

  
**nus**  
**NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE**

# Education Zone Live Policy 2017-20

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# Key information

## Purpose of this document

This document contains all the policy currently in effect for the Education Zone. This is the policy that the Vice-President Further Education, Vice-President Higher Education and the Further Education and Higher Education Zone Committees are responsible for implementing and is sometime known as 'Live Policy'.

## Policy Lapse

### Policy Lapses in 2 circumstances:

1. If a subsequent policy over-rides it.
2. After 3 years unless National Conference votes to renew it.

Policy passed at National Conference 2017 will lapse at the end of National Conference 2020.

## What You Need To Do

If you are considering submitting policy to National Conference you should first check whether any policy is currently 'live' for that issue and whether you need to change the National Union's current stance on that area of work.

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact [democracy@nus.org.uk](mailto:democracy@nus.org.uk).

## Contents

Key information .....	2
Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2017 .....	4
Motion 201   Putting Learners at the heart of the Post 16 Skills Plan.....	4
Motion 202: JoJo doesn't know much about quality: what a wonderful world HE could be .....	5
Motion 203   Save Our Support Services .....	7
Motion 204  Partnership is (almost) dead, long live student power! .....	9
Motion 205   An Agenda on Tertiary Education .....	10
Motion 206  Free Education .....	11
Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2018 .....	14
Motion FE101   This Story is getting old... time for investment in FE/College our voices to be heard! .....	14
Motion HE101   Tackling the Black Attainment Gap.....	16



Motion HE102   Students and Brexit .....	18
Motion HE103   High course costs are destroying student mental health .....	20
Motion FE102   The Scourge of Day 42 .....	22
Motion HE104   Quality of Teaching .....	23
Motion FE103   There is progression data for most learners! why not us? .....	24
Motion HE105   Postgraduate Tuition Fees and Funding.....	25
Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2019 .....	28
Further Education Zone Proposal .....	28
Higher Education Zone Proposal .....	29
International Student Fees Cap .....	31
Graduate Levy .....	31
Publish programme costs; transparency in HE.....	32
Fair Pay for Students on Placement.....	33



# Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2017

## Motion 201 | Putting Learners at the heart of the Post 16 Skills Plan

### Conference believes

1. In July 2016 the government announced their vision for the future of Technical Education and Apprenticeships in the form of the Post 16 Skills Plan.
2. The Post 16 Skills Plan implements all of the recommendations made by the Labour Peer, Lord Sainsbury, in the Sainsbury Review.
3. It presents a radical, but largely welcomed overhaul of Further Education.
4. For too long technical education has been seen as holding less value than “academic” post 16 routes, such as A-Levels. The plan seeks to create parity of esteem between technical and academic education, including the ability to move easily between the two at level 3.
5. That 68% per cent of students think that 16 is too early to be making choices which will define their future career path.
6. That the plan includes provisions for 16 year olds and adults returning to education to undertake a ‘Transition Year’, giving them further time to consider their options.
7. That Black students and women are severely underrepresented in areas of Further Education, including apprenticeships and STEM subjects.
8. That there are specific targets in the plan, including a 20% increase in Black apprenticeship starts by 2020 and gender parity in the working population by 2030.
9. That the plan includes positive provisions for learners with disabilities and learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, including SEND support until the age of 25 and free or subsidised training for NEETs aged 19 -24.

### Conference further believes

1. That whilst the ambitions of the Skills Plan are welcomed, there are concerns about its implementation.
2. The Government’s focus on ensuring employers are at the heart of the Skills Plan is deeply troubling. Education is about more than employment and the Government need to recognise this, not least when they are designing the transition year, bridging provision and the “common core” of technical education.
3. The attention given to apprenticeships is positive, but the push for 3 million extra apprentices by 2020 causes serious concerns around quality.
4. In similar European models there have not been enough apprenticeships available to meet demand. And in England, employers are less likely to employ an apprentice who is under 25<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships)

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5. The Government must ensure employers are incentivised to hire younger apprentices.
  6. That the plan does not adequately detail provision for SEND learners, especially level 1 and pre-entry level learners in specialist colleges.
  7. That Advanced Learner Loans are failing FE-based learning, with only 4,900 learners achieving level 4 and 5 awards in 2014/15<sup>2</sup>
  8. That the continued expansion of University Technical Colleges (UTC) is deeply flawed. UTCs are a failed project that the Government must stop advocating for.
  9. We note the rise of private colleges connected to the arms trade and other large, multinational companies.
  10. While technical education is important, young students shouldn't be exploited as cheap labour.

### **Conference resolves**

1. To work with the DfE and the NSoA to shape the plan and ensure that apprentices' and learners' needs are central to any decisions.
2. To work with Students Unions to ensure that FE learners are aware of the skills plan and the impact it will have on Further Education.
3. To continue to lobby for impartial, quality careers Information, Advice and Guidance and to respond and act on any careers strategy that is released.
4. To consult with specialist colleges on SEND provision and lobby DfE to include it in the plan.
5. To lobby for apprentice and learner representation on the Institute for Apprenticeships Board
6. To work with NSoA, AELP and the Institute to ensure that quality apprenticeship experience, both in on and off the job learning, is both defined and improve.
7. To campaign against the fees and loans model for levels 4 and 5.
8. To campaign against the expansion of UTCs.
9. To demand better bargaining rights for learners who are also workers.

### **Motion 202: JoJo doesn't know much about quality: what a wonderful world HE could be**

#### **Conference believes**

1. Teaching excellence is an important principle which should be central to the continued improvement of quality in higher education
2. Teaching excellence starts, first and foremost, with the partnership between students and those who teach them.
3. We cannot talk about teaching excellence without also talking about the liberation of spaces within which teaching and learning take place. Teaching cannot be excellent unless everyone benefits from it in a safe and inclusive environment.

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<sup>2</sup> [epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/remaking-tertiary-education-web.pdf](http://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/remaking-tertiary-education-web.pdf)

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4. The Government's Teaching Excellence Framework does not provide a useful measure of teaching excellence and instead, by reducing it to a set of unreliable metrics, the framework undermines it.
  5. The Teaching Excellence Framework, moreover, is part of an agenda designed to drive up market competition and make education more expensive for students through higher fees, both of which endanger the future of quality higher education.
  6. The student movement stands against the tide of marketisation and must rally behind what it believes to be true teaching excellence by working with students, academics and support staff to develop a new vision.
  7. The higher education sector has already progressed in student engagement and representation and is aware of the benefits that this brings. But this remains threatened by those who want to reduce this engagement to satisfaction scores and consumer relationships.
  8. The student movement must lead the sector in replacing the concept of satisfaction with empowered student engagement and co-production of excellent teaching and learning.
  9. That teaching, relative to research, is both undervalued and gendered. A commitment to teaching excellence must assert the value of teaching as a central practice in HE, and must consider the ways in which women academics are disproportionately affected by the reforms and the undervaluing of teaching.
  10. It is not possible to remain within current TEF while fighting to achieve better teaching quality and better access for students.
  11. The TEF's reliance on indicators such as employability incentivises institutions to avoid recruiting large numbers of students who face discrimination in the workforce, especially Black students.
  12. HE reforms risk increasing existing attainment gaps and counter on-going efforts to widen participation.
  13. The introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework is a worrying indicator of deepening competition within the sector, out of which students and workers stand to lose.
  14. OfS should require universities to adopt student charters of rights and responsibilities, and to set out the areas such a charter ought to cover (like contact hours and coursework turnaround times).

### **Conference resolves**

1. To develop a "manifesto for teaching excellence" through consultation with students, their unions, and the wider higher education sector, setting out what we believe teaching excellence looks like and how we can successfully measure and enhance it.
2. To produce research which outlines the benefits of moving away from the measurement of student satisfaction and instead empowering students to be consistently engaged and involved in decision making.
3. To investigate ways in which institutions can collaborate to improve the quality of their provision, with the involvement of students, and outside of market competition.
4. To challenge the moves to reduce the involvement of students in quality assurance, assessment and regulation by campaigning for greater student involvement in the new operating model for Quality



Assessment and by campaigning against the introduction of a National Student Survey for Postgraduate Taught Students, which is being developed solely for the purpose of creating metrics for a Postgraduate Teaching Excellence Framework.

