


  
The logo for the NUS National Conference 2019. It features the letters 'nus' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter 's' is partially enclosed by a blue square. To the right of 'nus', the words 'NATIONAL' and 'CONFERENCE' are stacked vertically in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font. The entire logo is tilted slightly upwards to the right.

# **nus** **NATIONAL** **CONFERENCE**

## **NUS National Conference 2019**

### **Zone Priority Motion Submissions**

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# Contents

<b>100   Priority Zone</b>	<b>3</b>
Motion 101: Education on the Edge	3
<b>200   Education Zone</b>	<b>6</b>
Further Education	6
Motion FE201:	6
Higher Education	8
Motion HE201:	8
<b>300   Society and Citizenship Zone</b>	<b>10</b>
Motion 301: Environmental Justice	10
<b>400   Union Development Zone</b>	<b>12</b>
Motion 401: Unions as Unions	12
Motion 402: The Elections Commission - making democracy accessible!	13
<b>500   Welfare Zone</b>	<b>14</b>
Motion 501: A Vision for Welfare	14

# 100 | Priority Zone

## Motion 101: Education on the Edge

### NUS Believes

1. The Augar Review of post-18 education and funding is due to report this Spring. Yet the ongoing negotiations around Brexit are continuing to delay its final report.
2. We live in politically uncertain times, and education reform has been pushed far down the priority list of the UK Parliament which is solely focussed on our withdrawal process and relationship with the European Union.
3. To date, there has been a conscious attempt by the UK government to not only undo our hard won gains in education, but to make it near impossible to win that ground back ever again.
4. We are seeing an almost unprecedented threat of universities being pushed to the point of collapse and closure across the UK – a threat which would have been almost unimaginable this time last year.
5. Institutions collapsing will lead to fewer places in HE, and measures such as student number controls and restrictions on funding all point towards attempts to limit the number of students able to access HE courses.
6. Alongside this, FE institutions face a range of immediate threats ranging from mass redundancies to the threatened closure of FE students' unions.
7. Upcoming reforms to tertiary education seem intent on pitting FE against HE, hiding a desire to restrict access to HE for the richest as providing benefit to the FE sector. We will not fall for these divide and conquer tactics.
8. Restricting access to HE might take more students into FE, but we will never build a thriving FE system in this way. While FE is a second chance for many, the government cannot treat it as a second choice.
9. Education policy is devolved in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Still, education reform in Westminster often has a knock on effect across the UK, all of which pales in comparison to the impact Brexit will have on education across all of the nations.
10. Brexit brings with it potentially catastrophic risks to education institutions that risk accelerating institutional collapse from massive drops in international student numbers to the loss of EU funding.
11. All of these challenges are not just affecting the classroom. We are seeing them impact all aspects of students' lives in cuts to mental health support services on campus, extortionate rents and an increasingly hostile environment for students from liberation groups.
12. The Poverty Commission showed that the poorest students end up paying a "Poverty Premium" when it comes to education, whether directly from having to get into debt and paying more interest on it, or indirectly from things like higher transport costs. This not only restricts access and choice – it increases the risk of dropping out.
13. NUS and students' unions face constant smears and attacks, largely because we stand for a different vision of education and society than those who seek to undermine us - our belief in a free and liberated education.
14. Be it tackling the black attainment gap or giving students a powerful voice in their classrooms; ending the silence around sexual harassment on campus or championing diverse, flexible and accessible education pathways; cutting the link between TEF and fees or bringing in affordable student housing for working class students. We have not only stopped these reforms time and again in their tracks; we have continued to advance our vision.
15. Whether selling off universities or exploiting postgraduate workers; or creating a false free speech crisis while simultaneously ramping up the racist PREVENT agenda - the political and social attacks that the student movement and education face come from the same place. They must be tackled together.
16. NUS is also facing challenges on multiple fronts. This makes it all the more essential that we unite behind a unifying campaign, rooted firmly in our values.
17. It is clear that our education is on the edge. But it does not have to be on the edge of collapse – by seizing this moment we could be on the edge of fundamental positive change.




