

Graduates have an average of £44,000 of debt: Students leaving English universities now owe the most in the world following tuition fee hikes

- English university graduates leave college with more debt than Americans
- US colleges offer some students scholarships reducing the debt levels
- English students owe more than Canadians, Australians and New Zealand
- American graduates owe on average £20,000 - far less than in England

By [Eleanor Harding for the Daily Mail](#)

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English university graduates face the highest debts in the world, owing an average of £44,000 when they leave university, according to a new report.

University leavers now owe more than their American, Canadian, Australian or New Zealand counterparts because of the hikes in tuition fees, data shows.

The findings from the Sutton Trust will surprise many students as American universities – particularly those in the Ivy League – have traditionally been seen as among the most expensive in the world.



English university graduates face college debts of on average £44,000 when they graduate from their course

However, those who graduated from English universities last year - under the £9,000 fees regime - owe an average of more than £44,000, which is double some US graduate debt.

American graduates owe between £20,500 - for students at public or private non-profit universities, and £29,000 - for those at private for-profit universities.

The difference between the UK and US is down to the fact that some American universities are cheaper while the most expensive ones have a large number of scholarships.

The report, Degrees Of Debt, also highlights the growing complexity of arrangements in the UK nations, with different fee levels in Scotland for those from the rest of the UK.

The charity is now calling the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to investigate the impact of the changes to grants and loans, to ensure value for money for students and taxpayers.

The Sutton Trust is concerned that the abolition of maintenance grants this September will leave the poorest students with debts in excess of £50,000.

Sir Peter Lampl, chairman of the Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation, said: 'These debt levels are by far the highest in the English speaking world and are more than double average debt levels at universities in the United States, where students study for four year programmes, rather than three.

'They impact on the ability of graduates to go to graduate schools, to afford a mortgage, the timing of having children and other major life decisions.

'The cost of going to university has become so expensive that more young people should seriously consider higher level apprenticeships, preferably to degree level.

'By choosing this route they will earn while they learn, incur less debt, and develop skills which are greatly valued in the workplace.

'We need more good apprenticeships to offer genuine alternatives to university degrees.' Students who left Canadian universities last year were on average £15,000 in debt, those leaving Australian institutions were £20,900 in debt, and graduates from New Zealand universities owed on average £23,300.

In 2012, the maximum tuition fee cap was raised to £9,000 a year in England, with around 76 per cent of all institutions charging the full amount in 2015-16.

In 2006, the fee cap had been set at £3,000 a year, with the cap only rising gradually in the following years to take into account of inflation.

The government has pledged to allow institutions to increase their fee caps in line with inflation if they can prove they provide good teaching.