5. To generate a plan for responding to the outcomes of the current campaigning against the Higher Education and Research Bill.
6. To campaign for fair and meaningful representation of students in university governance, tackling issues of how student representatives can effectively “represent” the wider student body in decision making and NUS will support students’ unions to ensure this at an institutional level.
7. To support the higher education sector in the development of new measures of learning gain to help better assess what the student experience can achieve.
8. To support students’ unions to lobby their institutions on the involvement of students from all backgrounds in submissions to the Teaching Excellence Framework and in Access and Participation plans, evidencing the benefits of student involvement.
9. To support students’ unions in running successful course representative systems in partnership with their institution, embedding them into the decision-making process of both the union and the institution.
10. To campaign for fair and meaningful representation of students in university governance, tackling issues of how student representatives can effectively “represent” the wider student body in decision making and NUS will support students’ unions to ensure this at an institutional level.
11. To work with UCU to research the ways in which women academics are disadvantaged in current teaching practices and ensure that future assessments of teaching excellence and teaching practice resist this.
12. To initiate a mass survey to our NUS membership led by the HE Zone in which the following will be answered. What does education look like from a student perspective? As opposed to the TEF?
13. Second phase to initiate membership consultation on research gathered from the mass survey.
14. To present the outcome of this study and recommendations to the NEC by October 2017.
15. To campaign for a Teaching Excellence Framework that actually promotes excellence in teaching.

## **Motion 203 | Save Our Support Services**

### **Conference believes**

1. Support services such as teaching and learning support, support for disabled students and childcare provision are vital in enabling learners to access further education.
2. They are also crucial in ensuring that learners are able to succeed and learn in their teaching environment.
3. Funding for Colleges has decreased by 27% since 2010. The Adults Skills Budget has decreased by 35% since 2009.
4. The cuts to FE Colleges and Sixth Form colleges by the Government have affected their ability to provide teaching and learning support.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>[www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/SFCA%20Costing%20The%20Sixth%20Form%20Curriculum%28web%20version%29.pdf](http://www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/SFCA%20Costing%20The%20Sixth%20Form%20Curriculum%28web%20version%29.pdf)

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5. Around a third of part time and 40% of full time students in FE are parents. The majority of these are women and mature students. Around half of students report having missed classes because of problems with childcare and only 11% report receiving funding which covers all of their childcare costs.<sup>4</sup>
  6. A recent report into the experiences of FE and HE student parents in Scotland has revealed much the same; almost 80% of respondents reported facing problems with time management and almost 70% faced financial difficulties.
  7. The cuts in services disproportionately affect women, black and LGBT students as well as learners with disabilities and learning difficulties and learners with caring responsibilities.
  8. These cuts to support services have been accompanied by a real time increase in the cost of Further Education for learners.
  9. Support funds such as Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the Adult Learning Grant (ALG) have been axed, whilst students have been forced to put an ever increasing amount of money into their education.
  10. Course costs, equipment costs and transport costs have risen, yet students are not able to access funding or bursaries.

### **Conference further believes**

1. This year NUS held consultations with FE learners across England, supporting them in building a vision for the future of further education post area reviews.
2. Learners highlighted that student support services are a key part of their ability to access education.
3. Area reviews have now finished colleges are now implementing their recommendations.
4. Area reviews present a serious and significant shake up to the delivery of FE, with over 100 colleges expected to merge and share non-teaching services between colleges.
5. The exact impact that mergers will have on student support services is currently unknown. However they will be expensive to implement, costing colleges substantial amounts of time, money and resource.
6. The mergers will put increased pressure on student support services. Both in terms of cost, but also in terms of the increased number of students accessing the service in a merged college.
7. NUS should be supporting SUs to work with their institution, local authority and UK government to ensure FE remains accessible for all.
8. Good support services will look different in different areas of the UK.

### **Conference resolves**

1. To ensure that the protection of student support services are included in any future work around Area Review implementations.

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<sup>4</sup>[www.nus.org.uk/global/nus\\_sp\\_report\\_web.pdf/](http://www.nus.org.uk/global/nus_sp_report_web.pdf/)

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2. To encourage and support SUs to collaborate and campaign at a regional level to protect their services.
  3. For the FE Zone Committee to collaborate with the Welfare Zone Committee on this issue.
  4. For the VPFE to collaborate and support the NUS officers in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to protect and enhance student support services.
  5. To work with trade unions and other partners to campaign for an increase in FE investment.

## **Motion 204| Partnership is (almost) dead, long live student power!**

### **Conference believes**

1. The concept of partnership between institutions and students' unions has served as a useful framework in pushing back against seeing students as consumers.
2. In the face of government and institutions recently appropriating the language of 'partnership' and putting 'students at the heart of the system' in order to conceal further marketisation of the system, supposedly done in our 'interest', this romanticised notion no longer serves our needs.
3. 'Partnership' is often invoked by our institutions to ensure both the students' union and institutions work on the same agenda, and claim its breach whenever our agendas diverge.
4. Students' unions are often accused of undermining 'partnership' for representing the interests or democratic will of their membership.
5. Partnership is exactly supposed to rebalance the power dynamics between students and those running their institutions, but is too often twisted to disempower us.
6. Unions and students taking campaigning on issues universities dislike or don't align to, from opposing government's restructuring of funding, to standing in solidarity with staff taking industrial action, to using the NSS boycott as leverage against the Teaching Excellence Framework, are often faced with threats from their institution, or removed from committees or communication channels.
7. Students are not consumers, but outright rejecting aspects of the student-institution relationship covered by consumer law fails students who need protections

### **Conference further believes**

1. Partnership cannot exist when one party is allowed to pull the plug on collaboration when they perceive their interests to be threatened.
2. Students' Unions should never find themselves in a position where they're told they're working against the university's interests when they're doing exactly what's right by their students.  
When SUs are forced to back down in order to preserve a notional 'partnership', we are no longer fulfilling our purpose.
3. Students need actual power to create change on their terms, not shiny laminated statements made by universities who won't blink in taking actions against them.

### **Conference resolves**

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1. To work with students' unions on identifying political and lobbying power by organising student groups and creating truly engaging mass campaigns.
  2. Support students' unions to change partnership agreements/charters to reflect an agreement of expected behaviours from parties should disagreements occur, with an expectation that the SU will act as a 'critical friend'.
  3. To support students' unions whenever universities take action against them for simply enacting their democratically agreed policies.
  4. To support and provide guidance to membership on democratising student representation and decision making within universities.
  5. To campaign for OfS to focus on student protections.
  6. To embrace elements of the "students as consumers" agenda by working with OfS, CMA and Which? to provide guidance for Students' Unions on using consumer law to protect students' interests.

## **Motion 205 | An Agenda on Tertiary Education**

### **Conference believes**

1. That investment in education is investment in human capital, but it is a mistake to imagine that this is only about individual investment and returns; it must also be about social investment and returns.
2. That public support for investment in further education is demonstrated by polling to remain weaker than for other area of spending. A broader approach to tertiary education could broaden support for investment, as well as being a fairer and more coherent approach.
3. That lifelong learning is important, but we should concentrate on broadening the initial phase of adult education towards lifelong engagement and capability.
4. That further education should be the highest priority for funding, with the aim of ensuring almost all adults obtain a Level 3 qualification; and that this first full Level 3 qualification should be free from fees and charges at any age.
5. That getting a job isn't the purpose of education, but most people want to get a good job that enables them to have agency, dignity and a secure life; we must develop a view of education that is engaged with the labour market.
6. That the local and regional dimension of education is often ignored; we must develop a view of further education that sees the activity associated with educational institutions as being imperative to citizenship, voluntarism, urban development, and the richness of community life; the relationship between civic institutions and educational institutions should be enhanced.
7. Colleges are an essential component of the public sector embody important ideals of universal benefit for citizens rooted in their communities.

