

Author & Job title:	Madeleine Spink, Governance Coordinator
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Contents

Policy

Policy passed at National Conference 2014	11
Policy passed at National Conference 2015	11
Policy passed at National Conference 2016	6

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 2014 will lapse at the end of National Conference 2017.

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 contact [**executiveoffice@nus.org.uk**](mailto:executiveoffice@nus.org.uk)

Contents

<i>Further Education Policy Passed At National Conference 2014</i>	3
NC_FE_14201: Qualifications and Progression	3
NC_FE_14202: Challenge of the Learner Voice	4
<i>Higher Education Policy Passed At National Conference 2014</i>	6
NC_HE_14201: Higher Education Qualifications	6
NC_HE_14202: Building Democratic Institutions	7
NC_HE_14203: If You Don't Like the Way the Table Is Set, Turn It Over	9
NC_HE_14204: A Clearer and More Transparent Employment Indicator from the DLHE	10
NC_HE_14205: Fitness for Practice, Not Fit For Purpose	11
NC_HE_14206: Their Jobs, Our Education: Supporting Staff For Fair Pay	11
NC_HE_14207: A New Deal for Education Funding	13
NC_HE_14208: Protecting Internationalisation in Our Education System, Fighting Visa Changes	16
NC_HE_14209: Postgraduate Funding	16
<i>Education Policy Passed At National Conference 2015</i>	19
NC_E_15201: Vocational Education	19
NC_E_15202: Changing FE	21
NC_E_15203: Doctor, Doctor, We Need To Talk About Postgraduates	22
NC_E_15204: Black Students Are NOT The Problem, Institutional Racism Is!	23
NC_E_15205: Students Aren't Consumers but They Do Have Rights	24
NC_E_15206: Changing the Structure of Maintenance Loans	25
NC_E_15207: We Are Sections, Let Us Roar!	29
NC_E_15208: No FE Cuts	29
NC_E_15209: Coming Of 'Digital' Age/Digital Literacy Motion	30
NC_E_15210: Bad Organisation and Management Makes For a Bad Student Experience	31
NC_E_15211: Free Education	31
<i>Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2016</i>	33
Motion 201 Divorce our courses from market forces	33
Motion 202 Area Reviews – Colleges are on life support; don't pull the plug!	37
Motion 203 Employability isn't working	39
Motion 204 Free Education, Further Education, For Everyone	41
Motion 205 Liberate My Degree	43
Motion 206 Qualifications - Once the golden rule...now just pieces of paper	45

Further Education Policy Passed At National Conference 2014

NC_FE_14201: Qualifications and Progression

Conference Believes:

1. From 2015 new GCSEs and A levels will be taught in England.
2. Across both qualifications there will be a reduction in coursework, end of year exams will become the favoured assessment method and there will be fewer opportunities to re-sit. GCSE grades will also change to numerical grading, with 9 being the highest and 1 being the lowest.
3. The AS qualification will be 'de-coupled' from an A level making it a standalone qualification, which does not count towards a full A level grade.
4. Vocational qualifications will also be reformed as the 'Tech Bacc' has been created as a means to raise the status of vocational courses in schools and colleges.
5. Under these new qualifications it will become more difficult to mix academic and vocational courses. Students are likely to have to make choices about what they study earlier on and will not have the flexibility to move between the two.
6. NUS' research has shown that students are opposed to the changes due to be made to GCSE and A level qualifications. In a national survey 81 per cent replied that coursework should remain a part of assessment. When asked if exams should only take place once a year, in the summer, 72 per cent of all respondents disagreed. An overwhelming 90 per cent of those who replied said that re-sits should be available in all subjects and 81 per cent said that the existing grading structure in GCSEs should remain in place.
7. The reforms to GCSE and A level qualifications are also likely to have serious negative impacts on students with a variety of disabilities. The changes ignore different learning styles and fail to provide second opportunities for students who may have to deal with upheaval during their education.
8. Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) in schools and colleges is currently not adequate. As these reforms are introduced, and the participation age is raised, IAG must be easier to access and more robust.

Conference Resolves:

1. To conduct research in to the state of vocational qualifications at level 2 and 3 in the UK and campaign against the marginalisation of this type of learning by the current Government.
2. To track the introduction of the new qualifications. Focusing on the impact of the reforms on participation, attainment, and progression to further study and work.
3. To look specifically at the removal/reduction of coursework and re-sits, and the impact on learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, and oppose all fees associated with re-sits.
4. To work closely with employers to ensure that they have a full understanding of the new grading system and are able to distinguish the value of different qualifications during recruitment.
5. To lobby for clarity on what GCSEs and A levels are intended to be for. Are they a proxy for essential skills/knowledge, or are they a test of memory, resilience, mental stamina or something else? Employers criticise them, as do schools. But what do students think, and what are their stories about how they've been useful?
6. To research the impact of more limited subject choice on access to arts/humanities provision, and the impact on social/cultural capital of this.
7. To continue to campaign on the improvement of IAG in schools and colleges, setting up an IAG commission and ensuring the National Careers Service better meets the needs of students.
8. To conduct research in to functional skills and their value as both standalone qualifications and as a components in other qualification frameworks.

NC_FE_14202: Challenge of the Learner Voice

Conference Believes:

1. Despite the increased profile of learner voice over the last 10 years, too often it is seen as a box-ticking exercise by providers, rather than an opportunity for students to influence colleges and the learning experience.
2. The government's "New Challenges, New Chances" policy poses a further threat to effective learner voice by deregulating the sector.
3. Learner voice is most effective when students' unions are empowered to build strong, effective partnerships with their institutions and provide opportunities for personal, social and citizenship education for students.
4. Well-funded, adequately resourced and student-led unions remain the exception to the rule in FE.
5. NUS must do more to support students' unions locally in winning the arguments with their institutions and setting clear development plans for better funding, resource and commitment for student-led learner voice.
6. Learner voice should be a clear mark of organisational performance from national inspectorate bodies.
7. Further Education students are increasingly diverse and more needs to be done to help develop innovative, localised models of representation for different learners, in particular apprentices and those based off campus
8. Unions need greater access to college performance data to enable them to build evidence-based campaigns to improve student experience
9. Since September 2013, colleges are able to directly recruit 14 and 15 year old students. However, these students are not entitled to membership of their students' union under the Education Act 1994.
10. All students enrolled on a course at college should be members of their students' union, regardless of age.
11. Government plans to shift funding for adult skills and apprenticeships to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and employers represents a challenge for learner involvement in regional decisions on education provision.

Conference Resolves:

1. To continue to support students' unions and colleges in building effective student-led, college-supported learner voice which empowers learners to improve the academic experience locally, regionally and nationally.
2. Commit to deliver greater targeted support to unions locally to help make the case for increased funding, resource and commitment from their institutions.
3. Be clear to the sector that college-funded, resourced and empowered students' unions should be commonplace across FE to ensure quality learner voice and student engagement.
4. Develop a strategy to increase learner voice in teaching, learning and education quality across the sector.
5. Working with the national inspectorate bodies across the UK, clearly define standards of learner voice within college inspection frameworks to put students at the heart of the college inspection process.
6. Work with Ofsted to increase student engagement with Learner View as a quality improvement tool.
7. Continue to consult with apprentices and students based off campus to develop strategies for effective learner voice for these learners.
8. Consult with students' unions, LEPs and employers to develop a learner voice strategy for the regional commissioning of adult skills and apprenticeship funding

9. Review the Education Act 1994 to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and that 14 and 15 year old students are legal members of their students' union.

Higher Education Policy Passed At National Conference 2014

NC_HE_14201: Higher Education Qualifications

Study is the one thing all students have in common. For two years we have campaigned for the adoption of partnership approaches to making higher education better – and we have won. But partnership will only become a reality if we now focus our energies on using partnership approaches to make the experience of studying transformative for every student. Study that transforms lives comes from students and course reps working directly with their lecturers as well as from students' unions working with institutions to build inclusive educational communities, develop the capacity of students to shape their educational context and determine the future of higher education.

Conference Believes:

1. Higher education has huge potential to transform and enrich the lives of those who undertake it. It extends their capabilities, enriches their understanding and builds their capacity to be a citizen who can effect change in the world.
2. Study and learning is what every student has in common, no matter their background, subject or level of study. Much learning happens in the classroom but much happens in the library, in the workplace, on the sports field, in an academic society or in the students' union.
3. Learning happens in an academic community; being engaged and feeling a sense of belonging to their community is what helps students learn and achieve.
4. Too many students in higher education struggle to engage and fail to reach their academic potential because of non-inclusive practices in the classroom and on campus by lecturers, staff and peers.
5. The rhetoric of employability and employability skills is inadequate to enable students to achieve their aspirations for their life.
6. Being an active citizen in the twenty first century requires individuals to understand concepts like environmental sustainability, social injustice, ethical use of knowledge and political activism. A higher education that serves the public good would seek to develop students with these attributes.
7. If higher education is to be transformative for students and help them achieve their aspirations then students will have to take on more of a role in creating their own learning outcomes, defining their own learning spaces and shaping their own curriculum.
8. Students' unions must be the cornerstone of student engagement.
9. There has been a dramatic decline in mature and part-time students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
10. Mature students face specific barriers to returning to study at postgraduate level, many of which are related to the lack of flexibility of study.
11. The work and family commitments that mature students make it difficult for them to travel outside of their community for education; they need a local HEI that meets their needs.
12. Existing provision aimed at adult and community learning by HEIs is under threat, with institutions closing evening and weekend community learning programmes.
13. Employers should be engaged in advising institutions on their needs and desires, but academic freedom and institutional autonomy over course content and structure must be maintained.
14. There is a growing problem in terms of unemployment and underemployment for older members of the labour force who cannot access the education and training they need to reskill and upskill.

Conference Resolves:

1. To develop a plan of work for the HE Zone targeted at developing our understanding and that of our members of how to create inclusive, student-led learning communities in higher education institutions.
2. To focus on reforming curriculum design, assessment and feedback practice to support complex learning outcomes and develop graduate attributes fit for twenty-first century active citizens.
3. To work to better understand and rearticulate the employability agenda so that it is aligned to students' aspirations rather than employer-led skills demands and support students' unions to both influence their institution and deliver their own employability support in innovative and student-focused ways.
4. To work with the Student Engagement Partnership to develop partnership approaches to engaging and supporting students to take the lead in determining their own higher education learning journeys.
5. To research and disseminate good practice in embedding peer learning and peer mentoring practices in higher education.
6. To work with institutions to find ways of increasing access to postgraduate study for individuals without undergraduate degrees by accrediting knowledge and skills from work, training and further education.
7. Engage in research to look at the ways in which postgraduate study could be made more flexible.
8. Engage with HEFCE about ways of incentivising institutions to create more flexible postgraduate provision and learning partnerships with employers and local communities.
9. Campaign to defend and extend the provision of flexible learning for mature students.
10. Lobby government to ensure employers are able and willing to provide flexibility for employees to undertake study while at work.
11. Campaign on the availability of affordable and flexible childcare provision for postgraduate students with children.
12. Work with institutional and local careers services to tailor advice and support for mature postgraduates, specifically the availability in small and specialist institutions.

NC_HE_14202: Building Democratic Institutions

Women represented 44.5 per cent of academic staff in 2011-12, but only 27.5 per cent of senior managers in Higher Education Institutions (ECU 2013). In 2011-12, 12.6 per cent of academic staff were from BME backgrounds, but they only represent 4.3 per cent of senior managers (ECU 2013). NUS has produced guidance for students' unions on how to audit the governance structures of their institution and ways to challenge undemocratic decision-making.

Conference Believes:

1. Higher Education Institutions have a duty to uphold the values of a democratic and pluralist society, and work to share those values with staff, students, and the wider community.
2. Governments since the 1980s have encouraged universities to adopt more corporate forms of governance, with an emphasis on market competitiveness, efficiency, and concentration of power in governing bodies and in the office of the Vice Chancellor.
3. There is a broad consensus in the student movement over the need to challenge corporate governance, particularly where it is related to marketisation and "value-for-money" assumptions and decisions.
4. There is also strong criticism of the way power and decision-making has been concentrated in the hands of a small group of senior executives, with students and academics having little say over important policies.
5. The role of students in governing bodies and committees is often nothing more than a 'rubber stamp' on university policies.

