

# **REALLY OPEN**

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# **UNIVERSITY**

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## **3 REFORMS**

Reform #1 – The Abolition of all Fees and the Institution of a Living Wage

Reform #2 – A debt jubilee for all past students

Reform #3 – The abolition of the Research Excellence Framework and the National Student Survey

## **What is the ROU?**

The Really Open University is an ongoing process of transformation by those with a desire to challenge the higher education system and its role in society.

Instigated by students and staff of higher education institutions in the city of Leeds (UK), the ROU is non-hierarchical and open to anyone who wishes to see an end to the commodification of knowledge and the creation of a free and empowering education system where creative and critical thought is fostered.

### **Background**

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Universities have traditionally been elite institutions benefiting a privileged minority. Their (anti)social role has been to reproduce the elite of society, enclosing knowledge in the minds of the few and cementing a small ruling class. There has been no ‘golden age’ of the university – it has never been an institution in the common interest.

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More recently, higher education has undergone an accelerated process of privatisation and expansion. This has further contributed to the (anti)social role of the university, as the academy increasingly operates as a factory producing highly-trained yet docile workers. Universities are now run as businesses, with students as consumers and lecturers as creators of products. Knowledge has become a commodity that can be bought and sold, its ‘value’ determined by its ability to generate further private profit.

The 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review & Browne report exacerbates the threat to knowledge with proposals to increase student fees to £9000 a year, while higher education faces funding cuts of 40%. All this results in students taking on more debt for a hollowed-out ‘education’, lecturers being forced to carry out ‘economies exercises’ and staff working longer and harder hours for less money.

It doesn’t have to be like this.

### **A Really Open University is Possible**

*Imagine an education system where participants teach what inspires them, and learn what they are passionate about – a space where people share and develop their skills and knowledge not in the individual quest for jobs and profit but in a mutual attempt to create a more equitable and sustainable world...*

The ROU sets out to change the expectations that people have of higher education, and by extension, the rest of our lives.

The multiple crises currently faced (higher education, neo-liberalism, climate change) open a crack for other narratives. Higher education could act as a laboratory of subversion, where collaboration creates collective solutions, and questions are asked about how people really want to live their lives.

In order to resist cuts and transform the university it is necessary to demystify the current system and move beyond the outdated and destructive model of neo-liberalism that currently governs it.

The ROU does not want to defend the university – we are not interested in maintaining an institution where our collective capacities are directed towards reproducing an elite or a highly-trained reserve army of labourers. We desire the transformation of the university, the creation of a common institution that works in the interests of all people in common.

### **Strike – Occupy – Transform**

The praxis of strike-occupy-transform is a form of direct action – a way of achieving positive change. The ROU sees this as a form of acting in, against, and beyond the current system, an empowering process we take control of our own collective future.

For too long university politics has been stale and boring. The ROU aims to engage in creative-resistive tactics that rethink and reclaim space and put it to different ends, from flashmobs to public assemblies. The ROU looks to conduct a series of interventions into different ways of living. Through this process the ROU hopes to transform subjectivities and engage in affirmative and positive struggle – living life in different ways, even if they are only ephemeral in the face of the existing politico-economic system.