### **Conference resolves**

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1. To campaign alongside unions and grassroots groups in Further Education for better and fairer government funding of our institutions as well as participating in events and campaigns putting forward the benefits of the sector.

## **Motion 206| Free Education**

### **Conference believes**

1. Higher education is a public good and a right that has been enjoyed by previous generations, and should be free for everyone to access.
2. Free education would pay for itself. The government's own figures show that for every £1 invested in higher education the economy expands by £2.60.
3. NUS believes in democracy – but political democracy is incomplete when the distribution of wealth is violently unequal and undemocratic.
4. Vast wealth lies in the coffers of a handful of rich, powerful people and their private businesses, instead of being invested in socially useful purposes such as education.
5. NUS should reaffirm the idea that education is a right not a privilege.
6. The introduction of the TEF opens fees to increases year on year, which would reach over £12,000 per year by 2020.
7. The TEF also allows for differentiated fees between different universities based on the institutions' ranking in the TEF.
8. That successive governments, over the last decades, have increased marketisation in Education. One of these policies' most visible consequences has been the on-going rise in fees in HE and the closing down of colleges in FE.
9. That the current government plans in post-16 education will accelerate both processes.
10. That the growth in fees has come with the rapid expansion in debt for students.
11. That the marketisation of FE has meant loss of EMA, shutting of colleges, job losses and the resultant growth of student/staff ratio.
12. That a free education lies at the heart of the NUS' vision for a liberated and accessible education for all.
13. That it is perfectly possible to reverse the existing direction of travel in Higher education. For example, Germany scrapped tuition fees after a decade of rising fees, proving once again that free education is possible and achievable
14. That if the government increased tax on corporations and the wealthy, scrapped Trident or reduced military spending, billions of pounds would be made available to fund free education and other vital public services.
15. That fees in FE disproportionately affect women and other 'minority' groups, particularly BME and disabled students.
16. That fees and debt present a barrier to accessing education.
17. That there is an alternative to paying for education through public investment for free education.

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18. Students contribute massively to the UK economy
  19. From 2017, thousands of students applying for university places face a rise of 2.8 per cent in line with forecasted inflation in terms of tuition fees
  20. We believe in education that is free at the point of access, as well as free from the dictates of the market: an education that is designed beyond the narrow aim of moulding learners into tools for the workforce.
  21. Whilst believing in free education is crucial, prioritising student hardship and stopping further free increases have to be our tactical focus in the year ahead.

### **Conference further believes**

1. Access to education is a fundamental human right, enshrined in Protocol 1, Article 2 of the Human Rights Act (1998) which states that: "No person shall be denied a right to an education."
2. Investing in free education would not only offer opportunities for people but would play a central role in reviving the economy now and in promoting longer-term prosperity and growth for the future.
3. If this wealth was instead under democratic control, our society could use it to build a comprehensive accessible free education system for all and pay every education worker decently, and still have plenty left over for other decent public services and benefits for all.
4. It is of economic benefit to have a highly skilled, highly trained population.
5. The deep marketisation proposed by the TEF and its steady increase in fees will cause irreparable damage to Higher Education.
6. Differentiated fees means only those with the most money will have access to the best institutions, harming social mobility and reducing education to a transaction.
7. That abolishing fees is insufficient if students are excluded or impoverished by the cost of living.
8. That NUS has a long history of campaigning against fees and the marketization of post-16 education, and has played a key role in overturning the proposed privatisation of student debt and delaying cuts to DSA.
9. That post-16 education should be seen as a social good, and collectively funded, rather than as a private investment to achieve comparative advantages in the job market.
10. That our vision for free education is part of a wider transformation of the education system to achieve a liberated and accessible education system for all, at any point in life.
11. That cuts to FE and area reviews are unprecedented and extreme in comparison to reforms in HE.
12. That FE colleges are life-changing for the poorest and disadvantaged in society
13. That fees, cuts to EMA, and closing colleges in FE are a financial barrier to HE and therefore
14. That, through working, as we should, with allies within the student movement, trade unions and other campaign groups, an effective and broad based campaign can be built and sustained to fight and end the marketization of education, including putting forward a different vision of what our education should look like.
15. Increases in tuition fees for students can create negative impact in their mind-set



## **Conference resolves**

1. To oppose and campaign against all methods of charging students for education – including tuition fees and a 'graduate tax' which is nothing more than a euphemism for 'student debt'.
2. That NUS should continue to oppose and campaign against all methods of charging students for education – including tuition fees.
3. That NUS should continue to campaign for truly free education for all students in FE and HE.
4. That NUS should continue to place this campaign within a broader context of fighting for a liberated education such as the fight for a liberated curriculum, the abolition of student debt, open and public access to universities and colleges, democratically-controlled institutions free from surveillance and harassment by police, Prevent, and immigration officials, and the abolition of all fees for home and international students.
5. To support students, it is an essence to raise voice against increases in student tuition fees and formulate appropriate policies to make it stable against the increasing trend of tuition fees
6. To maintain materials that put forward a vision for a publicly funded and universally accessible post-16 education sector but prioritise stopping fee increases.
7. To endorse and support the Goldsmiths fee strike for MA Social Work students after bursary cuts sored tuition fees by 86.5%.



# Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2018

**Motion FE101 | This Story is getting old... time for investment in FE/College our voices to be heard!**

## **Conference believes**

1. Further Education has been consistently cut since 2010. FE providers are at breaking point, funding per student has not risen in 6 years and colleges are running on bare minimum levels.
2. The Government are undertaking an expansive programme of reform that will change the face of further education provision forever.
3. The Government are currently consulting on T-Levels, with the first T-levels expected to be rolled out in 2019. NUS sits on the T-Level stakeholder group and this is a clear opportunity to ensure the reforms reflect the needs of students.
4. The Government refuse to adequately invest in the reforms. The £500 million announced in the Spring Budget 2017 doesn't come close to restoring what the Conservatives have cut from FE.
5. The disruptive marketisation of education, combined with the extensive cuts, means more and more colleges are looking to support their income by providing Higher Education courses. Currently, one in ten HE students are also in FE environments.
6. Apprenticeships at a Higher Degree level are becoming increasingly popular, meaning that the number of universities expected to deliver Degree Level apprenticeships is expected to rise.
7. Further Education students are habitually forgotten about in discussions about funding in education; specifically tuition fees, maintenance loans and grants.
8. With the regional rules and shutdown of the learning skills council surrounding SEND/LLD colleges, specialised colleges face closure, and more and more students are blocked from accessing vital education.
9. The Conservative government continues its push to marketise and commodify both Further and Higher Education. Nursing students have lost their bursaries, college students are struggling on the inadequate replacements for the Education Maintenance Allowance.
10. The Institute of Fiscal Studies reports that the FE sector has been proportionally the worst hit by budget cuts: In 1990-91, spending per student in FE was nearly 50% higher than spending per student in secondary schools, but in 2015-16 it was 10% lower. Spending on FE fell faster during the 1990s, grew more slowly in the 2000s, and has been the only major area of education spending to see cuts since 2010.
11. Driven by the commercial logic of the markets, FE institutions are shedding their least profitable courses, on top of government cuts. According to research by the Association of Colleges, 50% of schools and colleges have dropped courses in modern foreign languages as a result of funding pressures. Over 1/3 have dropped STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) courses. 67% have reduced student support services or extra-curricular activities, with significant cuts to mental



health support, skills training and careers advice. 77% are teaching students in larger class sizes and 50% have reduced the delivery hours of individual courses. 66% have moved from a 4 subject A-Level offer as standard to a 3 subject offer. 72% do not believe the amount of funding they will receive next year will be sufficient to provide the support required by students that are educationally or economically disadvantaged. For example, from 2007 to 2016 college places fell in Scotland from over 379,000 to under 227,000; a decrease of more than 150,000. This has hit mature and part-time students hardest - you can't access university without first having access to FE.

12. The government continues its flagship academisation programme, removing schools and colleges from Local Authority control and any democratic accountability.

