



Budget for Better Student Support

This campaign pack includes background information about our Budget for Better campaign, and ideas that students' associations can take forward locally to encourage students and members of the public to sign up to our campaign.

Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister, has said that education is the number one priority for the Scottish Government. NUS Scotland is asking the Scottish Government to make this a reality by investing in better support for Scotland's students.

Each year the Scottish Government goes through a process to finalise their Budget for spending for the next financial year. This includes outlining where there will be increases and decreases in spending. The Budget marks an opportunity for us to ask the Government to make changes to the student support system now and to put in place changes that will benefit students studying in academic year 2018/19.

In November 2017 the recommendations from the independent Student Support Review were released. This review wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for our collective campaigning efforts, and shows that when we stand together we can achieve change for students. The report contains a range of ideas, and different approaches the Government could take - including many that we believe will radically improve the lives of students in Scotland.

The Budget and the recommendations from the Student Support Review provide an opportunity for us to campaign to improve student support in Scotland through our Budget for Better campaign.

We're calling on the Scottish Government to Budget for Better when it comes to student support. We want to see Budget for Increased Bursaries, Budget for a Better Deal for Graduates and Budget for Mental Health Support.

Get involved:

- Email the First Minister and your local MSPs using [our online form](#)
- Find out [who your MSPs](#) are and get in touch
- Set up a stall - get leaflets and posters [here](#)
- Get the local press interested - get a template press release [here](#)

Campaign asks

Budget for Increased Bursaries

The current student support system is broken. The poorest students in higher education are forced to take the greatest debt, while further education students have no guarantees that they'll be entitled to any support.

The Student Support Review has reported. It presents a range of options for the future of student finance, including:

- A proposal to significantly increase bursary support to over £4,000 for the poorest students in both further and higher education.
- An entitlement to a total of £8,100 financial support for further and higher education students, tied to the cost of living.

It's now up to the Scottish Government how they will respond to this report. NUS Scotland is calling for serious new investment in bursary support for both FE and HE students - so that they are supported to succeed wherever they study.

Budget for a Better Deal for Graduates

At present those students taking out loans in Scotland get a raw deal. Currently, students start repaying loans once they earn over £17, 775. This is substantially lower than in England and Wales, where the threshold is set to rise to £25,000.

Students should start to see the benefit of their degree in their payslip before they start repaying loans. NUS Scotland is calling for a better deal for Scotland's graduates – starting with an immediate increase to the loan repayment threshold.

Budget for Mental Health Support

Drastically different levels of mental health are available to students, based on where they study. Provision of counselling services is particularly patchy across colleges. We are calling for the Scottish Government to dedicate new, ring fenced funding to establish a universal level of counselling provision and mental health support at all of Scotland's colleges and universities.



Budget For Better – lobbying your MSPs

During the first phase of our campaign we're encouraging students and members of the public to contact their MSPs to tell them why we need to improve student support. We know that when we work together and show the strength of feeling behind issues we can win for students.

To do this we're asking students and members of the public to email their MSPs through our online form. Not only will this send an email to your constituency MSP and up to 7 regional MSPs, we're also including Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister, in all of these emails.

Email your MSPs now at
www.nusconnect.org.uk/BudgetForBetter

Ideas for action

We've collated a number of ideas for action which you can use to promote the Budget for Better campaign on your campus, based on your feedback at NUS Scotland Zone Conference.

Host a stall on campus

Set up a stall in a busy area on campus and ask students to sign up to the campaign. You can use our [Budget For Better leaflets](#) to promote the campaign and either make use of our [printable sign-up sheets](#), or set up a laptop so students (and staff) can sign up there and then!

If you collect support for the campaign on sign-up sheets make sure to build in time to type them up – why not get along some keen volunteers and offer them pizza and a free Budget for Better tshirt for helping out! Not sure what to say to students? Try this:

Hi I'm [name] from [students' association] do you think that students have enough support whilst studying? What has been your experience?

I'm part of NUS Scotland's Budget for Better campaign and we're asking the Scottish Government to improve student bursaries, increase the amount students have to earn before paying back any student loan and to provide new funding for colleges and universities to improve mental health services for students.

We're asking people to take a couple of minutes to show their support for the campaign by emailing their local MSPs – it's really easy to, and you can do it online.

The current student support system is broken - but if we all take part in this campaign we can prove to them that we need more support as students. Students have done it before by working together and we can do it again.