## **NUS Further Believes**

1. NUS needs to articulate a shared political vision: not just for the work of our national union, but for the world we want to build.
2. The power to win this vision is in the hands of students' unions as a movement.
3. Across the UK, across institutions from 50 to 50,000 students: we know our work is at its best when it is rooted in making students' lives and chances better by improving their experiences in education.
4. Education changes lives. Everyone should have the opportunity to access further and higher education. But it's not just about getting in, we have to focus on getting on as well.
5. It is the poorest students who always suffer the quickest and suffer the hardest when negative changes are made. We will put front and centre measures that improve the life chances and educational opportunities of working class students.
6. Everyone should have the opportunity to take a full time residential undergraduate first degree, regardless of family income or class background.
7. We will continue to champion high quality flexible education pathways for all who want them: as an equitable education option, not a second tier option for the working class.
8. Education providers need to play a vital role in communities. Our institutions should be embedded within and engaging with the community that they are a part of, showing the public benefit that education brings.
9. Education funding touches on every aspect of students' lives and is a broader conversation than how undergraduate higher education tuition fees are funded. We have to prioritise the things that affect students every day: not only their ability to pay their rent, fuel, living and transport costs, but the extortionate cost of these in the first place. None of these concerns are unique to those in higher education.
10. We will fight for education funding models across the UK that ensure the poorest can succeed, where all students can afford the cost of living to enable them to survive and thrive on their courses, and which supports an education system which redresses inequalities in society.
11. We will always hold, first and foremost, the need to accept changes which will benefit the most disadvantaged in the first instance.

## **NUS Resolves**

1. We will run a priority campaign that actively fights to build an education that is free and liberated, working across all zones and liberation campaigns.
2. 2019/20 will be the start of a renewed long-term, tactical and determined fight for the education system we need in this country - we will build a campaign that's fit for a fight that will run for years and possibly even decades.
3. We will build a coalition between the student movement and like-minded organisations who share our vision and values, and a public-facing influencing campaign designed to win public opinion. All this will be backed up by an ongoing General Election strategy focused on delivering a pro-education vote, strong enough to influence party manifestos and government's actions.
4. We will set out a clear, bold and proactive vision for post-16 education to the sector, to government and to the public calling for:
  - a. full and free access to FE, HE and apprenticeships for everyone,
  - b. maintenance funding so everyone can take part and succeed in education;
  - c. student voice at the heart of education
  - d. equity for all in terms of access and outcomes, with a particular focus on:
    - i. equity for Black students in terms of access and attainment;
    - ii. equity for working class students in terms of access and attainment;
    - iii. equity for learners across HE, FE and apprenticeships in terms of esteem and outcomes
  - e. a government approach that views post-16 education as the engine room for a strong economy and an equitable society
5. NUS UK will work in partnership with NUS Scotland, NUS-USI and NUS Wales to ensure that our campaign is both UK-wide and also specific to the needs and particular devolved contexts of the nations.
6. We will support the Love Our Colleges campaign and work in partnership in pursuit of our goals and policies.

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7. We will deliver on the recommendations of the Poverty Commission as part of this campaign.
  8. We will work hand in hand with students' unions to be the unifying national force which brings together local activism and grassroots campaigning.
  9. We will bring students into our vision of education through their unions and empower unions to make change locally and nationally. Most importantly the campaign will be successful in reminding students that their voice and their actions WILL change society.
  10. Using NUS's national and sector influence, we will seize the opportunities that reforms to education provide and use them to build towards free and liberated education.



## 200 | Education Zone

### Further Education

#### Motion FE201:


Submitted by: Further Education Zone Committee

##### 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


### Motion HE201:

**Submitted by:** Higher Education Zone Committee

#### 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.
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.



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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**

1. 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
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. To develop a shared understanding of marketisation among the mass student population through students' unions



## 300 | Society and Citizenship Zone

### Motion 301: Environmental Justice

**Submitted by:** Society and Citizenship Zone Committee

#### Conference Believes

1. Across the globe, and particularly in the so-called global south, Black and poor communities disproportionately experience the gravest impacts of environmental pollution and climate change.
2. Moreover, those who are the key contributors to climate change globally are western powers, predominantly white states and rich corporations. Those who benefit from the airports, power plants, oil companies that cause climate change are mainly richer people who live in cities.
3. Whilst there is amazing work happening across the UK, in NUS and at students' unions, often this work fails to sufficiently highlight the racialised and classed aspect of the causes and impacts of climate change.
4. The US Environmental Protection Agency describes environmental justice as: "...the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies." [1]
5. Across the globe, people of colour are often at the forefront of campaigning but have their voices and interests shut out of decision making on issues regarding the environment.
6. The Environmental Justice Foundation estimate that between 2008 and 2016, 21.5 million people became displaced because of extreme weather events caused by global warming. The United Nations predict that the number of climate refugees worldwide could reach up to 1 billion by 2050.
7. These environmental refugees do not currently have the right to stay in the UK
8. These people will be from the most vulnerable communities across the globe – 99% of direct victims of climate change come from countries which overall contribute to just 1% of global emissions.
9. In 2016, it was reported that Black African and Caribbean people living in London are disproportionately exposed to air pollution. It had already been acknowledged that poorer people in London most greatly feel the effects of air pollution, but this was the first time that the UK Government had been exposed for the impact this was having on Black communities too.
10. The idea of environmental justice isn't a new one, it arose in the 1980's from the struggles of Black communities in the US trying to challenge the impact that environmental injustices were having on their local communities.

