the burden of debt as a result of the student loan scheme, the Green Party will:

A. Debt Write Off

1. Explore options to introduce a debt write-off scheme that limits the individual burden of debt, while incentivising graduates to contribute to New Zealand after graduating.

B. Re-payment Options

1. Ensure that repayment rates reflect borrowers' ability to repay by adjusting the repayment thresholds to start at a higher income level, and introduce a progressive repayment scheme.
2. Lengthen the repayment holiday for overseas borrowers to reflect the typical time spent by graduates overseas.
3. Re-introduce a voluntary repayment bonus scheme.

C. Interest on Student Loans

1. Support keeping the current zero-interest scheme.

2. Student support

One of the significant barriers to participation in tertiary education is the lack of financial support while studying. As steps towards reducing current financial barriers to tertiary education, the Green Party will:

1. Review the levels of Living Costs, Course-related costs, Student Allowances, the Accommodation Supplement and the Accommodation Benefit to ensure they are equitable and at a liveable level, and review whether the differences between the Accommodation Supplement and the Accommodation Benefit are justified.
2. Work towards a universal student allowance, by progressively reducing the age at which students cease to be means tested on their parents' income and continue to raise the parental income threshold.
3. Ensure that the amount a student can earn per week without impacting on their eligibility for a Student Allowance is based on average weekly income, and not on income in any one week.
4. Improve access to the Independent Circumstances Allowance.
5. Ensure access to financial support and the loan scheme by:
 - a. Ensuring access to the student loan scheme for Living Costs and Course-related costs for part-time students and those aged 40 years and over;
 - b. Reinstating access to the Student Allowance for those studying postgraduate courses;

- c. Removing the academic performance criteria currently used to determine students' eligibility for continued access to the loan scheme;
- d. Removing the lifetime limit of 7 EFTS for access to student loans.

3. Fees and university funding

The Green Party will:

1. Work towards establishing a public 'fee-free' tertiary education system. As steps towards this, the Green Party will:
 - a. Cap and then progressively reduce student fees.
 - b. Remove the ability for the Tertiary Education Commission to approve exemptions from fees maxima.
 - c. Investigate bonding, or other mechanisms of contribution, in exchange for fee-free tertiary education.
 - d. Review funding mechanisms to explore alternatives to EFTS funding and the competitive approach it creates.
 - e. Ensure that Tertiary Institutions are adequately funded.
2. Review current funding to tertiary institutions to ensure that subsidies are sufficient to meet real costs and to provide sufficient funding to:
 - a. Improve staff to student ratios;
 - b. Improve library resources and staffing;
 - c. Improve staff recruitment and retention.

4. Research and Governance

The Green Party will:

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) model and investigate the merits of alternative funding streams.
2. Move towards a more representative governance model for all tertiary institutions, in which staff, students and communities work in partnership on governing bodies.

5. Removing barriers

The Green Party will:

1. Be committed to international conventions protecting the rights of students with disabilities and fulfill all obligations required by the Human Rights Act 1993 and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. Implement a Code of Practice to be adhered to by all tertiary institutions to ensure students with disabilities are provided with equitable opportunities to achieve their individual capabilities and participate in all aspects of tertiary education life.
3. Provide targeted funding for tertiary institutions to create an inclusive environment for students with disabilities by supporting disability support services and ensuring staff are trained to meet students' needs.
4. Ensure graduates with disabilities receive support and assistance to move from tertiary education into employment (see our [Disability](#) policy).
5. Ensure that statistics are collected on the number and performance of tertiary students with disabilities and that these inform planning and resource allocation.

6. Honouring Te Tiriti

The Green Party will:

1. Work with Tangata Whenua to provide high quality and accessible tertiary education services for Māori, including initiatives for alternative education approaches that are effective in delivering services to Māori.

7. Private tertiary establishments

Private Tertiary Establishments (PTEs) have an important role to play in the tertiary education sector. Some PTEs have proven themselves highly successful at reaching parts of the community that the public providers are traditionally poor at reaching, and have thus increased access to tertiary education. PTEs are also important in providing education in subject areas that the public sector does not cover.

The Green Party believes:

1. Where tertiary education funding has to be prioritised it should be directed in the first instance to the public education sector (universities, polytechnics, wānanga) and community based providers.
2. Funding for PTEs should be available where the PTE:
 - a. Does not compete unfairly with the public sector, because of the target population or because of the subject matter taught; and
 - b. Can demonstrate existing capacity to deliver high quality outcomes, value and performance.
3. Funding cycles for PTEs should reflect the length of the study programmes they offer.

8. Export education

The export education sector plays an important role in financially assisting tertiary providers, as well as contributing to the wider economy. To ensure that this sector is supported, the Green Party will:

1. Monitor providers to make sure they are offering a high standard of export education;
2. Assess the impact of the export education sector on domestic education.