6. The current underrepresentation of women and BME persons in senior roles at universities is a disgrace and represents a clear failure of universities to take seriously equality and diversity in the workplace.
7. Gender equality is a crucial aspect of democratisation and it involves breaking down masculine and sexist cultures as much as it involves increasing the representation of women.
8. The idea that students are 'window dressing' in governance structures must be dispelled, whether it is the result of student perceptions, or the result of institutional practice.
9. Students' unions are well placed to challenge their institution on the fairness and suitability of its governance practices. Unions should, therefore, be at the vanguard of any campaign to democratise universities and build student partnerships.
10. Students are heavily involved in their local communities in many positive ways, contributing economically, socially, culturally and politically in local activities. They can help encourage local communities to hold their institution to account and ensure it works to champion local causes.
11. The work that NUS and students' unions have achieved on student partnership should be seen as a building block to encourage institutions to improve the representation and voice of students in institutional governance.
12. Decision making at institutions should be conducted in a democratic manner, involving a diverse representation of the key stakeholders in education, namely students, academic and non-academic staff, and the local community.
13. Transparency is necessary for democracy.
14. Where outsourcing is used by institutions to cut costs and undermine workers' pay and conditions, this should not be allowed to silence these workers' voices in the democratic structures of the institution. Students' unions should campaign locally for outsourced staff to be incorporated into and given a democratic voice through institutions' governance structures alongside directly employed staff and students.
15. The agenda of marketisation within Higher Education stands directly in opposition to the democratic claims of staff and students within their institutions. In order for any education system to be democratic, it must be accessible and run for the public good. We must take a clear stand against education as a commodity and for a free, publicly-funded education system.
16. In the end, we want education to be entirely democratically governed by students, staff and the community, to ensure that it serves our needs. Senior managers represent nobody
17. While we should strive to improve representation at the highest levels, any unelected hierarchical management will always help perpetuate the oppression of marginalised groups.
18. Universities have been increasingly using the brute force of security staff and police to silence student protest, with some attempting to ban protest altogether.
19. Students, elected officers and staff have been beaten and arrested for exercising their right to protest.
20. That for an institution to be democratic it should be a place where critical thinking and active dissent is encouraged.
21. The recent arrests, draconian injunctions and suspensions seen in response to campus protests is the reflex of managements who have lost the arguments with students and staff over marketisation, fees, outsourcing and pay.
22. Educational institutions should be run by those who study and work in them, not overpaid and unaccountable managements.
23. Repressing student protest is an affront to democracy, the right to resistance and free speech.
24. Universities employing force negates their duty of care to students and staff.
25. The police are institutionally violent and racist and are known for lying about student protest activity.
26. In order to promote a safe space, we should demand police have no presence on our campuses unless authorised by an elected student representative.

Conference Resolves:

1. Support students' unions to articulate a strong narrative against forms of governance that put the interests of students at risk and work against the welfare of society as a whole.
2. Provide evidence to unions to show the benefits of better student representation and more democratic governance to institutions and to the student body.
3. Provide further evidence and resources to unions to help them challenge undemocratic and unrepresentative decision-making at their institutions and come up with positive and workable proposals for improvement.
4. Campaign for better representation of women and BME in senior positions, and to remove masculine cultures by de-genderising the concept of leadership and "speaking out" against sexism.
5. Stand up for values of democracy in higher education and ensure that education remains a tool for fighting injustice and building a fair and equitable society.
6. Improve the involvement of students in decision making at all levels, making sure that they can fully represent the views of the student body on university committees and governing bodies.
7. Ensure that students are adequately represented on the governing bodies of their institution, and that student governors have the right to speak as representatives of the student body and not merely as individuals.
8. Provide the right training and support to union officers that sit on university committees and governing bodies.
9. Empower course reps to champion the democratic voice of students in departmental decisions which affect them with the right training and support.
10. Campaign for 'open books' – key information such as university finances must be shared fully with student and staff unions.
11. Campaign for managements to pledge - and write into regulations - that they will not call police onto campus without permission from the SU.
12. Create a legal fund to support students facing charges or legal costs as a result of repression.
13. Develop policy for democratic control of institutions by staff and students, on the basis of restored public funding, linking it to the police question with the slogan "Reclaim your campus".

NC_HE_14203: If You Don't Like the Way the Table Is Set, Turn It Over

Conference Believes:

1. The opening up of a market in Higher Education is increasingly turning universities' attention to how to 'compete' rather than how to widen participation.
2. Where universities are externally accountable for widening participation targets (i.e. through fee plans, access agreements, outcome agreements, and in other ways) this does not prevent them from enacting other, regressive admissions policies which negate their other work.
3. Our universities are more and more focused on recruiting the perceived 'best' students with the highest grades in order to boost their standing in league tables.
4. The measures used by league tables as markers of quality do not account for educational disadvantage. They incentivise universities to recruit high numbers of students with the highest quantity of high grades [tariff points] and lots of social capital [employability], rather than making holistic assessments of students' potential.
5. League table compilers are accountable to no-one other than their publishers.
6. Universities are increasingly directing resources to attract these 'top' students, and are offering incentives such as guaranteed offers, free sports passes, better accommodation, bursaries or other financial incentives, or enhanced educational experiences for these applicants.
7. These resources are not being spent on supporting students who need it the most.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Universities should recruit students based on a holistic assessment of their achievements, background, and potential, rather than on grades alone.

2. Universities should focus their available resources on retaining and supporting students in most need.
3. Initiatives to widen access are only effective if universities' other admissions policies do not undermine them.
4. Students and elected officers should continue to hold individuals accountable for poor decisions.
5. Students and elected officers can achieve change by challenging and changing the framework within which our institutions are working

Conference Resolves:

1. To continue to campaign against the idea of Higher Education as a market, in all its manifestations.
2. To continue to support students and elected officers to work with their universities on access measures like Access Agreements, Outcome agreements, and others.
3. To provide specific support for students and elected officers to challenge all universities' admissions and recruitment decisions outside of these measures.
4. To put together a compendium of 'worst practice', highlighting regressive and market-driven recruitment practices universities have put in place, as well as successful campaigns against these decisions by students' unions.
5. To campaign for national governments to scrutinise and regulate all universities' admissions decisions, not just specific access measures.
6. To hold league table compilers to account for their negative impact on widening participation, and demand they use measures that do not disincentivise or penalise universities who take progressive student recruitment decisions.

NC_HE_14204: A Clearer and More Transparent Employment Indicator from the DLHE

Conference Believes:

1. That the HESA DLHE survey, and its subsequent 'Employment Indicator', provide prospective HE students with an idea of their potential employment and career prospects following graduation from a given institution - based on the whereabouts of recent graduates from that institution 6 months after graduating.
2. That particular components of the DLHE survey result in a figure/statistic (i.e. the 'Employment Indicator') that can be both a misleading and untruthful reflection of respondents' actual employment statuses and career progression.
3. That the DLHE 'Employment Indicator' is different to an employment rate (which the indicator is sometimes marketed and/or perceived as) in that it does not represent the proportion of a given group of graduates who are employed within 6 months of leaving a given institution. It, instead, is based on a mixture of an employment rate and a number of other factors which then only partially reflects an employment rate and indicates the likelihood of current and future employability (and subsequent employment).

Conference Further Believes:

1. That for the likes of 'voluntary or other unpaid work' and 'developing a professional portfolio/creative practice' to be classed as working full-time/employment is misleading and unethical.
2. That the manner in which the DLHE Employment Indicator is used by institutions is not always in the correct context or consistent, both internally and externally.
3. That the Employment Indicator has the tendency to give students a false sense of post graduation employment prospects - mainly due to the way in which the survey results are or aren't presented.

4. The employment indicator doesn't suggest whether graduates are in employment, work or activity that is of relevance to their studies, qualification and ambitions – i.e. whether their university has helped them into a job they wanted as appose to any job.

Conference Resolves:

1. To lobby for the implementation of a framework for HEI's which governs how institutions use DLHE data/the Employment Indicator to market themselves.
2. Lobby for students' unions to have access to a breakdown of the DLHE results/the 'Employment Indicator' and be entitled to a clear and thorough explanation of what the 'Employment Indicator' actually is/means and how it is calculated.
3. Lobby for HESA to review the structure of the DLHE survey and the make-up of the Employment Indicator figure.

NC_HE_14205: Fitness for Practice, Not Fit For Purpose

Conference Believes:

1. Students who are on courses whereby there is a professional nature, whilst dealing with people (nurses, teachers, midwives) can go through Fitness For Practice (FFP) procedures if the University or Professional body/trust is concerned about the student's personal or professional suitability for the course or future profession.
2. A FFP panel is made up by various professionals, including University representatives, and often, placement provider representatives
3. If a student goes through the FFP procedure, and is found fit for practice by the board, placement providers can currently still refuse to take students back on placement.
4. When denied the ability to go back to their original placement provider, it is then very difficult to find a student a placement with a different provider to complete their placement.
5. If these students are lucky enough to get a placement with another provider, this can be anywhere in the country, which means students have to relocate causing stress and inconvenience.

Conference Further Believes:

1. The referral to fitness for practice is inconsistent within trusts.
2. Students can be referred to FFP for actions that might have been otherwise dealt with, if the same action was conducted by a member of NHS staff.
3. Given the potential to end a student's career, we think that there should be a review of how issues with students on placement is dealt with to make it consistent with how staff are treated.

Conference Resolves:

1. NUS will work with the NHS to ensure local trusts respect and recognise the decision of fellow Health Professionals in deciding that a student is Fit to Practice, and therefore provide them with another opportunity to complete their course.
2. NUS will lobby the NHS to ensure that when students feel it necessary to transfer to a different trust, whether it is due to FFP decisions being upheld, or due to logistical issues, the NHS Trust system will do more to accommodate these students.
3. NUS will complete a report in partnership with the NHS reviewing the circumstances of what a student can be brought to a Fitness for Practice disciplinary panel for. Thus ensuring all placement providers and universities understand what can be brought as an issue for FFPs, and what can be addressed separately through academic staff.

NC_HE_14206: Their Jobs, Our Education: Supporting Staff For Fair Pay

Conference Believes:

1. Following 3 years of a pay freeze, the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) has imposed a 1% pay offer for all HE staff in the UK on the national pay scale.
2. As a result, all HE staff who are not off the pay scale (everybody who isn't a senior manager) have had a 13% real terms pay cut over the past 4 years
3. This pay-cut has been labelled "one of the largest sustained wage cuts any profession has suffered since the Second World War."
4. That the pension schemes for both academic and non-academic staff have recently been attacked.
5. In 2011-2012 University senior management pay rose, on average, by five thousand pounds per year.
6. That this academic year saw, for the first time ever, coordinated strike action between UCU, Unison, UNITE and EIS.
7. That this strike action has included an exam marking boycott.
8. That industrial action in the FE sector over terms, conditions and bullying looks increasingly likely.
9. The cut to HE teaching grants of 45% since 2010/11 has had a drastic effect on staffing levels and conditions
10. Students have been made to bridge the funding gap through an increase in tuition fees to on average £8,507 (for 2013/14)
11. Already one of the highest in the western world, projected cuts to teaching budgets could lead to an increase in student/staff ratios to a level at which it is impossible to deliver a quality degree course
12. The lifting of the cap on student numbers could lead to a squeeze on staff/student ratios within some institutions and faculties, particularly post 92 universities which already have broadly higher ratios
13. In research carried out by UCU, a majority of academics report 'often' or 'always' neglecting tasks due to having too much to do
14. On average, education professionals as a whole work 11.1 hours in unpaid overtime per week
15. Median pay for academics has fallen in real terms by 2.26% since 2009 and 15% for support staff
16. Universities have sought to cut corners, through a gradual replacement of permanent academics with postgraduates and visiting lecturers, use of hourly paid staff to deliver large components of courses in the space of a few days, 'team teaching' and lectures delivered by video relay, amongst other measures
17. HE has one of the worst gender pay gaps of any sector, reported at 19.8% in 2013 by the UCEA.
18. Widening pay inequality is part of the marketisation of HE.
19. Workers and students should have democratic control over remuneration of management.
20. A pay ratio of 1:5 would ensure a fairer scale of salaries between the highest and lowest paid.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Although industrial action is likely to affect students in the short term, in fighting for their terms and conditions staff trade unions are fighting for the long-term health of a set of professions of which students are the primary beneficiaries.
2. Universities and Colleges know that it is students who are harmed when staff are forced to take strike action. It is our members and our staff who are made to pay the price when senior management try to cut their wage bill.
3. That the more staff has the support of students in the early stages of industrial action, the less likely it is that they will be forced to escalate their industrial action and therefore avoid inconveniencing our members.
4. That the fates of the student movement and the staff trade unions are intimately entwined, together we are stronger.
5. Managements are responsible for seeking to make staff and students pay the price for anti-social and irresponsible policies.

