

Tuition Fees in England and Wales Rise to £9,535 as Universities Face Financial Strain

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Tuition fees for undergraduate students in England and Wales have increased for the first time since 2017, now set at £9,535 per year for most courses. The 3% rise, equivalent to an additional £285 annually, comes amid growing financial pressure on universities and is intended to reflect inflation.

Alongside the tuition hike, maintenance loans have also been adjusted upward. Students from England living away from home, outside London, can now borrow up to £10,544 per year to cover living expenses. This is an increase from the previous maximum of £10,227. The changes were announced by England's Department for Education (DfE) in November 2024 and implemented to keep financial support in line with inflation.

While tuition fees have remained frozen for seven years, higher education institutions have warned that their operating costs have not. In May, the Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator for higher education in England, reported that over 40% of universities are projected to operate at a financial deficit by summer 2025. The regulator attributed this to sustained inflation, which has reduced the real-term value of tuition fees, and a decline in international student enrolment, a group that typically pays higher fees and helps offset budget gaps.

Universities have indicated that without additional funding, students could face reduced services, including cuts to staff and available courses. These developments have intensified calls from institutions for a more sustainable long-term funding model.

The government has yet to announce a comprehensive funding strategy but has stated that plans will be outlined in due course. In the meantime, both students and universities are expected to adapt to the revised financial structure for the upcoming academic year.