### **Conference further believes**

1. NUS is a confederation of Student Unions, 65% of which are at Further Education institutions.
2. NUS supports the National Society of Apprentices, whose leadership team represent 250,000 apprentices.
3. FTOs have a remit to represent all affiliate members, not just those well-developed, well-funded Universities.
4. Educational providers are becoming multi-functional, and the lines between Further and Higher Education are becoming increasingly blurred.
5. NUS needs to provide crucial development and support to FE Students' Unions and the National Society of Apprentices to enable all learners to express their voice.
6. FE should be geared around the educational needs of individuals and the social needs of society, not the profit motives and 'employability requirements' of big business.
7. We need to ensure every student can afford to live decently during their studies - the fight for universal living grants is a fight for accessible, liberated education.
8. The mental health crisis has to be tackled - we cannot leave FE or HE students to struggle without support.
9. FE institutions should be under the democratic and accountable control of students and education workers - those who actually run and use them. Academies should be returned to public hands.

### **Conference resolves**

1. To mandate the VPFE to launch a priority campaign for investment in further education, working in ALL nations depending on each government's rules.
2. The VPFE to dedicate a stream of this funding campaign to SEND/LLD Learners to fight closures and gain investment VITAL for these learners.
3. To campaign for a grant that is enough to live on for all FE students.
4. To campaign for apprentices to be paid the full living wage.
5. To fight against campus cuts and course closures, for more government funding for FE, and for all academies to be returned to local control and democratic accountability.
6. To work with trade unions like the NEU and UCU to achieve the above.



## Motion HE101 | Tackling the Black Attainment Gap

### Conference believes

1. The black attainment gap is a long-established issue with a trend as far back as national data was gathered.<sup>5</sup>
2. The attainment gap exists along with other inequalities, including disparities in access, continuation and employment outcomes.<sup>6</sup>
3. Over a decade ago the attainment gap was established to predominantly lie with the institutions, and exists after other factors such as socioeconomic background, discipline and institution choices, and entry grades, were accounted for.<sup>7</sup>
4. There is not parity within the sector on the courses and institutions attended by students of colour, or for black academics.<sup>8</sup>
5. Black students are significantly more likely to become unemployed on graduation and less likely to experience the benefits of their degree<sup>9</sup>.
6. The attainment gap should be viewed, in part, as a symptom of multiple issues affecting the education sector, which disproportionately impact Black students.
7. These are issues that are exacerbated by the current regime of marketisation and post-2011 reforms within the education sector e.g. the scrapping of maintenance grants, the wedging apart of students from staff by the NSS, casualised employment of academics, the narrowing of opportunities for students to shape curricula, the growing management culture of institutions.
8. Thus tools like the TEF that are tools of that regime should not be used to try and achieve race equality we must be wary to not rehabilitate the TEF.
9. Issues of race inequality cannot be divorced from the other pressures affecting institutions and education on a national scale.
10. The attainment gap is not just an issue for Higher Education.

### Conference further believes

1. Systemic inequality undermines the real value of our degrees, as well as the whole higher education sector. Race inequity cannot coexist with the internationally leading system we want.
2. The causes of the attainment gap are multiple and systemic within our institutions<sup>10</sup>, and require broad approaches from both government and each individual institution.
3. Educational race inequality is further compounded by employer bias, leading to poorer employment outcomes nationally<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk) – Statistical Reports

<sup>7</sup> DFES. Research Report RW92, S Broeke, T Nicholls, 2007

<sup>8</sup> [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk) – Statistical Reports

<sup>9</sup> [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk) – Statistical Reports

<sup>10</sup> Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE 2015

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/> The Cabinet Office

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4. Current regulation of universities via the Teaching Excellence Framework does not require improving the attainment gap; while the issues are sector wide, approaches significantly vary by and within each university and other providers.
  5. The Teaching Excellence Framework has not been adequately analysed to understand whether it systematically suppresses race inequalities outcomes<sup>12</sup>.
  6. Student-led initiatives to make improvements on the attainment gap and race inequity need to be sustainable over several years and adaptable for all member unions.
  7. Specific challenges on attainment persist in specific disciplines and types of institution<sup>13</sup>.
  8. The Equality Challenge Unit provides a Race Equality Charter which equips committed institutions with a framework to make change around race inequality, including improving the attainment gap<sup>14</sup>. The Equality Challenge Unit is currently undergoing significant changes to its governance and merging with other sector bodies.
  9. The Higher Education Funding Council for England, due to wind down with the introduction of the Office for Students, has enabled projects to work on race inequity via the Addressing Barriers to Student Success funding<sup>15</sup>.
  10. Projects around the attainment gap at Manchester and Birmingham have highlighted the importance of student-led campaigning in campaigning around it.
  11. Whilst responsibility lies with institutions, there is a danger of the attainment gap becoming a narrow, top-down, bureaucracy-driven “numbers game” for institutions.
  12. NUS should place proportional emphasis on supporting student-led campaigning as well institutional action against the gap.

### **Conference resolves**

1. Raise awareness of the black attainment gap institutionally and nationally, including discussing race inequalities throughout our education system.
2. Campaign for institutions to take responsibility for and lead on addressing the attainment gap.
3. Campaign for the government to intercede to ensure that the attainment gap and race inequality is a key issue for institutions as well as students.
4. Lobby for the entire sector’s attainment gap data to be released, to facilitate the discussion on how to address race inequity among the other factors.
5. Campaign for the government and/or relevant agencies to penalise institutions that do not close the attainment gap.
6. Equip students’ unions with models for institutional data gathering, good practice, and campaigning guides on the attainment gap and student experience.
7. Develop materials with the sector, led by black students and academics, relating to decolonising the curriculum across all disciplines.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://wonkhe.com/blogs/analysis-ethnicity-in-the-tef/>

<sup>13</sup> Undergraduate retention and attainment across the disciplines, Professor Ruth Woodhead, HEA 2014

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/sas/barriers/>

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8. Lobby for further investigation of race inequality in courses with supervision, e.g. nursing, practical arts, apprenticeships, or research.
  9. Lobby for institutions to create interventions targeted at students who experience race inequity, including careers advice and scholarships.
  10. Lobby for institution-wide and cross-sector approaches to addressing differential outcomes around race, with NUS leading other sector agencies in this work.
  11. Lobby for membership of the Race Equality Charter to be a baseline requirement for all higher education institutions.
  12. Lobby for HEFCE work and funding on differential outcomes, specifically around race, to continue after HEFCE has wound down.
  13. Where possible, work with other student and activist groups and organisations including the Black Students Campaign to raise awareness, campaign and lobby on racial disparities in Higher Education.
  14. Ensure that calls for free education, the reintroduction of maintenance grants and democratising our education is central to our messaging around long-term solutions to the attainment gap.
  15. To avoid the lure to use the TEF as a tactic in addressing the attainment gap.
  16. To work with UCU on developing student-staff campaign strategies for addressing the attainment gap.

## **Motion HE102 | Students and Brexit**

### **Conference believes**

1. On June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016, a referendum that posed the question "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" resulted in a 51.9% to 48.1% result in favour of leave
2. NUS had campaigned to remain members of the European Union in the interests of our student members as mandated by National Conference
3. 74% of all UK voters aged 24 or under voted to remain<sup>16</sup>
4. Leaving the EU creates uncertainty around the position of UK students studying in EU countries and vice versa and also threatens access to European research funding and could damage long standing academic collaborations
5. As it stands, in leaving the EU, the UK risks losing access to the Erasmus + exchange scheme for students and apprentices.
6. It is likely that, after leaving, EU students in the UK will be regarded as international students and as such, without a deal or a special arrangement, will be charged international student fees.
7. Whilst current arrangements for students stand until 2017/18 and students who have been accepted under the current arrangements will have their contracts honoured for 2017/18 there is no certainty for students beyond these dates.