6. That whenever staff are overworked, facing attacks on pay and pensions, casualised or insecure in their employment, students' education suffers
7. The financial burden on students, and attacks on staff are unfair and unnecessary in the context of an estimated £120bn tax evaded by big business and the wealthy annually, as well as the £22,000 average pay rise for vice chancellors in 2013.

Conference Resolves:

1. Reaffirm our support for our staff in the ongoing HE pay dispute.
2. To publicly call on UCEA to meet the demands of the unions' for a fair and equitable pay settlement as soon as possible.
3. To campaign for an end to use of zero hours contracts and for a Living Wage for all university and college workers.
4. To offer maximum practical and political support to staff unions in their struggle against low pay, redundancies, excessive workload, and other attacks which affect their ability to deliver a good quality education
5. To make the issue of 'teaching on the cheap' a key demand of local and national campaigning, with associated demands for a restoration of the teaching grant to pre-2010 levels, to be used to fund permanent, salaried, properly trained staff
6. To call on university managements to implement budgets on the basis of what is needed to provide a good quality education, and to support them in campaigns to fight for the necessary funds from central government should they do so
7. To link up this campaigning work with other public sector workers and service users to defeat the government's austerity agenda
8. Run a national campaign for a 5:1 pay ratio, including rolling protests against institutions that don't pay all staff a Living Wage, highlighting VCs' pay.
9. Campaign for democratic control over pay.
10. Baring a vote to the contrary at NEC which must be ratified at the following conference, to give our full support to our staff trade unions in any future industrial disputes.

NC_HE_14207: A New Deal for Education Funding

Conference Believes:

1. The Coalition Government's 2010 higher education funding reforms sought to continue a trend of redefining direct public investment in education as private debt resting on the shoulders of individuals
2. The Government pays more than £7 billion annually to fund higher education tuition fee loans alone; of this the most recent revised figures suggest that up to 40 per cent will be covered by public sources due to non-repayment.
3. The extension of a funding system framed in terms of loans and debt to individual students has created a destructive narrative of 'waste' in place of one where the public investment in higher education can be properly recognised and celebrated as vital to a fair, sustainable and prosperous society
4. The 2010 funding system has left students facing the prospect of paying twice for higher education: once in the form of loan repayments and subsequently through taxation to fill a putative economic black hole, which is neither fair nor sustainable.
5. The narrative of waste has hastened the sell-off into private hands of a public asset in the form of student loan book, and with no legal protection for students' terms and conditions, putting repayment thresholds and rates at risk of amendment.
6. The higher education tuition fee 'sticker price' drives a marketised system in which students are encouraged to make narrow choices on the grounds of costs that in reality they may not end up paying.

7. While those who access higher education remain disproportionately those from higher socio-economic groups, a universal public subsidy will not win over public support.
8. An alternative funding system that moved from loans and debt to individual entitlement and fair contributions from graduates in employment would build and maintain popular support for public investment to pass on the opportunity for the next generation to benefit from higher education
9. Any alternative funding system must not maintain an artificial divide between further and higher education, and should move towards a model of funding that enables individuals to access the type of education they need at the point they need it.
10. Any alternative funding system should ensure that all students in education have the financial support to succeed.
11. The Student Opportunities Fund exists to provide institutions with pots of money to great better access to higher education for students from underprivileged backgrounds.
12. The Student Opportunities Fund faced a £400m cut this year of which £350m was saved by the student movement.
13. It is not acceptable to pit access and retention against each other in order of importance as both hold the key to a successful education system.
14. In England & Wales, asylum seekers are categorised as International Students. In Scotland they are categorised as home students but are not entitled to student support packages.
15. Education changes lives. OECD data indicates that life expectancy is strongly associated with education.
16. The 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act is the legal framework by which asylum seekers and refugees are dispersed across the UK, with a high number historically being settled in Glasgow, which has the lowest life expectancy in the UK with an average life expectancy in some areas of just 59 years old for men.
17. There is an alternative paying for university through tuition fees or a graduate tax – public investment for free education.
18. The proposal to replace tuition fees with a 'graduate tax' is simply replacing one form of student debt with another. Under both systems the experience for the overwhelming majority of students would be the same: to pay tens of thousands of pounds for a university degree over the course of a number of decades after graduation, taking the form of automatic deductions from graduates' wages every month.
19. Higher education is a public good and should be free for everyone to access.
20. 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.
21. Investing in free education would not only offer opportunities for young people but would play a central role in reviving the economy now and in promoting longer-term prosperity and growth for the future.
22. There is an austerity agenda that refuses to fund education properly, which produces a false choice between underfunded, fee-laden, debt-ridden education for the many or free, elite education for the privileged few.
23. This is no choice at all.
24. NUS believes in democracy – but political democracy is incomplete when the distribution of wealth is violently unequal and undemocratic.
25. 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.
26. In 2008, the UK government spent £850 billion to bail out banks, but these banks have continued to operate much as before, instead of being required to spend that public money on the public good.
27. 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 free, world-class healthcare, good social housing, and decent public services and benefits for all.

28. NUS should reaffirm the idea that education is a right not a privilege.

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. Treating asylum seekers as international students effectively denies them access to education.
3. Treating asylum seekers as home students whilst preventing access to student support denies them access to education.
4. It is of economic benefit to have a highly skilled, highly trained population.

Conference Resolves:

1. To forge a new deal for education funding to unify public investment in further and higher education and campaign for it ahead of the 2015 general election.
2. To support sustained public investment in further and higher education and to promote its role in creating a fair and prosperous society
3. To support moves away from increasing fees and debt, towards a model of entitlement for students and contributions from graduates in order to pay it forward and to ensure the next generation can also benefit from public education provision
4. To support a system of contributions to higher education determined by the real earnings after graduation, not variable sticker prices, and which includes an employer contribution.
5. To campaign against the sell off of the student loan book into private hands
6. To campaign to ensure the terms and conditions of existing student loans are enshrined and protected in primary legislation.
7. To campaign for substantial increases in the financial support available to those in study.
8. To raise wider questions looking at how access and retention activity is funded, spent and assessed and what alternative models might look like to enable greater success.
9. For NUS to call for an immediate end to and reversal of the Government's target of reducing immigration.
10. To call for asylum seekers to be classed as home-students for the purposes of tuition fees and student support.
11. For NUS to work with STAR to lobby on an institution-by-institution basis to create scholarships and dedicated support for asylum-seekers.
12. For NUS to work with the Scottish Refugee Council and the Refugee Council on this issue.
13. To reject the absurd idea that our society lacks the resources to provide decently for its citizens, and make campaigning for the democratisation of our society's wealth a priority running through NUS's work.
14. To make the case for free education and demand that free, accessible, quality education, and decent wages, public services and benefits, are funded by:
 - a. Ending tax evasion and avoidance and cracking down on tax havens
 - b. Imposing serious taxes on the incomes, inheritance and capital gains of the rich
 - c. Taking the banks, and their wealth, under democratic control
15. To raise these demands in particular when putting forward positions on fees and education funding, and when organising protest actions.
16. 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'.
17. Foundation courses should be free of fees for all students, regardless of age or nationality, with full access to a grant.

The following policies were passed at National Conference 2011; National Conference 2014 voted to renew them for three further years.

NC_HE_14208: Protecting Internationalisation in Our Education System, Fighting Visa Changes

Conference Believes:

1. That a flexible immigration policy is important to provide a global education experience for home, EU, international students and helps the UK maintain its international reputation.
2. Recent visa reforms are the tightest in many years. 94% of international students said the ability to have 2 years work experience with Post Study Work visa after graduation was important to their UK education experience and global employability
3. 75% international students would not have come to the UK without the option for Post- Study Work visa. Moving the language requirement to B2 (equivalent to a high A level grade) will unnecessarily rule out many prospective students

Conference Resolves:

1. To campaign against any restriction on the numbers of international students being allowed to study in, government recognised, further and higher education institutions.
2. This includes campaigning against explicit restrictions, such as the introduction of a cap on numbers, or implicit restrictions, which could include limiting working rights or bringing dependents.
3. To campaign for a visa and immigration system that is based on the principles of recognising the value and importance on international students to the UK education system and enabling genuine students to be able to make the most of the world-class UK education system.
4. To campaign to allow international students to have work experience opportunities in the UK after finishing their studies.

NC_HE_14209: Postgraduate Funding

Conference Believes:

1. There is a high likelihood that Postgraduate Taught (PGT) fees will also increase nationally.
2. That unlike undergraduate, there is currently no state-funded PGT funding system for students.
3. Masters course fees are payable upfront and aren't capped or regulated for fairness/access considerations, and are therefore viewed by universities as a source of funding to plug budget gaps – including to cross-subsidise other activities;
4. Part-time Masters courses can cost anything up to the cost of the full-time course;
5. Browne said little about postgraduates;
6. The HEFCE grant which the government is to cut 80% includes £110m for taught postgraduate courses.
7. As well as being intrinsically worthwhile, postgraduate taught courses are vital gateways to academia and various careers;
8. There is a serious risk of skyrocketing masters fees, which would make postgraduate education and the doors it opens the preserve of the rich;
9. If university managements need more money, they should refuse to extract it from students and instead demand it from government;
10. Education at every level is a social good and a right, and should be funded entirely by progressive taxation – in the short term, fees mustn't rise;
11. If charged, fees must be transparent, injustices minimised, and support provided;
12. Postgraduates should not have to pay fees upfront, or take on commercial loans, but should have

- access to similar loan systems as undergraduates allowing deferred payment dependent on income.
13. That no student with the will and capacity to undertake postgraduate study should be held back by inability to pay;
 14. The NUS report *Broke and Broken: Taught postgraduate students on funding and finance* revealed that financial considerations are the key determinant of whether students are able to take up postgraduate study;
 15. That 66.9% of postgraduates surveyed are entirely self-funded and 62.9% report that their debt causes them concern to the extent that it affects their quality of life;
 16. The academic experience of postgraduates is threatened when they are struggling to make ends meet;
 17. The Browne Review's conclusion that "there is no evidence that changes to funding or student finance are needed to support student demand or access" is complacent and unreflective of the realities revealed in the *Broke and Broken* report;
 18. The fee setting process at universities should be transparent and involve negotiation with the students' union;
 19. Project Participation and the Higher Education Funding Campaign should be extended to include access to postgraduate education as a priority for NUS, universities and students' unions;
 20. The government should provide taught postgraduate students with access to low cost loans, similar to those provided for undergraduate tuition fees;

Conference Resolves:

1. To fight any increase in PGT fees, through lobbying government and providing support for SUs, amongst other methods.
2. To investigate, and lobby for, appropriate funding options for PGT
3. To mandate VPHE and President to establish a campaign on postgraduate funding directed both university managements and the government, to include organising and backing lobbying, demonstrations, and non-violent direct action such as occupations, in pursuit of the following:
 - a. Freeze fees for taught postgraduate courses for home and international students, as a minimum precursor to their abolition.
 - b. No cuts to the postgraduate teaching budget.
 - c. Don't pick on post-grads - Funding shortfalls in education must be made up for by state funding via progressive taxation – masters and international students fees should not be raised in order to plug budgets or cross subsidise other parts of universities' work. Instead of raising fees, universities must join students' call for state funding.
 - d. Transparency now – Students should be told where their fees have gone. Fair deal for part-time students – Part-time fees must be proportional to the equivalent full-time course and the course's hours – i.e. set on a pro-rata basis.
 - e. No surprises – Fees for the whole course must be clear at the point of application, students must never be asked to increase payments during a course.
 - f. Proper support, not upfront payment – Give postgraduates access to a similar loan system to undergraduates, and establish national postgraduate bursary and scholarship schemes to ensure able students can always access education.
 - g. No to the unregulated market – the government must regulate masters fees to guarantee accessibility and minimise injustice.
 - h. Training is no substitute for education – while the option of more vocational courses is welcome, the academic nature of other courses and the intrinsic value of education must be defended regardless of the source of funding.
4. To include postgraduate funding issues more prominently in existing HE funding campaigns.
5. To provide advice and information to CMs seeking to establish similar campaigns on campuses
6. To lobby the government to provide all taught postgraduates with access to low-cost loans, in a

similar manner to undergraduates;

7. To lobby the government to introduce legislation to limit and control increases in postgraduate fees;
8. To encourage and support students' unions in lobbying their institutions for more flexible fee payment options for postgraduates;
9. To produce and distribute resources for students' unions to help them refocus their campaigns, activities and governance structures towards the needs and experience of postgraduates.