#### Conference Further Believes

1. Environmental justice should be adopted as a framework for ensuring that the needs and voices of Black communities locally and globally are central to our work tackling environmental challenges.
2. Our work must centre the needs of and amplify the voices of Black and working-class people who are already feeling the impacts of climate change most dramatically, in communities across the UK and internationally.
3. The principle of environmental justice should exist at every level of our sustainability work, from our supply chain through to our work with activists on campus.
4. That action on climate change is best delivered on an international and local level. Students' unions are in an excellent position to build relationships with activist groups on and off campus in order to ensure that their campaigning work is as inclusive and effective as possible.
5. That climate refugees should have the right to enter and remain in the UK.



## **Conference Resolves**

1. NUS should support students' unions to develop relationships with activist groups on and off campus to ensure a variety of voices are reflected in their sustainability work
2. NUS should collaborate with expert organisations and already working within an environmental justice framework, such as War on Want and People and Planet and launch a toolkit
3. NUS should continue its commitment to the Divest-Invest Campaign
4. NUS should work with the Black Students' Campaign on this issue
5. NUS should lobby the Government to provide robust rights and protections for climate refugees once they arrive in the UK



# 400 | Union Development Zone

## Motion 401: Unions as Unions

**Submitted by:** Union Development Zone Committee

### Conference Believes

1. The student movement exists alongside and within a strong trade union movement in the UK.
2. Attacks on education and Students' Unions are happening side by side attacks on our colleagues and siblings in the Trade Union movement.
3. The success of our movement and society is best served by standing in solidarity and working closely with the wider Trade Union movement in the UK.

### Conference Further Believes

1. That there needs to be far more done in our education system to raise awareness about the important role Trade Unions have played and continue to play in the creation and protection of valuable rights workers in the UK have earned.
2. Students' Unions around the country can build strong local links through their trade union branches in their institutions and in the local community more broadly. This can help in development of campaigns and the engagement and support of groups beyond our immediate members on campuses.
3. Solidarity between our movement and the trade movement has been proven to work when we share beliefs, such as in the case of our continued fight against the PREVENT strategy.

### Conference Resolves

1. The Vice President Union Development should work to create support for SU's to link in with local Trade Union branches.
2. To integrate political and historical training of the Trade Union movement into Lead and Change for sabbatical officers within Students' Union's.
3. That NUS should be providing SU and/or student staff with information on joining a Trade Union.
4. We should continue to grow and develop our integration with the wider Trade Union movement in the UK.



## Motion 402: The Elections Commission - making democracy accessible!

**Submitted by:** Union Development Zone Committee

### Conference Believes

1. One of the unique and special aspects of our student movement and individual Students' Unions is our democratic spaces, elections and decision making. Our movement should be run by elected student leaders representing the voice of millions of students around the UK.
2. The absolute aspiration of all should be to ensure that our democratic spaces in Students' Unions and NUS is accessible for all and capturing the full wealth of experience, talent and diversity of our membership.
3. The NUS Black Students Campaign, Women's campaign, VP UD and many other campaigns and officers consistently hear of the difficulties that both candidates and Students' Unions face during their individual election season.
4. The work surrounding the elections commission by the zone this year is welcomed, but needs to be grown and expanded much further.

### Conference Further Believes

1. There have been a plethora of experiences shared by students showing consistent examples and experiences of both conscious and unconscious bias as well as discrimination in elections on campuses.
2. Many Students' Union's struggle specifically with encouraging women to stand in elections and often end up with all men teams and very often men as presidents. In places where all women teams are elected, it is frequently faced with backlash and calls for 'Men's officers' or representatives for reasons that can be addressed through liberation campaigns.
3. International students have particularly found in recent years that elections are increasingly inaccessible and have been disproportionately affected by suspensions and disqualifications.
4. Black students are often homogenized and disproportionately targeted through sanctions, suspensions and disqualifications during elections.
5. Students' Union's themselves have told us they have also struggled in many places with running of elections and engaging all students.

### Conference Resolves

1. The Vice President Union Development should continue to work on the Elections Commission work in supporting SU's and candidates in accessibility of SU democracy.
2. To particularly work with all Liberation campaigns and officers to support students and candidates that define into these groups.
3. That we also take a stance against Men's officers/representatives, and that we redirect these calls for support to the relevant liberation campaigns.
4. To provide particular attention to the experiences and support of international students in SU democracy.