### **Conference further believes**

1. EU students are not and should not be treated as bargaining chips throughout the Brexit process.

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<sup>16</sup>[http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/640yx5m0rx/On\\_the\\_Day\\_FINAL\\_poll\\_forwebsite.pdf](http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/640yx5m0rx/On_the_Day_FINAL_poll_forwebsite.pdf)

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2. EU students who are already here or who will begin courses in the UK before the UK has formally left the EU need urgent clarity about their status, and this should not be contingent on what the EU offers UK citizens
  3. The UK will prove in the future to be a less attractive partner for future research and collaborations if any new immigration policy restricts and deters high quality academics from across Europe from moving to the UK
  4. Student mobility around Europe is integral to transformational experiences for students studying in Europe, for EU students and for UK students studying alongside EU students.
  5. Since the referendum, the hard line taken by many senior politicians on immigration has seen increases in xenophobic and hate crime incidences, with an increase of 42% just before and after the referendum.<sup>17</sup>
  6. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has made it clear that many prominent politicians were responsible for this increase in hate crime, xenophobia and intimidation directed at ethnic minority groups in the UK. <sup>18</sup>
  7. EU and international students should not be made to suffer because of the increasingly harmful and dangerous rhetoric around Brexit
  8. A hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will be detrimental to the lives, experiences and educational opportunities for students across the two countries and must be avoided.
  9. The government and the Higher Education Sector should be in a position to reassure EU staff currently working in universities and colleges in the UK that they have the right to remain and contribute to the UK's future and ensure employment rights developed during the UK's EU membership are maintained
  10. The government must ensure that any losses in income that universities and colleges will experience because of Brexit will be made up
  11. Tertiary education should be exempt from forming part of any future trade deals that are negotiated once the UK has left the EU

### **Conference resolves**

1. To negotiate for special immigration status for EU and UK students and academics, to ensure that they remain able to move across the EU freely for work and study
2. To campaign for the UK to remain a full member of the Erasmus+ scheme and to secure a commitment from MPs that the UK will be a member of any similar schemes in the future.
3. To campaign to remove international students from net migration targets
4. To lobby stakeholders in the UK, including MPs and MEPs, to protect student mobility after Brexit
5. To collaborate with activist groups and organisations across the UK to make the case for student mobility after Brexit
6. To collaborate with allies across Europe, including the European Students' Union and the Erasmus Students' Network.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jul/11/police-blame-worst-rise-in-recorded-hate-on-eu-referendum>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/aug/26/politicians-rise-hate-crimes-brexit-vote-un-committee>

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7. To support students unions to campaign locally and nationally to protect student mobility after Brexit.
  8. Work with USI through NUS USI to ensure that students in Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland do not face any new restrictions when travelling, working and studying across the two countries
  9. To campaign for a second referendum on the deal negotiated on Brexit
  10. To campaign for continued membership of the single market and the right of EU nationals to live and study here.

## **Motion HE103 | High course costs are destroying student mental health**

### **Conference believes**

1. NUS currently supports and campaigns for free education for all students.
2. In 2014/15 145,330 students were accepted onto art and design courses in the UK.<sup>19</sup>
3. NUS has conducted research into hidden costs in creative arts courses, but no further action or policy resulted from this.
4. Arts students are expected to shoulder higher (usually hidden) course costs than most non-arts students.
5. There is no current financial support available to all arts students to help cover these additional costs.
6. First year arts students can face significant printing and materials costs for assessments that ultimately do not even contribute to their final degree grade, but still put them out of pocket.
7. Most arts students have to undertake a foundation year in addition to their three years of undergraduate study, meaning their degrees are a year longer than most, resulting in more course costs than three-year degree students, and with no maintenance loan.
8. Arts students are discouraged from using cheaper materials in their final assessments, under the guise of professionalism in their work.
9. Arts students are also expected to purchase expensive equipment, including Apple laptops and Photoshop software, which is a cost that most non-arts students are not expected to incur.
10. Most arts institutions fail to provide a realistic estimate of the course costs that their students will pay throughout their degree.
11. Such high course costs put students' quality of life at risk.
12. That there is an epidemic of creative students agreeing to work for no pay, in order to gain experience or exposure.
13. That most Drama Schools charge audition fees to prospective students.
14. That these fees do not guarantee you a space at the school, it is simply for the privilege to apply.
15. That many universities are now charging audition fees to students applying for performing arts courses.
16. That some, but not all, institutions have an audition fee waiver or bursaries for students from low-income backgrounds.
17. Most people come to Uni hoping to graduate

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/subject-guide-list/creative-arts-and-design>

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18. The moment of physically collecting a degree is a central part of the celebration and experience which surrounds education
  19. There are only two providers of most graduation gowns in the UK
  20. Graduating in front of a student's parents/family/supporters can cost 100s of pounds to both the students and their guests
  21. Having paid so much to get a degree students shouldn't have to pay to collect it
  22. Like all hidden course costs graduation costs are bad.
  23. Graduation is a costly addition to what students already have to pay.
  24. Whilst many unions, such as Sunderland and The Students' Union at UWE have worked on decreasing ticket prices, costs of robes remain high.
  25. Ede and Ravenscroft have a monopoly over many institutions' graduation robes hiring.
  26. Ede and Ravenscroft charge on average £45 to hire robes for graduation, which is necessary to wear at the ceremonies.
  27. There is little individual institutions can do to affect this price
  28. Students should not be priced out of celebrating achieving their degree.
  29. Ede and Ravenscroft should provide robes at a more reasonable price, that reflect what newly graduated students can afford.

### **Conference further believes**

1. Course costs for arts courses tend to increase as the student progresses, culminating in final assessments that can cost thousands, on top of the consistent cost of materials throughout the students' degrees.
2. To create their final collections, some fashion students have been known to spend up to £5,000 of their own money on materials.
3. Some arts students feel anxious and demotivated by this level of spending on their education.
4. Art and design courses have a higher proportion of students with specific learning differences, thus disproportionately affecting them.<sup>20</sup>
5. Rising course costs has a bearing on student mental health and has led to a rise in people accessing counselling before being expected to spend thousands while on the course to even complete their degree.<sup>21</sup>
6. That audition fees are inherently classist, locking working class students out of even applying to institutions that have them.

### **Conference resolves**

1. NUS will support students' unions in lobbying their institutions to carry out assessments on course structures to decrease extra costs.

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<sup>20</sup>[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/ug\\_retention\\_and\\_attainment\\_in\\_art\\_and\\_design2.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/ug_retention_and_attainment_in_art_and_design2.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/13/tuition-fees-have-led-to-surge-in-students-seeking-counselling>

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2. NUS will support students' unions to lobby their institutions to undertake a quality audit of their assessment practices, seeking to understand how they disproportionately affect students from low income backgrounds, as well as affecting BME and LGBT+ students.
  3. NUS will support students' unions in lobbying their institutions to give all students a realistic estimate of additional course costs before starting their course.
  4. NUS will support students' unions in lobbying their institutions to give students personal finance training during their course, including how to document their course spending to submit with their final assessments.
  5. NUS will support students' unions in lobbying their institutions to make progress toward free assessments through new technology (such as use of tablets instead of printed portfolios).
  6. NUS will support students' unions in researching the correlation between hidden course costs and welfare and mental health.
  7. For NUS to put in a Freedom of Information request to all HEIs to uncover which ones charge audition fees, and to publish this list.
  8. For the Vice President Higher Education to produce a toolkit for Students' Unions to lobby their institutions to abolish audition fees, and/or introduce fee waivers and bursaries.
  9. To conduct research with unions into the average cost of graduation in the UK
  10. To work to reduce this cost
  11. To investigate a student owned social enterprise model for graduation gowns and photographs
  12. NUS should lobby, and put pressure on Ede and Ravenscroft to lower the prices of their robes.
  13. NUS should work with institutions to campaign on lower the costs of graduation.

## **Motion FE102 | The Scourge of Day 42**

### **Conference believes**

1. Colleges that withdraw students before 42 days do not have them counted towards official retention, achievement and success rates.
2. Funding and inspection frameworks work within policies whereby colleges and individual tutors are incentivised to remove some students before they have been on courses for 42 days.
3. Colleges and individual tutors implement withdrawals before Day 42 in order to protect their achievement rates.
4. Many students are removed from college within this timeframe and are denied an education.
5. The 42 day rule may significantly and disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable students
6. Funding and inspection arrangements mean that vulnerable students are often not offered the opportunities they deserve to begin or continue courses of study.