Education Policy Passed At National Conference 2015

NC_E_15201: Vocational Education

Conference Believes:

1. Vocational education prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers. It is taught in a practical way and learning happens through deconstruction and reconstruction of practices, methods and ideas until the skill is mastered.
2. Vocational education exists in both further and higher education. Practical learning can be found on a plumbing course or as part of medical or legal training.
3. Higher technical and vocational education is less well established and resourced in the UK in comparison to other countries.
4. The UK is suffering from a skills shortage as the labour market struggles to meet employer demand.
5. Apprenticeships are currently dominating the dialogue around vocational study and training.
6. The political sphere is obsessed with 'the other 50 per cent' and how we can get more young people trained and ready for the workplace.
7. As we near the General Election in May there is consensus across the main parties that apprenticeships should be supported politically and backed financially.
8. The Conservative party recently pledged to use cuts to the welfare budget to fund three million new apprenticeships. At the same time the Labour party has announced its intentions to match the number of apprentices to those going to University by 2025, making apprenticeships one of its 'national goals'.
9. Since the last election the apprenticeship budget has risen from £1 072 million in 2009/10 to £1 487 million in 2013/14.
10. Employers are also being incentivised to take on apprentices. In last year's Autumn Statement the chancellor George Osborne announced that the Government would abolish National Insurance contributions for apprentices aged under 25. This means from April 2016 almost half a million employers will be exempt from making the contributions.
11. Apprenticeships are often framed as a chance to 'earn whilst you learn'. They supposedly offer a chance to gain a skill and a qualification whilst working in a 'real' job with a wage. Yet for many apprentices their low wages quickly disappear on travel, rent and food.
12. That apprentices need a better system of support in place in order for them to properly afford to complete their course. Without this apprentices are being forced to take on extra work, borrow money or drop out altogether.
13. The expansion of apprenticeships in this country is meaningless if the experience of those learners is poor.

Conference Further Believes:

1. The narrative around vocational education should stop being about the 'the other 50 per cent'. For too long society has framed vocational courses as done by those who have failed their GCSEs or aren't 'academic enough' for A levels or a degree. We need a new narrative which affirms the need and value of vocational education.
2. Poor information, advice and guidance directs students away from vocational options as traditional or academic routes are often favoured.
3. Lifelong learning is a crucial part of a dynamic economy. People should be able to access education at any point in their career to re-skill or up-skill.
4. Colleges, universities and employers should work together in a social partnership, to develop vocational routes and deliver higher technical and vocational qualifications.

5. Vocational learning should match the skills needs of the local economy, through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and collaboration, to ensure it is responsive to local demand.
6. Students should be protected from businesses becoming a too powerful partner in the skills agenda, ensuring that their input puts the interests of the learner first.
7. Apprenticeships have support across the political spectrum, with universal commitments to increasing spending in this area. Yet, the minimum wage for apprentices remains pitifully low and many apprentices are spending most of their wages on travel. Apprentices remain at a considerable disadvantage to their full time student counterparts, as they don't have access to the same tax breaks and funds. If the Government plans to expand apprenticeships in the future then they need to commit to providing better financial support.
8. The space in which vocational learning takes place is critical. A vocational setting must encourage skills such as craftsmanship, employability and professionalism.
9. Gender stereotypes are embedded in vocational education, leading to technical and professional jobs becoming inaccessible and restrictive.
10. The Government needs to install stability in to the education system in order to allow teachers, students and employers to experience some continuity. The Government's plans for reforms should be part of a long-term strategy, developed through consultation with key stakeholders and not based on quick fixes or the electoral cycle.
11. The Government should scrap the apprentice minimum wage, and apprentices should be entitled to at least the national minimum wage (NMW) for their age.
12. Employers should ensure that information on the national minimum wage enforcement hotline is made available to apprentices.
13. In the short term the Local Government Association should issue national guidance for local transport services to extend discount fares to apprentices.
14. In the long term we would like to see free bus travel extended to all 16-19 year olds, enabling young people to access further study, training or work without a financial barrier.
15. Statutory Sick Pay should reflect hours worked, rather than the amount earned and should therefore be available to everyone who works for 30 hours or more a week. This would prevent apprentices from being absent from work without pay.
16. The loss of child benefit for parents who have a child completing an apprenticeship is unacceptable and inconsistent with other areas of Government policy. The Government to include apprenticeships in their 'approved' education or training category.
17. The Government should extend Care to Learn to apprentices. Access to this fund would make a huge difference for young adults on apprenticeships, helping them to afford their childcare costs.
18. The Government should extend access to the bursaries available for FE students to apprentices. This would ease the financial pressure on apprentices, helping with living and travel costs.
19. Banks should be encouraged to provide products, similar to those made available to undergraduates and college students, for those on apprenticeships.

Conference Resolves:

1. To campaign against the Government's requirement for all vocational courses to be assessed by exam and to support the development of assessment which is appropriate for practical settings as well as academic.
2. To support flexibility in the 14- 19 curriculum, encouraging the development of an education system which recognises and values both vocational and academic learning.
3. To encourage partnership between students, education and training providers and employers in vocational learning. Ensuring that provision remains flexible and responsive to local labour markets.
4. To work on developing a university application system where skills and work experience are recognised in applications, as well as qualifications. This will aid applicants who have skills which have been acquired in the workplace, rather than through formal education

5. To continue to support the diversification of vocational courses, combatting gender. stereotypes and challenging how vocational courses are presented. This should extend to apprenticeships, where the gender pay gap is significant.
6. To campaign for apprentices to be better financially supported, with access to the same funds and support packages as full time employees or students.
7. To continue the campaign for a universal careers service, including impartial face-to-face guidance for all students.
8. To launch a campaign, working with the National Society of Apprentices, calling for the end of the financial support divide between academic and vocational courses

NC_E_15202: Changing FE

Conference Believes:

1. New freedoms for colleges from 2011 have led to a range of different governance models and partnerships within further education.
2. Freedoms, twinned with huge cuts to further education by the government mean providers are increasingly accountable to business and employers, with less focus on understanding the voice of learners.
3. Inspection and regulation of colleges works best when providers and learners are able to present clear information on the educational experience of learners, rather than a snapshot observation of teaching.
4. Pressure caused by observations of learning, such as those from Ofsted, adversely affects the welfare of staff and students leading to poorer quality educational experiences.
5. New measures on provider performance, such as positive learner destinations can help learners move on to employment and further study and encourage improved advice and guidance for students.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Students should be seen as the key stakeholder for providers and should seek to build collaboration and partnership with their student body to enhance the educational experience.
2. There is a need to ensure that students' voice isn't lost as employers become more influential in governance structures.
3. Students have the right to access clear, autonomous complaints procedures.
4. Data on provider performance should be open and easily accessible to allow students to make informed choices about their education.
5. Students should have confidence that information about provider performance is an accurate reflection of the quality of the educational experience they receive at a provider
6. No-notice inspections are by definition anti-worker. Increased pressure caused by reducing or removing the notice period given for inspections would have a negative effect on teaching and learning.

Conference Resolves:

1. To work to improve the clarity and quality of information about provider performance available publicly, including lobbying for a single, high-profile student satisfaction survey for further education.
2. To continue to lobby for an independent complaints authority in further education which is easily accessible to students
3. To reject any move towards no-notice inspections from FE regulatory bodies
4. To take a lead in the conversation to improve college regulation and accountability both to students, provider stakeholders and the local authority across the board

NC_E_15203: Doctor, Doctor, We Need To Talk About Postgraduates

Conference Believes:

1. Excellence in UK higher education teaching and research requires a well-funded, accessible and innovative postgraduate research sector. However, PGR is becoming increasingly important for delivering the right skills and experience in a number of fields outside of higher education.
2. Funding for postgraduate research is too concentrated among a small number of research-intensive universities, and in particular subjects, and this does not represent the good work being done by other institutions and subject areas that require heavy cross-subsidisation.
3. While a majority of postgraduate research students have career aspirations in research and/or teaching inside higher education, only a minority will find an academic job after graduation, and many of these opportunities will not be permanent or full-time.
4. Issues of underrepresentation, particularly for black and disabled students and for women in STEM subjects, are extenuated at PGR level, and not enough is being done to tackle these participation issues.
5. PGR training and development should better reflect the fact that a growing number of PGR graduates will work in non-academic jobs in a number of different sectors of the labour market.
6. Employers require better information of the doctorate and what knowledge, skills and experience a doctoral student can offer.
7. Many postgraduate research students face serious mental health issues, suffering from stress, anxiety disorders and depression.
8. The health and wellbeing of PGR students is adversely affected by pressures from lack of funding, unmanageable workloads and poor support in part-time research and teaching roles, lack of key resources such as office space, and poor support structures.
9. Some institutions do not take seriously enough issues of mental health and wellbeing because of a "culture of acceptance" in the academic environment when examining the pressure and stress of academic work.
10. The culture of acceptance, and wider academic cultures often disproportionately affect women PGR students due to their masculine nature.
11. PGR students on Centres for Doctoral Training may not be able to gain access to other resources available to other PGR students such as DSA. This harms these PGR students' ability to feel supported by government and institutions.
12. They may also not integrate fully with the wider student body due to being the potential of being unable to access certain aspects of university life, such as students' union services due to not being affiliated across different students unions.

Conference Resolves:

1. To lobby HEFCE and the Research Councils to increase the level and distribution of funding for postgraduate research and ensure its fair distribution so that it reflects both research excellence wherever it is found, but also high-quality PGR provision wherever it is found.
2. To lobby for more funding to be distributed on the basis of improving underrepresentation of groups in PGR.
3. Examine the quality of careers advice and professional development options for PGR students, supporting students unions to campaign for improvements where necessary.
4. Monitor the progress of institutions that have developed or are thinking of developing doctoral colleges to support PGR students, supporting students' unions to engage in the structure and content of the colleges.
5. Work with students unions to further investigate issues of PGR mental health and wellbeing, and work up guidance on best practice.
6. Work with sector organisations and mental health charities to develop guidance for supervisors to help them to spot signs of stress and anxiety in their students and act as signposts to the right support structures.

7. Encourage institutions to offer more staff resource for mentoring and pastoral support for PGR students, and to develop processes for checking student progress that support students rather than add more pressure or encourage students to suspend study.
8. Provide support for students' unions to raise awareness and campaign for improvements in tailored welfare and counselling services for PGR students.
9. Continue to develop the "postgraduates who teach" campaign, to ensure that all PGR students who work at institutions are treated fairly and given the support they need to develop.
10. Continue to support and strengthen unions to provide better representation for postgraduate students.
11. Mitigating circumstances / performance management – how to deal with processes / checks and balances that support students rather than add more pressure.
12. NUS needs to develop a benchmark framework for new forms of doctoral training and partnerships to ensure those students benefit from representative structures and support services available to students not in these schemes and there is a parity of experience.
13. Centres for Doctoral Training based at one or several institutions and Doctoral Training Partnerships need a clear framework on student integration with the institution and respective Students' Union.

NC_E_15204: Black Students Are NOT The Problem, Institutional Racism Is!

