



Politeia, 22 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0QP
E mail: info@politeia.co.uk Telephone: 0207 240 5070

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Thursday 15th June, 1pm, Launch at Politeia

Aspire Ever Higher – Government must change track on higher education says Conservative Shadow Minister, Boris Johnson

In *Aspire Ever Higher: University Policy for the 21st Century* Boris Johnson MP, Shadow Minister for Higher Education outlines a fresh approach to Britain's threatened universities. As Britain's universities are weakened by ever tighter control from government and its bureaucracies, their future is uncertain. Academic freedoms have been under threat as pressure is brought to bear on the universities in line with the political and ideological preferences of governments. Admissions policies, courses and even the concept of excellence have become victim to political pressure. Against this background Boris Johnson asks:

- *What is the aim of a university education?*
- *How can UK universities flourish and excel?*
- *What funding arrangements are needed for British universities?*
- *How can essential freedoms be protected?*

Mr Johnson has set out the principles for future policy by the next Conservative Government. In particular he will emphasize that education is an end in itself: while there are – and will continue to be – considerable economic benefits to the individual and the UK, the power which education has in transforming lives can not be overstated. The growth and expansion of higher education is but one reflection of this and no politician should seek to stop it. What then should the Government's role be? Boris Johnson explains that for the universities and higher education to flourish there must be a three fold policy:

First, there must be proper funding. This means spreading the burden of cost between taxpayer and beneficiary and being creative about tax breaks and other ways of building up endowments and donations.

Second, there must be less interference. Universities are not part of the public sector and should be set free to run their own affairs, whether this means admitting students or teaching courses.

Third, the Government should acknowledge that 'hierarchies of excellence' must be allowed to flourish. The best thing for the Government is 'to get the funding right and then stand back and let students and institutions do the rest'. It should make sure students have the most up to date information about courses – and the benefits they bring.

* *Aspire Ever Higher: University Policy for the 21st Century* is available from Politeia, 22 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0QP. The text will be available by e mail in advance to journalists on application by response to this message. Enquiries to to Politeia on 0207 240 5070, e-mail, info@politeia.co.uk

The pamphlet will be launched at Politeia on Thursday 15th June at 1p., If you would like to come, please could you let Olivia Boyd (secretary1@politeia.co.uk) know.

The author: Boris Johnson is MP for Henley and Shadow Minister for Higher Education. He is also a columnist for *The Daily Telegraph*.