### **Conference further believes**

1. That all students deserve to be given a chance to succeed, especially vulnerable students such as care leavers and those experiencing mental health issues. Students who are deemed to be quite



troublesome or the ones who need extra support should be provided with such support instead of being removed from their courses because that is the easier option.

2. That Colleges should not be systemically incentivised or put under pressure to cherry pick students for course acceptance or to remove students from courses that deserve an opportunity to grow and succeed.

### **Conference resolves**

1. That NUS undertake research into the impact of the 42 day rule on students, colleges and success rates.
2. That NUS work with SUs to provide support and lead campaigns to raise students' awareness of their rights prior to Day 42.
3. That should research confirm statements put forward in Conference believes 1-6, that NUS support this motion and lobby the Department for Education, decision makers and Ofsted to remove the 42 day policy from funding models and inspection frameworks.
4. That NUS work with stakeholders to introduce funding and inspection frameworks that do not disadvantage students and are equality impact assessed.

### **Motion HE104 | Quality of Teaching**

#### **Conference believes**

1. Students are paying an unprecedented amount in annual tuition to UK universities, with fees for most courses now set to rise to an eye-watering £9,250 per academic year for home students (and higher for international students).
2. People accessing higher education are increasingly being treated as consumers of a commercial product rather than students developing their skills and knowledge.
3. For many students quality of teaching is essential in determining whether or not they find their time at university engaging and worthwhile.
4. There are wide-ranging discrepancies in the quality of teaching "and in the rigour of processes for monitoring teaching quality" between different universities, and even between departments within the same university.
5. The UK Government's Teaching Excellence Framework does not adequately consider the experience of students during their course.
6. Many university instructors at all levels are not adequately trained in teaching, and are poorly supported in developing their skills both as instructors and as personal supervisors to students
7. Students commonly complain across the UK about lectures or seminars that are uninteresting or uninspired as a consequence of this lack of support for teaching staff in developing their skills.
8. Many students complain of lectures where content is itself robust and reflective of the expertise of instructors, but lectures themselves are delivered almost as though the instructor is reading off someone else's script.

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9. With e-resources and the rising digitisation of academic literature, as well as the rise in open access journal content, students increasingly find or believe themselves able to avoid poor quality teaching by doubling down on self-study.
  10. There is a similar lack of support for training and development of academic staff as providers of one-to-one support for students; e.g., as personal supervisors or research supervisors.

### **Conference further believes**

1. That education is valuable in its own right and not just as a commodity, and the sharing of knowledge for its own sake and for personal development is a moral good. However, in an age where students are paying up to £27,750 in tuition alone for the average degree, they should have a right “as students and consumers alike” to expect quality instruction at their institutions.
2. Lack of support structures and teaching skill development is ultimately harmful to staff, students and to institutional leaders, particularly at universities aspiring to improve their overall performance and student satisfaction rates.
3. The UK Government is increasingly focusing on promoting alternatives to traditional higher education, including accelerated degrees, whilst neglecting the problems within the current education system. It is difficult to imagine how quality provision will be ensured if universities cannot ensure it on existing traditional degree programmes.
4. Students who come from families with no prior experience of higher education are much more likely to struggle with unsupported self-study.

### **Conference resolves**

1. To work with students’ unions and universities to develop more effective support mechanisms for postgraduate students engaged in teaching activity in particular.
2. To work with students’ unions and universities to produce resources and guidance on how to be an effective personal tutor.
3. To campaign for universities to allocate more funds to the recruitment, training and employment of teaching assistants to support the work of university lecturers in particular, and to investigate the international experience with using teaching assistants to enhance teaching quality.

## **Motion FE103 | There is progression data for most learners! why not us?**

### **Conference believes**

1. The NSoA believes that the 3 million target for apprentice starts by 2020 is only an achievement if those apprenticeships are of high quality.
2. The NSoA believes there needs to be a method of tracking apprentice progress during and after the apprenticeship, in order to measure quality and success.
3. There needs to be data on what success and progression in apprenticeships is, to enable applicants to get an understanding of career prospects. This will also enable correct information, advice and guidance to be provided.



### **Conference further believes**

1. This will be more attractive to more learners, meaning they can apply with a clearer understanding of all apprenticeships.
2. This enables more personal development and accessibility on and off the job.

### **Conference Resolves**

1. NUS and NSoA to work with employers, training providers and the Institute for Apprenticeships to create a way of tracking and publishing progression data, in the hope of widening participation.

## **Motion HE105 | Postgraduate Tuition Fees and Funding**

### **Conference believes**

1. There are 551,595 postgraduate students in the UK.
2. Many universities currently operate bursary schemes for undergraduate students from low income backgrounds. These schemes are usually based on family income data from the UCAS process.
3. Some universities provide bursaries and grants for postgraduate students, either in the form of dedicated schemes or by allowing all students to be considered for the university's existing bursary scheme. This is often the exception however, with many universities not providing any financial support for postgraduates from low income backgrounds, beyond some emergency hardship funds.
4. This frequently results in the situation whereby an undergraduate from a low income, or otherwise socio-economically disadvantaged background, receives financial support from their university but a postgraduate with the same background does not.
5. The Welsh Government recently announced funding for Welsh universities to provide bursaries and grants for postgraduates from Wales from low income backgrounds in 2018/19 and 2019/20.
6. The student loans company currently provides a separate 'maintenance loans' in addition to a 'tuition fee loans for undergraduates.
7. Masters students receive a combined 'Postgraduate Masters' Loans with a fixed ceiling, which does not take into account the applicant's potential tuition fees.
8. Consultation was undertaken by government around PG Doctoral loans in late 2016.<sup>22</sup> Following this, there will be 'Postgraduate Doctoral Loans' of up to £25,000 available from August 2018. These loans are independent of household income<sup>23</sup>
9. Tuition fees for PG students have been increasing year on year. This is often done above the rate of inflation and almost always above the rate of increase in loan available to students.
10. There are no current plans by government to remove Postgraduate fees.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/postgraduate-doctoral-loans>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study>



## **Conference further believes**

1. Postgraduate study is a vital development opportunity for many students, whether to retrain in a new area of study or to specialize in their existing field of study. Postgraduate study is therefore a useful tool to aid widening participation and lifelong learning.
2. The government postgraduate loans offered to students by the respective governments of the UK don't currently vary depending on family income, meaning a student from a low-income background gets no more support than any other student.
3. Postgraduate student numbers are rising, and more jobs require postgraduate qualifications. While the current lack of financial support exists, we risk postgraduate study becoming increasingly slanted towards students from privileged backgrounds with prospective postgraduates from low-income backgrounds priced out.
4. The Office for Fair Access in 2015 noted that students from disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to go onto study at postgraduate level than their more advantaged peers. This echoed 2015 NUS research that found of those not considering postgraduate study, 38.5% were not doing so because of affordability concerns. 7% more graduates who studied at private schools were found to be considering postgraduate study than graduates from state schools. This, the OFA concluded, was particularly worrying as postgraduate study is 'becoming an essential stepping stone into many careers'.
5. Making postgraduate study more affordable for students from low-income backgrounds will enable more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to afford and enter postgraduate study and realise the life changing opportunities that it brings.
6. Students are taking on multiple jobs to cover their cost of living as the student loans available are not adequate. This places additional stress and time constraints on students who are already in high pressure situations due to their degree. Students have a right to adequate funding in order to live while they study.
7. NUS has a responsibility to represent PG students.
8. Some students are not able to get financial support from family members. Therefore course costs are a better measurement of the financial requirements of students than household income.