Conference Believes:

1. Nationally, Black students are on average 20% less likely to achieve First class or Upper Second class degrees than their white counterparts, despite entering their institution with the same FE qualifications.
2. The ethnicity attainment gap is a national crisis
3. The academic attainment gap between non-black and black students continues to widen
4. The effect of low academic achievement could present difficulties, potentially affecting life chances and advancement in their careers.
5. The attainment gap is symptomatic of many issues relating to racism within education, including but not limited to Eurocentricity of the curriculum, experiences of overt and covert racism and microaggressions within institutions, lack of diversity within student body and faculty, poor pastoral care towards Black students, lack of student support services and other institutional and systemic failures within the academy.
6. Despite this, many institutions operate a deficit model in addressing the attainment gap, problematising Black students and focusing on the false idea that the issue lies within them.
7. All this is coupled with the fact that Black communities are dealing with being 7 times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, and even killed in police custody, 50% youth unemployment, and an overrepresentation in prisons and psychiatric wards.
8. Policies and procedures currently operated may be wittingly or unwittingly be operating as disadvantageous/discriminatory against Black students.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Tackling the ethnicity attainment gap needs to be a priority for the education sector.
2. There is a lack of research into how the attainment gap affects Black students of intersecting identities and liberation groups, such as Black women, Black LGBT and Black Disabled students.
3. The issues surrounding race that feed into the attainment gap also contribute to the disproportionate drop-out rates for Black students.
4. By focusing only on access to education (and barriers affecting it), we fundamentally fail to address the issues affecting student retention.
5. There is also an attainment gap between international and Home students.
6. There are no national statistics available on the attainment gap for international students.

7. 'Internationalisation' of the academy must mean more than understanding how to profit off of globalisation; it should include a holistic integration of non-Eurocentric perspectives into the curriculum, and a shift away from a hegemonic university environment that privileges the white British male experience.
8. When articulating and developing solutions to the attainment gap, we should centre issues around structural failures in dealing with racism and highlight the responsibility of institutions to proactively address it, not problematise Black students.
9. Black people have the solutions to their own oppression.

Conference Resolves:

1. To set up a working group between the Black Students' Campaign, HE and FE zones to address and tackle the attainment gap
2. To adequately support the Black Students' Campaign by allocating funding to research and produce regular briefings and reports into the attainment gap, especially its effect on Black students of intersecting identities, and corresponding issues such as the Eurocentric curriculum and Black representation in education.
3. To work with the Black section of UCU to support Black-led initiatives to tackle the attainment gap, including developing workshops and webinars for institutions.
4. Work with QAA to push for statistics into the international student attainment gap to be developed and disseminated.
5. We demand:
 - 1) An inquiry undertaken by an independent external panel to investigate the academic marking
 - 2) Evidence of statistical data from institutions' equality committees showing academic attainment levels of the black student cohort over the last 3 years
 - 3) the number of black student cohort and their ethnic origin over the last 3 years
 - 4) Representation dedicated for Black students on top-level equality committees in all FECS and HEIS.

[1] <http://www.stop-watch.org/about-us/>

<http://www.irr.org.uk/research/statistics/criminal-justice/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/mar/09/half-uk-young-black-men-unemployed>

<http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/rise-black-people-detained-under-mental-health-act>

<http://www.inquest.org.uk/statistics/bame-deaths-in-police-custody>

NC_E_15205: Students Aren't Consumers but They Do Have Rights

Conference Believes:

1. Over the past few years Government has tripled HE fees in England yet has done nothing to strengthen students' rights.
2. The marketization of education has brought with it a flurry of suggestions that students are now consumers.
3. This "students as consumers" approach promised more power to students that has never materialised.
4. Research by "Which?" in 2014 found widespread problems in the practices of HEIs - in poor information and advice, standards for complaints, and exploitative and one sided student contracts.
5. This year the Competition and Markets authority found institutions seriously lacking in their procedures and practices.

Conference Further Believes:

1. "Which?", the consumers association, campaigns "to make consumers as powerful as the companies they face every day", and in doing so they work to support individuals with information about their rights, and consumers collectively with campaigns for change.
 2. Few of us would argue with the idea that we should campaign to make students as powerful as the universities and colleges they face every day, and in doing so we should work to support students with information about their rights, and students collectively with campaigns for change.
 3. Whilst our squeamishness about viewing students as consumers is understandable, it plays into the hands of powerful university and college managers who want to do all they can to retain disproportionate power over students.
 4. A smart student movement would say "No" to students as consumers whilst supporting and championing regulation that makes students powerful in the face of well-funded, exploitative and highly defensive institutions
 5. Often what should be basic student rights are touted as special features of a particular HEI as part of the process of competing with others, or labelled "consumer rights" to put us off arguing for them.
 6. That a system of Post qualifications admissions is long overdue, has clear WP benefits and should be imposed by Government as a condition of funding
 7. That UCAS should consider offering an institutional switching service for all students after their first term, incentivising institutions to provide a good student experience
 8. There should be a statutory duty on HEIs and FEIs to fund and support students' union/independent advocacy for students
 9. A new code of Post 16 Governance should be issued guaranteeing student and staff involvement in both the Governance and executive management of Universities and Colleges
 10. There should be legal backing for student charters which should exist in every HEI and FEI
 11. The Government should introduce regulation for any HEI or FEI charges made to students outside of a main fee- and if there are fees, what students get in exchange for that fees should be subject to clear regulation
- If there have to be student loans, the terms of repayment should be specified in statute.

Conference Resolves:

1. To work with the CMA and Which to strengthen students' rights in HEIs and FEIs
2. To mandate the NUS HE Zone to include student protection demands in post-election work with political parties
3. To run a major campaign involving SUs calling on these issues to be included in legislation or regulation as soon as possible

NC_E_15206: Changing the Structure of Maintenance Loans

Conference Believes:

1. The current system of loan payments in England and Northern Ireland means that Maintenance Grants and Loans are paid at termly intervals throughout the academic year. These are roughly equal payments made at the start of each term, with dates advised by the University. (www.gov.uk)
2. Despite each termly payment being roughly equal, term length and costs throughout the academic year such as accommodation and materials are not. Due to the timing of payments students can have shortfalls during one term and excesses in another.
3. In Scotland the Student Loans Company pay loans in monthly installments. Scottish students also get a double payment in their first month to help pay for start-up costs. (www.saas.gov.uk)
4. NUS research shows that many students find it difficult to budget and hardship funds see a spike in applications at the end of each term.

5. One in four adults will have a mental health problem at some point in their life. One in two adults with debts has a mental health problem. One in four people with a mental health problem is also in debt. Debt can cause, and be caused by mental health problems. (Royal College of Psychiatrists).
6. Current university undergraduate fees are £9000 a year.
7. A graduate with two undergraduate degrees or two masters, will have an advantage over someone with only one when applying for jobs or PhDs.
8. Many jobs require a specific degree.
9. There are not many places on 4 year, funded graduate entry courses to medicine or dentistry, leaving many graduates to apply for non-funded 5 year courses, costing them £45,000 in fees
10. Maintenance Grants are not allowed for part-time students.
11. The UK government has announced plans to introduce a new system of postgraduate loans from 2016; such loans will have an age cap of 30.
12. Mature students should not be ignored. There are many different ways the government and the loans company (student finance) can still benefit from giving loans to people over the age of 30, including higher interest rates, or a shorter term in which to repay, or a lower income threshold for repayment. By only giving funding to the under 30's; the government are discriminating against the majority of mature and postgraduate taught students, especially student parents who have had to take a break in studies, and those who have served the country in our Armed Forces. It is therefore imperative that we move to get this restriction removed, in the name of equality.
13. The recent announcement in the Autumn statement by the UK Government proposed the introduction of loans of up to £10'000 for students domiciled in England studying postgraduate courses anywhere in the UK.
14. Postgraduate education is expensive and inaccessible with, historically, poorer students less likely to study at postgraduate level.
15. This announcement was welcomed as a move towards making postgraduate study more accessible, however it is limited to only English-domiciled students.
16. Through consequentials from the Barnett funding formula, any increase in spending in education should result in the Welsh Government and Northern Irish Assembly being offered a match level (equivalent) funding to be spent in the same area.
17. This funding is likely to come with a strict set of conditions as to how it should be spent, which would limit the Welsh Government's ability to offer loans to all students.
18. The current independent review into education funding and student support (also known as the Diamond Review) is currently examining postgraduate education funding as part of its terms of reference.
19. Although there has been a significant movement towards an effective postgraduate taught loan system, there is still exclusion. As a country based on equal rights it is abhorrent to see that anyone who does not fit in to the extremely narrow restrictions placed on this new funding proposal, is being discriminated against.
20. The new policy restricts mature students over 30 from accessing government-backed postgraduate taught funding streams. This leaves them looking towards bank loans and other alternative funding options. Mature students should not be ignored.
21. There are many different ways the government and the loans company (student finance) can still benefit from giving loans to people over the age of 30, including higher interest rates, or a shorter term in which to repay, or a lower income threshold for repayment. By only giving funding to the under 30's; the government are discriminating against the majority of mature and postgraduate taught students, especially student parents who have had to take a break in studies, and those who have served the country in our Armed Forces. It is therefore imperative that we move to get this restriction removed, in the name of equality
22. Prospective postgraduate taught students have faced a "credit crisis" with banks extremely reluctant to offer loans. Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that last year less than half of the 20,000 prospective students who applied for a government-supported career

development loan received an offer of a loan. This struggle will be ongoing for mature students as long as they are denied access to government-backed postgraduate taught loans.

23. Maintenance Grants cease for adults at the age of 60 on full time degree courses.
24. Many students are surprised and concerned upon discovering that final year undergraduate students receive maintenance loans at a lower rate than in other years of their undergraduate study.
25. Student Finance England (SFE) have previously attempted to justify this policy by stating that students complete their studies in May or June and therefore require less financial support; this argument fails to take into account.
26. That many costs and in particular rent, one of the most significant, often run on 12 month contracts which do not end early in response to graduation,
27. That many students already rely on their loan only in term time and not over the summer, or;
28. That current youth employment rates mean a significant number of students are unlikely to find work immediately upon graduation and cannot guarantee that a salary will be able to compensate for the reduction in support.
29. Furthermore, the lack of publicity regarding the final year reduction is both dishonest and disadvantages students who may sign up for housing and other outgoings under the impression that they will receive an amount comparable to that in their previous years of study.
30. The present system of means testing fails to properly take account of the individual circumstances of students in different financial brackets and can result in students being over reliant on parental contributions which parents are unable to provide.
31. The cost of living for students is an ever increasing problem for students; maintenance loans should reflect the reality of students' needs and should cover basic living essentials – including accommodation.
32. That student finance should be an open and understandable process for students and their family, and to campaign for a revision of the presently over complicated application process.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and study under a wide variety of circumstances. The English student loan arrangements are 'one size fits all' and do not currently allow for students in different circumstances.
2. More consistent payments could avoid periodic shortfalls in money and therefore debt. This could impact on students' nutrition, physical and mental health.
3. The option of student loan payments on a monthly basis would allow students to experience budgeting and spending in line with other forms of payment such as wages.
4. Greater flexibility in the payment options would allow students to select payment schedules appropriate to their personal circumstances.
5. Larger, termly lump sum payments can cause increased debt for students who do not continue studying and drop out or intermit.
6. By only being able to obtain student loans for a single degree, students from poorer backgrounds are disadvantaged as they cannot afford to independently fund a second degree
7. All people, regardless of background or age, should have the same access to education.
8. NUS Wales believes the Welsh Government could delay a decision on Welsh postgraduate loans until after the conclusion of the 'Diamond' review in 2016; and therefore any system proposed would not be enacted until 2018/19.
9. Through the introduction of postgraduate loans in England only, there is a danger that a pseudo-market may appear, whereby universities across the UK will raise the cost of all postgraduate courses to at least £10'000, in order to benefit from the full loan from the students studying that course.
10. If Welsh and Northern Irish students are not offered comparable financial support to study postgraduate courses, they could be priced out of the system, and unable to afford the increased cost of postgraduate study.