Promote the campaign online

- Post a link to the campaign on your students' association Facebook page.
- Share the campaign on Twitter using #BudgetForBetter with a photo. *I've just supported @NUSScotland's #BudgetForBetter campaign and asked my MSPs to increase bursary support, budget for a better deal for graduates, and improve funding for mental health support.*
- Add a Twibbon to your profile photo.
- Video students on campus to ask them what an improved student support system would mean to them.
- Tweet your MSPs, [find out who your MSPs are here](#) and [download our MSP spreadsheet](#) to see which MSPs represent your college/university campus.
- Put a link on your students' association website to the campaign.
- Link up with other students' associations in your local area to Tweet your MSPs on the same day.
- Post a link to the campaign in group chats.

Get the word out on campus

- Set up a campaign team! This could include class representatives, student societies, or members of your executive committee.
- Simply taking an hour out everyday will make a difference. Grab some paper petitions and **go out and talk** to students about this. Get a group of volunteers to do the same. If you have 10 volunteers and they talk to 10 people each day for one week that would be: **500 sign ups!**
- Set up a competition between class representatives to see who can get the most sign ups.
- Write an article for your student newspaper about why you're supporting the campaign.
- Contact your IT department and ask permission to make the campaign logo and website into a screensaver across all computers and screens on the campus.
- Use your contacts lists (volunteers, societies, events) and send out an email promoting the campaign or ask your IT department (or you may already have permission) to send mass emails to all students and staff of the institution.
- Ask lecturers if you can do **a lecture shout** before busy classes. Simply wait for the class to fill up and take 5 minutes out to promote the website - they can even sign up right there and then on their phones.



Make use of your staff contacts

Many staff will be supportive of our campaign asks, they often see first-hand the impact that the current system has on students and want to see it changed for the better.

- Find out who your trade union representative is and request a meeting. At that meeting, ask them to email out to all the union members at the institution or put it in the union newsletter. You can find out who your [local EIS contact is here](#). You can find out who your local [Unison contact is here](#) and [UCU contact is here](#).
- Email out the logo and website address to lecturers and tutors and ask them to put it up at the beginning of classes.
- Lobby your Principal and senior management team to sign up to the campaign. The network of senior management in the education sector is small, and it is likely that a principal from one college/university talks to another and may even push their counterparts to sign up.

Plan a fun action

- Organise an event on campus – whether this is a rally or a flashmob it's something to get students involved with the campaign and talking about it. It's easy to do and will get you lots of attention and (hopefully) local press coverage (check out our [template press release](#)). Find a busy location and time, clear it with your institution, spread the word and make it sound exciting. Make sure you get a good number of students there and making some noise! The point is to show how many students care and make people stop and notice. Make sure everything you do is done safely and within legal limits.
- If you don't have the capacity for a rally then it's still easy to create a **photo opportunity**. A key way to put pressure on MSPs is to get local media coverage of the issue and a quirky photograph, even with a couple of students in it can make it into the local newspaper
- Make a big deal out of visiting your MSP, deliver a bag of letters about why they should sign up to Budget for Better, or arrange for a photograph outside their office with a Budget for Better banner.
- Set up a fun craftivism activity on campus - a wall of debt or get students to design their own Christmas cards to send to your MSPs about the campaign.
- Tie in the campaign to existing events that you have – this could be your student council, a wellbeing week or another event you have planned.



The local community

This isn't just an issue that students and staff at college and university will care about. Members of the local community are likely to support our campaign too. This is particularly true for parents, carers or grandparents of current students, and future students.

- Get on to the high street or city centre and get volunteers to sign up members of the community (you do not need a permit to do this)
- Engage your local school by asking the principal to let you speak to the staff, students or parents or send an email to them.
- Ask local organisations to sign up. Send emails with the link to the website to local businesses, charities or organisations you know your college or university work with.

Campaign timeline – key dates

Phase 1: generating email sign ups

- Campaign launch and week of action – 4 December
- Scottish Government announces draft budget – 14 December

Phase 2: engaging with MSPs

- January 2018 – MSP lobbying event at Scottish Parliament (tbc)
- Students' associations meeting with local MSPs
- Scottish Government finalises 2018/19 budget – mid February

Support from NUS Scotland

We'd love to hear about the campaign actions that you have planned and are happy to come and help out! You can find our campaign resources on NUS Connect here:

www.nusconnect.org.uk/BudgetForBettercampaign

For more information about the campaign contact:

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