# 500 | Welfare Zone

## Motion 501: A Vision for Welfare

**Submitted by:** Welfare Zone Committee

### Conference Believes

1. The marketisation of education has had a profound and disruptive impact on Further and Higher Education.
2. Students are facing a looming crisis- as the impacts of increasing debt, increasing living costs, social isolation, lack of pastoral support, and competition-driven academic experiences combine. This is heightened and exacerbated for students that identify into liberation or minority groups.
3. The NHS is being vastly underfunded and students in allied medical fields are bearing the brunt of these cuts within education, working more hours and under more gruelling conditions.<sup>1</sup>
4. According to the NUS Accommodation Costs Survey, the average annual rent for a student living in halls in 2018/19 is £6,366, up six per cent on the previous year and by a third on 2012/13. In London the average is £8,875 and for the rest of the UK £5,928. The cost of rent in this sector has risen above inflation for over a decade and continues to outstrip available student finance.<sup>2</sup>
5. The level of student debt is rising<sup>3</sup>.
6. The impact of debt and the cost of living increase is having a clear detrimental effect on student wellbeing and mental health.<sup>4</sup>

### Conference Further Believes

1. NUS Welfare Zone has clear policy on what we are against; now it is time to provide an inspiring vision of what we are for. A plan of action is required to explore radical solutions to the long-standing issues that impact on students' welfare.
2. The plan for the welfare zone should be grounded in the absolute belief that education should be free and that NUS should campaign tirelessly to remove the barriers to access to enable everyone to thrive in further and higher education including to campaign for the reinstatement and improvement of Disabled Students Allowance and to bring back grants and bursaries for students.
3. NUS will establish a new definition of what constitutes affordability for further and higher education, that considers the main areas of expenditure for students; namely accommodation, transport and course costs.
4. Everyone has the right to free and accessible healthcare. NUS should always fight for better NHS funding. NUS will stand with students to fight to ensure their access to health services that are fit for purpose and adequately funded, and that are free at the point of use including for International students and migrants. This includes mental health provision, sexual health and contraception services and free safe and legal abortion services in Northern Ireland.
5. NUS will drive forward a clear and coherent plan for change to improve the material wellbeing of students by developing consistent lobbying positions and campaigns that are developed with and shared by member students' unions. We will ensure our campaigns are evidence-based, and truly representative of student voice. We will equip students unions with the tools and expertise to enable them to engage with the work of NUS in a truly collective way.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2017/jan/04/2016-was-the-worst-year-in-nhs-history-we-must-fight-for-its-survival?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2017/jan/04/2016-was-the-worst-year-in-nhs-history-we-must-fight-for-its-survival?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/nus-and-unipol-accommodation-cost-survey-2018-full-report>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/80fb3686-e4ee-11e7-8b99-0191e45377ec>

<sup>4</sup> (Reference: Current research into the general student population has shown, according to figures released by IPPR in their report Not by Degrees, that over the last decade there has been a fivefold increase in the proportion of students who disclose a mental health condition to their institution (<https://www.ippr.org/publications/not-by-degrees>)).



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6. NUS will prioritise the voices of the liberation groups, including but not limited to taking direct steps to tackle racism in halls, discrimination in the private rented sector, the lack of culturally competent support services, staff and student sexual misconduct, period poverty, the racist Prevent Duty in our colleges and universities.

### **Conference Resolves**

1. To work with SUs to map out key stakeholders we can work with to support and amplify our campaigns and lobbying.
2. To Launch a NUS for NHS campaign that works with students in allied medical fields to fight to save our NHS and improve the learning and living conditions of students.
3. To relaunch the Students Not Suspects campaign and to fight the Prevent Agenda in education and society as a whole.
4. To recommission Pound in Your Pocket research to identify the true cost of living for students and use that as a powerful basis for campaigning work nationally. We commit to sharing data locally with students' unions and providing support to them to use the findings to campaign for change on their campuses as well as at a national level with NUS UK.
5. To establish networks of students' unions working on shared priorities and support them, by providing space, time and resources, to share their good practice and successes with the wider movement. Topics include but are not limited to culturally competent mental health services, staff and student sexual misconduct, anti-gambling initiatives, drug safety and testing kits, sexual health services, mental health strategy development and safety on campus.
6. To help create a dedicated campaign on PG Mental health and fight for workers' rights on our campuses.
7. To support housing campaigns on campus aimed at cutting the rent, improving standards, and fighting for a fair deal for renters as well as creating the first NUS campaign to lobby both universities and local councils to provide accessible and adaptable housing.