11. Any delay in formulating a Welsh and Northern Irish PG loan system will result in a generation of Welsh students unable to afford postgraduate study and being disadvantaged compared to their English counterparts.
12. The English PG loan system recommends limiting the accessibility of loans to those under 30, discriminating against those returning to education later in life.
13. Any proposal to limit loans to particular subject areas would result in certain groups of students being disadvantaged in accessing postgraduate study.
14. NUS has stated the importance of mature students in UK higher education in its never too late to learn report, and should not ignore them as the government have.
15. That any age cap on a postgraduate loan system is purely arbitrary and ageist and Contrary to the spirit of European Law
16. That there should be fair and equitable rates of repayment that are comparable for undergraduate and postgraduate loans.
17. There is evidence that it is increasingly the 'better off' who engage in postgraduate study, especially Masters or PhDs, and the number of students from lower income backgrounds is decreasing. This has implications for fair access and social mobility.
18. By having the loan available only to those under 30 is simply unfair. All who want to access postgraduate study should have equal opportunity to do so.
19. Age is a protected characteristic and as such the government are actively discriminating individuals on these grounds.
20. Over 30's are perhaps more likely to have greater responsibilities (e.g. children, mortgage etc.) than under 30's and may further require the extra support.
21. Undergraduate students with extra responsibilities currently receive additional financial support to help them through their studies.

Conference Resolves:

1. To consult with students regarding increased flexibility in the loan payment schedule. This may include monthly (over 12 months), monthly (term-time only), and termly options for payment.
2. To lobby Student Finance England to research and implement viable options for the provision of more flexible loan payments. This will include the opportunity for students to alter their payment schedule with each annual re-application.
3. If implementation of a new system is successful, to work with Student Finance England to provide students with guidance in selecting payment options.
4. NEC demands UK Government enables maintenance grants on part-time courses.
5. For NUS to actively campaign and lobby the government to lift the age cap on postgraduate loans and create a national campaign around this, removing exclusion from those who cannot afford to self-fund their postgraduate students.
6. To ensure that such a campaign is a priority in the year ahead.
7. To support, and advocate for, no age limit to postgraduate loans.
8. To ensure that any NUS response to the ongoing consultation on a postgraduate loan system outlines these views.
9. To mandate the NUS Vice President Higher Education to write to the Universities Minister to demand a change in policy, outlining the arguments for fair postgraduate funding for all.
10. To instruct the Higher Education Zone, in conjunction with the Postgraduate Students' Section and Mature & Part-Time Students' Section, to launch a Fair Postgraduate Funding for All campaign.
11. To develop a briefing and resources for Constituent Members so that they are equipped to lobby their institutions and policies locally on this issue to support students entering postgraduate study, particularly mature students.
12. For NUS to work with the sector to provide a more viable option for postgraduate loan funding
13. For NUS UK to work with devolved nations NUS elected officers to ensure any unintended consequences of any English loan system for students from the devolved nations don't arise.

14. For NUS UK, in all future conversations with the UK Government about postgraduate loans, to lobby for a flexible financial arrangement for devolved nations to allow the respective government to introduce a complementary postgraduate loan system.
15. NEC demands UK Government to withdraw any age restrictions on maintenance grants on all full time degree courses.
16. To campaign for immediate changes to student finance information, and in particular the student finance calculator on SFE's website to draw particular attention to the final year reduction to maintenance loans.
17. To campaign in the long term for the final year maintenance loan to be assessed on the same grounds as in other years.
18. To mandate the National President, Vice Presidents Welfare and Higher Education to work with member Unions to gather student and parent feedback and exemplar cases to draw attention to student hardship caused by the final year maintenance loan policy.

NC_E_15207: We Are Sections, Let Us Roar!

Conference Believes:

1. The Mature & Part-Time Students' Section created the "Child Free to Child Friendly" campaign.
2. Student Sections are the bodies that are responsible for the formation of policy and the carrying out of the policy work of the National Union that has been allocated to them by the National Conference and that is of concern to the Students represented by each Student Section.
3. Repeatedly work by the NUS has shown that students who are mature and/or part-time and/or postgraduate are not receiving the support they need.
4. The Mature and Part-time Students Section and the Postgraduate Students Section are unable to carry out the work they need because they have no budget for it.
5. The Mature and Part-Time students' campaign needs funding.
6. The Postgraduate Students' Section needs funding.

Conference Further Believes:

1. The Mature and Part-time Students Section and the Postgraduate Students Section need funding to conduct relevant research.
2. The Mature and Part-time Students Section and the Postgraduate Students Section need Funding to produce resources for SUs.
3. The Mature and Part-time Students Section and the Postgraduate Students Section need funding to provide training.
4. The Mature and Part-time Students Section and the Postgraduate Students Section need funding to be able to actually do what their conferences mandate.
5. The Mature and Part-time Students Section and the Postgraduate Students Section need funding to campaign to raise awareness of the complex issues our students face.
6. That all sections should be funded equally.

Conference resolves:

1. The Child Free to Child Friendly campaign should be renewed, and made accessible for all institutions.
2. That the campaign for fair postgraduate funding for all be made a priority of Mature & Part-time Students' Section, the Postgraduate Students' Section and the HE Zone.
3. That the Mature and Part-time Students Committee and the Postgraduate Students Committee will hold a joint meeting to discuss and plan the Fair Postgraduate Funding for all campaign.

NC_E_15208: No FE Cuts

Conference Believes:

1. The Coalition Government has imposed massive cuts to Further Education over the past 5 years, removed vital financial support to hundreds of thousands of FE students and introduced a disgraceful fees and loans system for FE adult learners.
2. FE has come under sustained and severe attack since the coalition came to power in 2010
3. FE often offers opportunities to students who have been otherwise shut out of education due to various forms of disadvantage
4. Adult education funding has been reduced by government cuts by 35% since 2010, whilst the budget for 16-18 year olds has been slashed by £250 million this year alone.

Conference Further Believes:

1. That the government needs to reverse all cuts to FE and instead provide a well, publicly funded FE which is accessible for all.

Conference Resolves:

1. Campaign nationally to restore all FE funding cut since 2009 and for yearly real-terms increases and to work with trade unions to demand Labour commit to this.
2. Produce materials to help students and SUs oppose FE funding cuts.
3. To launch a 'Defend FE' campaign
4. To call mass meetings in FE colleges to discuss the situation we are facing and to organise action
5. To organise a programme of action including college protests, strikes, walk-outs and occupations
6. To support action taken by and build campaigning links with trade unions organising in FE.

NC_E_15209: Coming Of 'Digital' Age/Digital Literacy Motion

Conference Believes:

1. There is a lack of digital self-awareness amongst the student population, about the risks that can have legal, employability, societal and university ramifications.
2. Student representatives sit on disciplinary panels and consistently see students fall victim to their own lack of digital self-awareness.
3. Some students are unaware of the legal implications of taking and sharing pictures and/or comments of a sensitive nature.
4. Some students are becoming the unsuspecting victims of sexual harassment and bullying facilitated through online technology.

Conference Further Believes:

1. The NUS has a duty to help develop students' unions understanding of the risks and consequences which can affect employability and civil liberties.
2. The NUS has a duty to protect victims with disseminating vital information from changes in the law.

Conference Resolves:

1. NUS should work with its members to understand the grassroots of the problems that arise from the lack of awareness of digital literacy.
2. NUS should lobby the government to embed Digital Literacy as a cross curricular issue through, primary and secondary education and put significant pressure on institutions and FE colleges to educate students.
3. The NUS should run awareness campaigns about the legal, institutional, employability and societal dangers of both taking and sharing sensitive photos and information. The NUS should keep students' unions up to date about changes in laws regarding online behaviour.

NC_E_15210: Bad Organisation and Management Makes For a Bad Student Experience

Conference Believes:

1. In the NSS, the “organisation and management” category comes out as a consistent concern for students.
O&M on a course underpins the entire academic experience – it directly affects students’ ability to learn.
2. Problems with organisation and management are stressful and distracting for students.
3. Conversely, when a course is well organised and running smoothly, students can concentrate on their studies rather than having to focus time and energy on administrative issues.
4. High-quality organisation and management facilitates positive relationships between staff and students by eliminating unnecessary points of conflict and dissatisfaction.
5. Good organisation and management promotes widening participation.

Conference Further Believes:

1. The choice to study part-time or to enter higher education as a mature student or a student with caring responsibilities is often determined by factors such as a timetable that is amenable to balancing study with other responsibilities.
2. Other issues like placements and assessment “spacing” all impact on the student experience. Too often these decisions are reached without input from students and with the needs of the institution, not students, at the forefront.

Conference Resolves:

1. To mandate the VP Higher Education to develop bargaining resources for SU officers and reps on organisation and management issues in 15/16.
2. To commit to researching and issuing a wider, regular programme of bargaining resources and to monitor wins that unions have when using them.

NC_E_15211: Free Education

Conference Believes:

1. There is an alternative to paying for university through tuition fees or a graduate tax – public investment for free education.
2. Last year Germany scrapped tuition fees – proving once again that free education is possible.
3. The proposal to replace tuition fees with a ‘graduate tax’ is simply replacing one form of student debt with another. Under both systems the experience for the overwhelming majority of students would be the same: to pay tens of thousands of pounds for a university degree over the course of a number of decades after graduation, taking the form of automatic deductions from graduates’ wages every month.
4. Higher education is a public good and should be free for everyone to access.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Nus policy to fight for free education has not been implemented for FE
8. The nus roadmap to free education is for HE only and ignores FE completely.
9. Education is a right, not a privilege
10. Fees in FE disproportionately affect women

11. NUS leaders have a history of refusing to stand up for students and confront the government when Labour is in power.
12. Labour leaders' talk of 6k undergrad fees and graduate taxes isn't good enough and doesn't help FE, but shows they are feeling pressure from students. We should capitalise and push for more.
13. Our broken political system won't represent our needs unless we force it to. Whoever wins the election, we must give that government no choice but to meet our demands, through a determined protest and direct action campaign. Lobbying is important – but powerless on its own.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Abolishing fees is insufficient if students are excluded or impoverished by the cost of living.
2. NUS has a long history of campaigning against fees and cuts, and has played a key role, along with other groups within the student movement in overturning the proposed privatisation of student debt and delaying cuts to DSA.
3. Working 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 and austerity policies.
4. It is vitally important that after the General Election, we continue to campaign in this vein. Whoever wins in May, they must be held to account and as a movement we must continue the campaign against fees and cuts.
5. Our vision for free education goes beyond abolishing fees: it is for a liberatory transformation of the education system.
6. Fighting for a truly free system of education will not be easy or quick, and we will not win everything at once. But unlike graduate tax or fees, free education is an inspirational policy, and every step closer we get to our goal, the more accessible and liberatory education will become.
7. FE is seen as an easy target for cuts by government
8. Cuts to FE are unprecedented and extreme in comparison to HE
9. It doesn't make sense to fight for free education in HE but not FE
10. FE colleges are life changing for the poorest and disadvantaged in society
11. FE is progression to HE so fees in FE are a financial barrier to HE and therefore counterproductive to free education in HE
12. Recognises that further education receives less funding per student than other sectors
13. Educational policy is not always coherent and owing to the 2 education departments influencing FE

Conference Resolves:

1. 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. To campaign for free education funded by taxing the rich for all students in FE and HE. We demand:
 - a. a liberated curriculum
 - b. the abolition of student debt
 - c. open and public access to universities and colleges, democratically-controlled institutions free from surveillance and harassment by police and immigration officials
 - d. the abolition of all fees for home and international students
3. NUS to lobby government for free education in FE
4. Identify a good economic argument for free education in FE
5. To create separate roadmap to free education in FE
6. Lobby government to give an equal amount of funding to FE as schools.