## **Conference resolves**

1. For the NUS to lobby the UK Government and the Universities Minister to provide universities with funding to create substantial schemes of bursaries and grants for postgraduate students from low-income backgrounds.
2. For the NUS to write to each member of the House of Commons Education Select Committee about the importance of financial support for postgraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. For the NUS to create a toolkit and resources for Students' Unions to support them to make the case to their university for the creation of substantial schemes of bursaries and grants for postgraduates from low-income backgrounds.

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4. To lobby the Office For Students and Research Council for more funding for postgraduate researchers and for a substantially more equitable increase in funding in areas currently not receiving funding
  5. To lobby the relevant authority/government to stabilise and have a transparent baseline of tuition fees for postgraduate students
  6. To lobby universities to provide contributions from the surplus from tuition fees to put into postgraduate research and teaching opportunities.
  7. Work with the international students' section to lobby for more comparatively aligned tuition fees and funding options where possible.
  8. NUS will lobby government to provide separate tuition and maintenance loans for postgraduate students, similar to the provision for undergraduate students.
  9. NUS will lobby the government to impose caps on PG tuition fees across all universities.
  10. NUS will provide SUs with advice on how to better understand PG issues and fight for issues such as increased contact hours, ensuring PG students receive better value for money.
  11. To review the first year of the postgraduate loans system and see the impact that the loans have had on the lives of postgraduate students, specifically whether the £10,280 loan is enough for postgraduate students to live on;
  12. To bring motion 11 of the 2016 Postgraduate Conference to the National Conference's attention and to follow through with the policy, including pushing for university fee regulation and looking at new avenues for postgraduates to gain funding.



# Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2019

## Further Education Zone Proposal

### Conference Believes

1. Further education can boost social mobility, providing students with the necessary skills they need to progress into work or education and qualifications to go on to succeed. For many students, it is a second chance.
2. Increasingly, the lines between further and higher education are blurred, with Higher Level Technical Education increasingly bridging the divide. This means there is a greater need to think about the whole tertiary education sector, rather than enforcing division or competition between further and higher education.
3. We are seeing innovation in further education, as new qualifications, such as T Levels, and training programmes are developed.
4. If developed in the interests of students, higher level technical education and the new T Level qualifications could be widely beneficial
5. Education funding is at a time of great instability. There is a funding discrepancy within further education, as newer initiatives such as apprenticeships and T Levels receive growing proportions of the funding available in comparison to existing providers.

### Conference Further Believes

1. The development of new qualifications presents an opportunity to ensure they are delivered in the student interest. These qualifications do need to be informed by what is needed in the workplace, ensuring that they meet standards which will allow students to progress into skilled employment. This does not mean that employers' needs should be front and centre though: student voice should be key to the development and delivery of any new qualifications.
2. The experience of a further education student is not limited to the learning that they undertake in the classroom. A broad, non-prescriptive student experience is as valuable as the qualification that a learner gains at the end. As such, things that detract from this, such as compulsory English and Maths resits should be challenged.
3. No part of education should be forced to compete with another for funding, whether that is between the higher and further education sector, or between different parts of further education. NUS will not advocate taking funding from one part of the education sector to finance another.
4. The further education sector should be sustainably funded in order to allow students at all levels and within all parts of it to thrive, whether funded by central government, devolved powers or topped up by local authorities, as specialist colleges are.
5. Students should receive maintenance funding directly to allow them to study and undertake placements. Providers should be funded to a level which allows them to deliver high quality



education which meets the needs of their students. This includes provision of high quality support services, and fair pay for staff.

6. Advice and guidance for students and prospective students is a crucial part of ensuring a healthy further education sector. This needs to be independent, timely, and delivered both on campuses and within communities. Practitioners should be trained to deliver this in an inclusive way to all students.
7. Strong student voice is integral to high quality education and placements, as well as to and sector- and institutional governance.

### **Conference Resolves**

1. To work to influence the development of new areas of further education in the best interests of students. This means calling for collective, democratic and independent student voice to be embedded across the sector. It also means ensuring that high quality provision is at the forefront of all qualifications and placements, and developing quality assurance that has student voice at its heart.
2. To lobby for the provision of clear, independent and timely advice and guidance, available both for students and within communities.
3. To advocate for funding, financial support and services which enable the delivery of high quality education, and students to successfully access and thrive in further education.

## **Higher Education Zone Proposal**

### **Conference Believes**

1. The goal of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 was to force higher education institutions to compete against each other and organise it as a market.
2. Implementing the HERA means that the government drives forward policy initiatives designed to make universities fight over fee income. Instead of leading to improvement, this leads to lower quality provision, as services are being cut and the experience of students and staff worsening.
3. The government is prioritising the political project of creating a 'well-functioning' competitive market, over nurturing a sustainable and well-funded higher education sector which serves the needs of students and communities.
4. For those who propose marketisation, the ultimate sign of an effective market is 'market entry' and 'market exit' – making it much easier for new providers to set up, but with fewer checks and balances, and then not intervening when other institutions face financial difficulty and could shut down. To encourage this, the regulator and the government have been clear that they will let universities go bankrupt and collapse should they face financial difficulty.
5. This ideological move away from supporting and funding our universities could prove to be one of the most dangerous moments for our higher education system in years.
6. National policy levers are being pulled to encourage universities to the point of collapse. These include proposals of differential fees or headline fee cuts. Without a top up from government funding, both of these represent nothing more than cuts to education disguised as progressive measures to give students less debt.

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7. Marketisation is linked to the current system of tuition fees, however at its heart is a system of regulation which encourages competition between institutions.
  8. If tuition fees were abolished, but the regulation of the system stayed the same, it would still show the worst excesses of marketisation; the burden of funding would just move from the student to the government.
  9. The introduction of a market incentivises universities to behave in certain ways. From only taking action to improve student services where the result will bring in money, to valuing the NSS over informed student lobbying, to rapidly increasing student numbers without increasing provision, the effect of this is being felt across higher education.
  10. Marketisation encourages a culture of individual and atomised student engagement, on the basis of 'making customers happy' through asking their opinion in surveys, rather than listening to collective, political lobbying from unions.
  11. Tools such as the NSS and the Teaching Excellence Framework have been used to further competition between institutions, rather than collaboration and enhancement, and as such have become a key part of the marketisation agenda.
  12. Marketisation also threatens effective widening participation work. The current policy landscape, including measuring institutional success and teaching quality by graduate salaries, incentivises the recruitment of students likely to gain higher graduate outcomes. This prevents universities from carrying out truly collaborative outreach, and incentivises school and academy sponsorship with a mindset to setting up a pipeline of recruitment to their institution, rather than promoting educational access and choice.
  13. The sole purpose of education is not as a pipeline of graduate training to move people into the workplace. However, students are concerned about their job prospects on graduation, and these concerns do not mean that they have uncritically accepted a marketized system.
  14. The education sector is changing. There is no longer a solid divide between further and higher education qualifications and provision, with higher level technical education often bridging this divide. Our responses and organising as a student movement should reflect this.

### **Conference Further Believes**

1. Regulation of higher education should be based on collaboration and solving common problems, not competition and 'survival of the fittest'.
2. Collaboration should span not only other higher education institutions, but further education providers. Universities and colleges should play a central role within communities: this means meaningful co-delivery and sharing of resources, not activity designed only to recruit students.
3. Students should be active partners in their education, with democratic, collective engagement central to the design and running of both institutions and throughout the higher education sector.
4. There should be no limit on the number of students able to access tertiary education.

### **Conference Resolves**

To challenge the culture of individualised student engagement by advocating for democratic and collective student engagement throughout higher education; and to challenge the manipulation of student voice to further or justify marketisation through the TEF and uses of the NSS

1. To advocate for a clear vision of free education, not regulated through competition but through collaboration and partnership, with collective, democratic engagement at its core, and to prioritise lobbying work against policies which exacerbate marketisation, lobbying in the first instance to secure education funding at the current level.