Education Policy Passed at National Conference 2016

Motion 201 | Divorce our courses from market forces

Conference believes

1. Successive governments have introduced policies designed to increase market competition in higher education and pass the cost of education from the taxpayer to the individual student.
2. The marketisation of the Higher Education sector, not to be confused with privatisation, is defined as a way of changing people's relationships and values towards those of the market, while operating institutions as if they were businesses. This is not simply a state versus market values debate, as the marketisation of education has been paralleled not by a decrease but an increase in state intervention and the micro-management of university life.
3. The previous Coalition government passed legislation which increased maximum tuition fee levels to £9,000 in England and pursued an agenda of opening up the sector to competition from private providers.
4. The current government, through its policy proposals since the publication of the Green Paper *Fulfilling our Potential*, show an intent on implementing further market reforms that have potential to further increase the cost of education to students and force even greater competition between institutions.
5. Higher education institutions are responding to higher education reforms and cuts to public funding by continuing to raise tuition fees where possible and by behaving as market actors, treating students as consumers, cutting corners and ruthlessly focusing on efficiency savings and competition in league tables.
6. The UK government's marketisation agenda in England is having knock-on effects in the nations, by squeezing funding for devolved administrations, and by putting pressure on institutions in the nations to raise fees for other-UK and international students in order to compete.
7. NUS has highlighted in publications such as *The Roadmap for Free Education*, *A Manifesto for Partnership* and *Democratic Universities*, how the marketisation agenda in higher education is having a negative impact on students.
8. NUS does not currently have policy on state-enforced marketisation and how to support unions and students in challenging it systematically.
9. The HE reforms currently being considered by the government represent a fundamental attack on the idea of education as a public service. It is a blueprint for the marketisation of the sector, introducing private providers and variable fees, and orientating the whole sector towards the needs of employers.
10. The new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a core part of the reforms and will damage the quality of education. In the years to come, the TEF will require and use data from the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) survey.(1,2)
11. The government's Green Paper represents the most significant restructure of higher education in recent times
12. The Green Paper's reliance on metrics to assess the quality of our teaching stifles innovation in teaching

13. The Teaching Excellence Framework's suggestion to allow institutions to increase tuition fees creates further marketization within our sector
14. The idea to allow more private universities risks creating inferior institutions and taking valuable resources from our existing universities
15. Making universities exempt from Freedom of Information enquiries will hurt transparency and limit students' ability to hold universities to account
16. The plans to reform Student Unions are yet another example of the government's opposition to the student movement
17. The proposed reforms presented in the government's Higher Education Green Paper included:
 - a Increasing tuition fees in line with inflation.
 - b The introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) that forces universities to compete in market-oriented metrics.
 - c Variable tuition fees across institutions that can rise if universities meet certain criteria in the TEF, including graduate employment statistics.
 - d Increased private sector involvement by making it easier for private providers to enter the 'market', award degrees, and compete with existing universities.
 - e Facilitating closure of existing universities.
 - f The exemption of universities from the Freedom of Information Act
 - g Students' unions mentioned in the context of the Government's reforms attacking trade unions' ability to campaign and take industrial action.
18. At the time of writing, after the consultation, we were waiting for a revised version of the reform package to be announced
19. The proposed reforms presented in the government's Higher Education Green Paper are a potentially devastating attack on education.
20. The HE paper threatens further fee rises, privatisation and marketisation on our campuses

Conference further believes

1. Marketisation is one of the greatest threats to our education system at all levels.
2. The so-called "benefits" to students and students' unions from market mechanisms, such as better information and choice, higher quality provision, and greater power to change things, are often exaggerated and can be achieved via non-market mechanisms.
3. The overreliance on quantitative data and metrics can deteriorate the relationship between students and academics, and it stifles the development of an inclusive learning environment.
4. Students' Unions operate in a difficult environment where they need to balance how to fight for better support and services for their members whilst actively opposing marketisation and other threats to students and education more widely.
5. To function in the medium term, the TEF will need us to participate in the NSS and DLHE.
6. If students and graduates either boycotted the NSS and DLHE or sabotaged the surveys by giving artificially maximum or minimum scores, this could render the TEF unworkable, and seriously disrupt the government's HE reforms as a whole. The NSS and DLHE already form important parts of the government's management and marketization of education.(3)
7. There is a strategic case for using them as a highly effective form of leverage against the government's destructive HE reforms.
8. The Freedom of Information Act is an essential tool for holding universities to account by students and student media.

9. There are no one-size-fits-all metrics with which the Government can quantify the quality of teaching at very different institutions.
10. Some of the proposed metrics fail to recognise, and perpetuate, sexist, racist, socioeconomic and other disadvantages. Research has shown that the ethnicity of lecturers affects NSS scores. And given pay gaps and the biases in the job market, the use of graduate employment statistics will punish universities for accepting more women, black students, disabled students and those from poorer backgrounds.
11. Higher education should not be seen merely as job training. A narrow-minded focus on employability will damage the quality of education, and disadvantage institutions specialising in arts and humanities. The introduction of TEF will further disadvantage struggling institutions.
12. The TEF will increase stress and exploitation for teachers and academics, in particular casualised early career academics including postgraduates. Issues of casualisation disproportionately harm women and black academic staff. Improving teaching requires good working conditions for staff.
13. Universities and teaching can be improved by decent public funding and democratic structures, not marketisation.
14. The Government is proposing a structure which sets some public universities up to fail and close in order to make way for private businesses, to the detriment of students, staff, and wider society. The proposed reforms actively facilitate this process.
15. The autonomy and campaigning activity of Students' Unions must be defended.
16. We need to significantly up our work to stop the proposals which, combined with cuts to grants, bursaries and FE colleges, form a potentially devastating attack on public education.
17. Universities and teaching can be improved by decent public funding and democratic structures, not marketisation.
18. The autonomy and campaigning activity of Students' Unions must be defended.
19. We need to significantly up our work to stop the proposals which, combined with cuts to grants, bursaries and FE colleges, form a potentially devastating attack on public education.

Conference resolves

1. To actively campaign against the marketisation of education, calling for a free, publicly funded education system for all, driven by democratic values and duties for the good of society.
2. Focus attention on combating current and future government policy which attempts to further marketise our education system.
3. To produce further evidence of the negative effects of the market on students in higher education.
4. To produce guidance for students' unions which can help them better understand and counteract the negative forces of marketisation.
5. Provide direct advice and support to students' unions in fighting for improvements to the student experience whilst avoiding the pitfalls of consumerism and short-term thinking.
6. Help drive a new language of student empowerment outside of the frame of students as consumers, where ideas of "student choice" and "student rights" have strong meaning outside of marketisation.
7. Find more effective means for surveys and quality assurance to be used solely for enhancement rather than market competition.
8. Help enhance students' unions negotiation and campaign tactics to encourage their institution to break from market-orientated policy and strategy, and find an alternative sustainable path to institutional success with students at its core.

9. To work at a sector level to lobby and campaign against political inertia of organisations like Universities UK (UUK) to marketisation, pushing for institutions to change collectively.
10. To form greater collaboration and consultation with NUS Scotland, NUS Wales and NUS-USI on how UK government policies on higher education affect the devolved administrations and institutions in the nations.
11. The VPHE, consulting with the NEC and education workers affected by the NSS (represented by UCU, NUS Postgrad Section, and the Fighting Against Casualisation in Education campaign), will determine the most effective boycott/sabotage strategy.
12. This will be done before June, when NUS will write to the government and announce that the NUS will mobilise students to sabotage or boycott the NSS and DLHE if the HE reforms and the TEF are not withdrawn.
13. If the government refuses to withdraw the HE reforms, to mobilise students to sabotage or boycott the Spring 2017 NSS, and the next year's DLHE. The campaign should begin at the start of Autumn Term 2016 collecting pledges from students that they will carry out the action if the HE reforms are not withdrawn.
14. To oppose any rise in tuition fees linked to the Teaching Excellence Framework
15. To fight any attempt to weaken Student Unions or the Student Movement
16. To provide resources to help SU officers to:
17. Engage productively with their universities to ensure the student view is heard as plans set out in the Green Paper are further developed.
18. Lobby MPs to oppose the provisions in the Green Paper that are unsatisfactory to students
19. Continue to lobby to secure policy proposals that would make it more friendly towards the partnership between students and universities that we seek to achieve
20. Lobby Jo Johnson, Minister for Universities, with the concerns over the Green Paper to get a change in direction
21. Actively campaign, in collaboration with education trade unions, to stop the proposed Higher Education reforms as a whole, countering with our own vision of democratic, accessible, well-resourced public education, with academic freedom and good pay and working conditions, well-funded by taxing the rich.
22. To put this campaign in the context of a wider fight against marketisation, casualisation, and the institutional perpetuation of oppressive biases and disadvantages.
23. To help SUs, with resources such as toolkits, etc, to spread awareness of the content and negative consequences of the reforms in order to mobilise people to join the campaign
24. To organise a demonstration at Parliament in the week running up to, or on the day of, any Parliamentary discussion or vote on these reforms, and to invite the education trade unions and other supporters to join us.
25. To place this action within a wider strategy of protest, direct action and lobbying, with action at both local and national levels.
26. To reaffirm our commitment to campaign for free and democratic education at all levels, funded by taxing the rich and big businesses, not by cutting other services or further squeezing those who can't afford it.
27. Actively campaign, in collaboration with education trade unions, to stop the proposed Higher Education reforms.
28. To link fighting the HE reforms to stopping the major cuts threatening further education and to reversing abolitions of grants and bursaries.
29. To organise further local and national action – including protest, direct action and lobbying, strikes and occupations

Motion 202 | Area Reviews – Colleges are on life support; don't pull the plug!

Conference believes

1. Cuts to further education colleges and sixth form colleges since 2010, including the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance in England, have outrageous and disproportionate.
2. The Association of Colleges has calculated that overall funding for colleges has decreased by 27% in real terms since 2010. Funding for 16-19 year olds fell by 14%. The Adult Skills Budget has been cut by 35% since 2009.
3. That the latest assault on further education is coming from the Government's 'Area Reviews' of post-16 education and training in England. At least 36 reviews across England will be completed by March 2017.
4. Whilst the Government's stated aim for the review is to create "larger, more efficient, more resilient providers" within further education, they will in reality see colleges merge, with fewer colleges, less staff and possibly more cuts to the further education budget.
5. A similar process of regionalisation of colleges in Scotland and Wales, leading to course cutbacks, staff strikes, and prohibitive travel costs.
6. That Sixth Form Colleges are at particular risk of closure, merger or conversion into academies and free schools.
7. That the Public Accounts Committee of MPs has reported that the Government continually "make[s] decisions without properly understanding the impact on learners", and that "it is unclear how area-based reviews of post-16 education, which are limited in scope, will deliver a more robust and sustainable further education sector".
8. Over the next year further education in England faces its biggest attacks yet with the government's 'Area Review' – a process which has already taken place in Scotland. This 'Review' will result in colleges merging, huge job losses and cuts on a scale we have not seen before.
9. Since winning the General Election in May, the Tories have intensified their attacks on education.
10. These attacks have included cutting the Disabled Students' Allowance, scrapping maintenance grants and the NHS student bursary and a new round of cuts to further and higher education which are seeing courses closed and staff losing their jobs
11. The cuts have led to vital welfare services on campuses being axed, which has disproportionately hit women, Black, LGBT, disabled and international students as well as learners with learning difficulties and student parents and carers.
12. Meanwhile the government is deepening the marketization of higher education with plans to allow the 'elite' universities to increase tuition fees.
13. Schools and sixth-forms are also facing a funding crisis, with schools in some areas facing up to 30% budget cuts

Conference further believes

1. Continued cuts to further education are a national scandal and undermine access to education for people of all ages and all social classes.
2. College mergers and narrowed curriculums are only being viewed as necessary because of Governments' successive decisions to cut public funding.
3. The Government's approach to area reviews is rushed, reckless, and is not in the interests of learners. There is confusion about exactly what the Government wants to achieve and not enough public knowledge about the jeopardised futures of many colleges.
4. The area reviews do not account for learner voice or students' needs, and are too focused towards satisfying the needs to employers. Area reviews must listen to the needs of learners when making their decisions.

5. Bulldozing established colleges and sixth-forms to make way for private providers and academies will further marketise further education. We cannot allow for-profit providers to take over our further education sector.
6. There is no evidence that larger and more specialised providers are more cost-efficient than local general FE providers. Evidence from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland shows that merging colleges has not saved money, and has only led to further cuts to budgets, teaching and student places.
7. That there is still work to be done in putting regionalised colleges in the devolved nations on a sustainable and accessible footing, and that lessons can be learned for England.
8. That introducing a distinction between prestigious 'specialist' colleges and general FE colleges would be disastrous for the 36% of college students who study at level 2 and below. Providing second chances and basic-skills is a vital feature of college education.
9. Apprenticeships are often fantastic, but that they are not growing quickly enough to offer all students an alternative to college.
10. That regionalised colleges with fewer campuses will increase travel-to-learn distances and costs for many learners, and restrict access to learning for many. Some of the reviewed areas are over massive distances.
Student support for travel is inconsistent across local authorities and does not cover costs.
11. That further education and sixth-form colleges provide education for a massive range and diversity of learners, and are intrinsic parts of local communities. Small communities need local colleges to maintain their local identity.
12. It is unacceptable and unsustainable for the Government to expect colleges to pay for student learning costs by selling off their estates and assets.
13. That merged colleges must not cut-back on vital student support services.
14. That NUS needs to make the case for developing students' unions in colleges more than ever, building on work by NUS Scotland during regionalisation.
15. NUS should prioritise fighting all of these huge attacks by launching a major new campaign to Save Our Futures – Stop Cutting Education.
16. The focus of such a campaign would be to unite the whole student movement, in all Nations of the UK, to oppose all of the cuts facing further and higher education as well as putting forward our alternative vision for free, publicly funded education for all.
17. That NUS should approach the trade union movement to build a coalition behind the campaign.