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2. To work with students' unions to build a comprehensive picture of the ways marketisation is affecting students on campus, and to present this to the regulator, government and the public at every opportunity.
  3. To develop a shared understanding of marketisation among the mass student population through students' unions

## International Student Fees Cap

### Conference Believes

1. According to HESA\* 268,805 international students enrolled UK universities in the academic year 2017/18 taking up as high as 14% of total student population in the UK
2. Other EU(non-UK) students enrolled in the academic year 2017/18 account for 6% of the total UK student population (108,335)
3. Looking at the available data on distance studies (overseas, online etc.) it is noticeable that almost 90% of students are international
4. Living expenses of international student coming to the UK also feed into the local economy based on their location of residence
5. Although course fees are capped\*\* for UK and EU undergraduate students, that is not the case for international students and does not apply to postgraduate study
6. Students experience fee raises throughout their course thus paying more from year to year.

\*<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/>

\*\*[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111170946/pdfs/ukdsiem\\_9780111170946\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111170946/pdfs/ukdsiem_9780111170946_en.pdf)

### Conference Further Believes

1. After Brexit all non-UK students might be considered as international hence looking at the current HE statistics more than 20% of entire student population in the UK will be international making a considerable impact on the HE market
2. International students should have the same financial rights and security as UK students in terms of a transparent, secure and invariable fee payment scheme
3. Universities across UK should ensure a contract binding relationship between them and the students at enrolment stating the terms and conditions of tuition fees clearly

### Conference Resolves

1. NUS to campaign to have International Student Fees capped at a rate proportional to that of home students.
2. NUS to ensure that Universities confirm the exact cost of tuition fees for the entire duration of a student's course. This information needs to be readily available at the application period.
3. To work with Office for Students and Government to ensure students do not encounter fee increases whilst studying. They pay the same for every year upon commencement of their course.

## Graduate Levy

### Conference Believes

1. Society benefits from having an educated population, the quantity and quality of which has always been a general measure of social progress
2. The increase in tuition fees introduced since 2012 has severely limited people's ability to receive higher education
3. The competition produced by the marketisation of higher education has reduced the quality of education

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4. Both the staff and students attending higher education have suffered due to the need to make universities more profitable
  5. A Grad Levy would link course funding to employability.
  6. Courses would become more focussed on employability as education is shaped to fit the will of the market.
  7. A Grad Levy would result in universities avoiding recruitment of students from marginalised backgrounds because they know these students earn less later in life.
  8. Post-92s would suffer more than older institutions because they're more likely to recruit working class and widening participation students, who again are less likely to get high paying jobs.
  9. A Grad Levy would also discourage employers from hiring graduates in areas when they could hire non-graduates – it makes university more of a risk for working class students.

### **Conference Further Believes**

1. Integral to opposing marketisation is the belief that the principle of free education should be funded by higher taxation.
2. Lecturers, teaching assistants and support staff deserve a fair living wage and pension
3. There is enough money and resources in society to provide free education for all
4. Profit should have no place in education
5. NUS' support of the Grad Levy undermines its own ongoing work fighting marketization.

### **Conference Resolves**

1. To oppose the Grad Levy at any point it is brought up.
2. To clarify publically that NUS opposes a grad levy.
3. To re-iterate that NUS believes in funding HE through general taxation.
4. To work with UCU, and other unions present on campuses nationwide, to campaign for a national and democratic plan of education and research based on the good and needs of society.

## **Publish programme costs; transparency in HE**

### **Conference Believes**

1. Education is a public good.
2. As providers of a public good, Higher Education providers need to be transparent not only to their students, but to society.
3. Data from Tredence shows that students want institutions to be upfront and open about the costs of individual programmes.
4. Most people come to university hoping to graduate
5. The moment of physically collecting a degree is a central part of the myth and rhetoric which surrounds education
6. There are only two providers of most graduation gowns in the UK
7. Graduating in front of a students parents can cost 100s of pounds
8. Having paid so much to get a degree students shouldn't have to pay to collect it
9. Like all hidden course costs graduation costs are bad

### **Conference Further Believes**

1. Universities should be publicly owned, and as such publicly accountable.
2. NUS should campaign for transparency in costs of study for individual programmes.

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3. The lack of competition in this sector is a real problem
  4. Most universities take large commission payments from graduation gown providers
  5. Strathclyde has recently abolished graduation fees

#### **Conference Resolves**

1. To lobby UUK to advise institutions to publicise the individual costs of programmes.
2. To create a campaign briefing for Students' Unions to lobby their own institutions to be upfront about the costs of individual programmes.
3. To also create a campaign kit for Course Representatives to lobby for transparency around the cost of their courses.
4. To conduct research into the average cost of graduation in the UK
5. To work to reduce this cost
6. To cause NUSSL to investigate a student owned social enterprise model for graduation gowns and photographs
7. To carry out an FOI on all UK HEs to identify the hidden commission being made on gowning
8. To call for an outright ban on graduation fees

### **Fair Pay for Students on Placement**

#### **Conference Believes**

1. 2016 National Conference policy 'NUS for the NHS' (Motion 401), which resolves to support campaigns to reverse NHS bursary cuts, is due to lapse this year.
2. Since the removal of the bursary, applications to study nursing in England have declined by around 40%. (ref 1)
3. Further to the removal of the bursary, the compulsory clinical placements for NHS students create an additional financial burden due to:
  - a. the limit this places on their capacity to do paid work alongside their course.
  - b. the cost of travelling to placements that are often far away from their campuses, which they are expected to pay
4. These hidden course costs also affect non-NHS students who have compulsory placements as part of their course, such as undergraduate trainee teachers.
5. The increased financial pressure faced by these students is detrimental to their success in their course and their wellbeing, and is a barrier to widening participation for low-income, mature, and other underrepresented students.
6. Paramedic students were never eligible for any kind of NHS bursary despite going on placement frequently and having course schedules similar to those of other allied health courses.
7. Most other allied health courses were affected by the bursary cuts and implementation of fees, including courses such as orthoptics, radiography, physiotherapy and several others.
8. All of these courses incur plenty of additional costs over and above those of most other students, such as travel to placements and necessary equipment.
9. Applications to allied health professions have fallen since the removal of the bursaries.

#### **Conference Further Believes**

1. Students should not be expected to bear the full burden of additional - sometimes extortionate - travel costs to complete compulsory placements, particularly as they have very little control over where they are placed.
2. All workers should be paid a fair wage for the work they carry out, whether they are trained professionals or on placement.

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3. The struggles of workers in the healthcare and teaching sectors are essential to the fight to preserve our public services as public goods, and oppose the privatisation which is also currently damaging higher and further education.
  4. Particularly in the context of the ongoing national shortage of NHS and teaching staff, NUS should do everything in its power to ensure our healthcare and education services are sustainable and work for the many in society.
  5. Most of these allied health courses have high course costs - such as travel to placements and equipment - and students are increasingly finding themselves in significant financial difficulty as a result.
  6. Most of the attention has been focused on nursing and midwifery students after the loss of the NHS bursary, but there are thousands of students on these other health courses who are just as vital to the UK health services and who are suffering because of a lack of funding.
  7. Not enough work is being done to raise awareness of the effect on these students, or to lobby for these students to get their bursaries back, or given to them for the first time.

### **Conference Resolves**

1. To lobby providers to calculate compulsory placement travel expenses as a necessary cost of delivering a course, and as such offer bursaries to all students that cover any such costs incurred.
2. To continue to support SUs, NHS workers, and related groups campaigning to reverse NHS bursary cuts.
3. To lobby the government to classify placement work as work, and ensure students are paid at least the National Minimum Wage.
4. To work with SUs and trade unions to campaign on this issue, in conjunction with related issues such as the exploitation of young workers through low pay for apprentices. (ref 2)
5. To promote trade union membership to students, and particularly those on placement.
6. To support and campaign for an end to cuts, marketisation, and privatisation in the NHS and public education system, and for public services that are fair for all service users and staff, including trainee staff
7. To lobby to get bursaries returned to all allied health students who were previously in receipt of them.
8. To lobby to get bursaries given to Paramedic students.

#### -- REFERENCES --

1. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/removing-the-student-nurse-bursary-has-been-a-disaster>
2. <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2018/07/National-Minimum-Wage.pdf>