Conference resolves

1. To continue to condemn and call for a halt to cuts to further education and sixth forms across all nations of the UK, and where cuts have been halted, to call for reinvestment in the sector.
2. To endorse the National Union of Teachers' #SaveOurColleges campaign, and any upcoming actions to campaign against more cuts and poorly planned mergers.
3. To ensure that learners' voices are heard in the process of area reviews by bringing together college student representatives in affected areas.
4. To run a campaign drawing attention to cuts, area reviews, and attacks on the further education sector.
5. To make FE students aware of what is happening and the risks to their local colleges, and to enable students to advocate independently for their colleges.

6. To provide support and guidance to students' unions undergoing mergers, to ensure that unions come out of the area reviews process stronger than ever.
7. To lobby both nationally and locally for discounted and accessible travel for college students and apprentices across the UK.
8. To launch a major campaign to Save Our Futures with the aim of fighting all the cuts to further and higher education
9. To organise Save Our Futures activist training days to equip students with the skills and knowledge to campaign against cuts locally and at a national level.
10. To put the voices of women, Black, LGBT, disabled and international students as well as student parents and carers at the heart of the campaign.
11. To use and encourage a variety of tactics in the Save Our Futures campaign from calling national days and weeks of action to lobbying, petitions, peaceful direct actions and creative stunts.
12. To put forward our alternative vision of free, accessible and publicly funded education through the Save Our Futures campaign.
13. To call a national demonstration in the autumn on the theme of 'Save our futures' – stop the education cuts' with a focus on opposing all of the attacks and cuts facing further and higher education. Including stop the HE reforms, Stop College Cuts, and Grants Not Debt.
14. To organise this demonstration on a Saturday to be inclusive of further education students.
15. To invite the other education trade unions to jointly organise the national demo alongside the NUS.

Motion 203 | Employability isn't working

Conference believes

1. 58.8% of UK HE graduates are in non-graduate jobs.
2. 47% of total U.S. employment is at high risk of automation over the next two decades with expectations of similar trends in the U.K.
3. There remain deep inequalities in the labour market; graduates still face discrimination on the basis of their gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion, age and disabilities.
4. On average, women graduates still earn £8,000 less than men with the same degree. In addition, we know that when these averages are intersected by race and ethnicity, overall unemployment rates and the national pay gap of ethnic minority women is consistently lower and wider than that of white women in the West.
5. Some of these inequalities are upheld and even sponsored by the state, in particular international students who face the xenophobia and anti-immigrant discourse of the current government. Graduates in Northern Ireland also face stances by political parties in government, such as those on abortion and gay marriage, which help to legitimise homophobia and sexism.
6. As well as in graduate employment, and despite the progress on financial support for postgraduates, there remain key issues of fair access to taught and research postgraduate courses across all nations.
7. Analysis has shown that human capital is the key metric of the government's current agenda in education, which reinforces the notion that higher education institutions are primarily factories for the production of a skilled workforce and that they are subservient to the needs of business and industry.
8. The spiralling cost of study has clear effects on the decisions that students make, both at university and when they leave, limiting their options and pressurising them to focus on a simplistic notion of what education is for, based on human capital.

9. It is widely accepted that the pedagogy of employability is more than simply learning “soft skills” and how to utilise them in work. Employability is a wide concept which encompasses many aspects of the student experience.
10. Focusing too heavily on an employability agenda which is reduced to basic skills training is counterproductive, as this is not what students or employers need.
11. Graduate employment prospects are still too closely linked to where and what you study, rather than what you have learnt and how you have developed as an individual. This places many students at an unfair disadvantage.
12. The single-minded pursuit of higher graduate employment scores in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey by some institutions is counter-productive and harmful to the wider education experience.
13. The government’s Trade Union Bill threatens to further undermine the rights of workers by making it easier for employers to avoid industrial action and to break strikes with agency workers.
14. Accurate, inclusive and relevant Information Advice and Guidance is key to graduate employment prospects.
15. Graduate employment in the nations is affected by cross-border flow of graduates and the correspondence between their regional economies and the responsiveness of the higher education sector.

Conference further believes

1. Education can and should play a key role in tackling inequalities in the labour market and in wider society.
2. The government’s economic policy and commitment to austerity are the central cause of the difficulties and inequalities that graduates face in the labour market, but the blame is being shifted onto higher education institutions and further education colleges for political reasons.
3. The right to join a trade union and the right to strike are absolutely essential and as a movement we must do all in our power to protect and enhance them.
4. The marketisation of higher education is part of an ongoing attempt by the rich and privileged to keep people down and maintain the existing inequalities in our society.
5. Education means far more than simply getting a job at the end of it, but it is nevertheless important to ensure that all students are best equipped to find the right job and thrive in it when they graduate.
6. That NUS must lead in the development of a new language of employability, one which is not tied into the government’s marketisation agenda and the short-sighted pursuit of higher scores in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey.
7. Students’ unions can and should play a key role in developing a rounded conception of employability which complements rather than stifles the other important aspects of education and the student experience.
8. The employability agenda is economically illiterate: it is tied down to what employers think they want, rather than what society and individuals need.
9. Academic freedom is an important concept and too much intervention by employers on the basis of securing their own business interests threatens to undermine the ability for academics to teach freely and effectively, and for students’ choice of modules, courses, learning styles and environments.

10. In courses designed specifically to equip people for certain careers, such as nursing and teaching, the government's programme of marketisation and austerity is threatening the futures of these students.
11. Students are being given overinflated expectations as a result of poor information, advice and guidance on graduate employment prospects.

Conference resolves

1. Support students' unions to provide more robust and realistic information, advice and guidance on careers and the state of the labour market, and enable all students to be able to articulate their skills and experience for the benefit of their future life choices, and to lobby their institutions to do the same.
2. To campaign for increased trade union membership among students and graduates and generate closer links between students' unions and the trade union movement.
3. Expand on the recommendations of the NUS Commission on the Future of Work and provide research on the state of graduate employment.
4. Produce guidance on how to campaign for careers services and IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) to be more inclusive and combative of social inequalities.
5. Lobby for better data on the employment destinations of both HE and FE learners, and for a more accurate definition on what constitute "graduate jobs", including the effect of cross-border flows and the effect of regional economic growth.
6. For NUS to initiate research and gather data on how students currently understand the concept of employability, their role in higher education and how it enables them more broadly as members of wider society.

Motion 204 | Free Education, Further Education, For Everyone

Conference believes

1. The funding arrangements for further education across the UK are complex and spread over multiple government departments.
2. That FE funding has been squeezed and cut across all four nations since 2010, including a 27% reduction in overall college funding and a 35% cut to the adult skills budget in England.
3. Adult skills spending per head of working-age population in England and Wales has halved since 2009.
Funding per non-apprentice adult learner is only 15% of funding for an undergraduate.
4. There are 1.3 million fewer adult learners in England than in 2010.
5. FE cuts have affected all UK nations. There are 100,000 fewer college students in Scotland, in 2014 there was a £45 million cut to FE in Wales, and Northern Irish colleges have suffered a £12 million funding cut in 2015-16.
6. 24+ Advanced Learner Loans have been expanded to those 19 and over and to level 4 and 5 qualifications, despite loans being underutilised and leading to a 21% fall in numbers on eligible courses upon their introduction.
7. Cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Adult Learning Grant (ALG) in England have taken money directly out of students' pockets and harmed access.
8. Cuts to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) funding and pressure on available local authority funding for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LLDD) has hit some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

9. Around 100 colleges are reported to be financially 'stretched', whilst 39 are 'financially inadequate'.
10. That the compulsory education or training age has been extended to 18, and that 16 to 18 education is primarily delivered through colleges.
11. That the Government has introduced a new levy on business to fund an expansion of apprenticeships.
12. That the apprentice minimum wage is only £3.30 per hour.
13. There is extensive evidence demonstrating the value of further education for wider society and individuals, and in particular for working-class communities and those from the most disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.
14. That NUS has continually opposed the ongoing attacks on further education under the current and previous government.
15. That National Conference has previously passed policy declaring NUS's support for 'free education' in higher and further education, but has not yet outlined a route to free education in further education.

Conference Further Believes

1. That NUS and wider student movement needs to develop and expand on what we mean by 'free education' in further education.
2. That further education covers a wide-range of academic and vocational routes and many different levels and ages, and that funding arrangements need to be tailored to these.
3. That NUS needs to direct and focus its funding campaigning in further education to where it can have the greatest impact.
4. That introducing loans has not worked in FE, and their expansion is not a sustainable basis for funding.
5. That the current levels of the 16-19 bursary and discretionary learner support are unacceptably small.
Maintenance support for FE learners needs to be expanded.
6. That the apprentice minimum wage is still unacceptably low, and should be at least in line with the National Minimum Wage.
7. Government investment in apprenticeships should extend to supporting apprentices living costs as well as the cost of training.
8. That cuts to mandated ESOL funding are a disgrace, and that the ability to learn English should be a right of all UK residents.
9. That local authority cuts are failing learners with LDD and reducing the places available at specialist colleges, many of whom are in serious financial difficulty.
10. That 16-19 funding should be equalised with pre-16 funding and protected in real, not cash terms.

Conference Resolves

1. To further outline a vision for free education in further education across all four nations.
2. To campaign against the extension of the fees and loans system for adult learners and to campaign for sustainable government funding and investment.
3. To campaign for equalising the apprentice minimum wage with the national minimum wage and for a portion of apprenticeship spending to be spent on wage support and widening access, including free prescriptions for 16-18 apprentices and extension of Care to Learn.
4. To campaign for the expansion of learner maintenance grants and bursaries across all four nations.

5. To endorse the National Association of National Specialist Colleges' (NATSPEC) 'A Right, Not a Fight' campaign for learners with LDDs, demanding that all students with special educational needs have access to specialist support.
6. To campaign against any further cuts to ESOL spending, and to make the case for investment in this area.
7. To campaign for the Government to extend the statutory right to free education in all subjects up to Level 3, regardless of age.
8. Deliver activist training for FE students across the UK so they are equipped to campaign for better provision in their colleges and community, and join up nationally to fight cuts.

Motion 205 | Liberate My Degree

Conference Believes

1. Black students are over-represented in HE institutions in relation to the general population, but severely under-represented within academic ranks.
2. White graduates have significantly higher degree classifications than graduates from other ethnicities. This is a 16 percentage point difference between the two groups of graduates according to HEFCE data (Sept 2015).
3. Once other factors are taken into account, the proportion of Black graduates gaining a first or upper second continues to be 15 percentage points lower than their white counterparts.
4. Despite the intellectual contributions Black people have made to global knowledge production, and their close relationship with Britain over the past 400 years, Black people are grossly under-represented in university curricula.
5. A lower percentage of graduates with specified disabilities achieve a first or 2:1 class degree than those without a disability (4% in 2013-14, HEFCE Sept 2015 data) and disabled students report lower satisfaction levels with teaching practices.
6. In the last year NUS has made significant progress with the Office For Fair Access and HEFCE on prioritising solutions to attainment gaps at national level and embedding measures in access agreements as well as with BIS on addressing the gaps at postgraduate level.
7. The NUS Liberate My Degree campaign is ran in conjunction with the NUS Black Students' Campaign and aims to empower student reps from academic and liberation groups with the tools to transform and decolonise education so that it is more representative of the diverse student body, as well as amplifying local campaigns and initiatives to liberate education to a national level.
8. The attainment gap (the proportion of Black graduates graduating with 1st/2:1 degrees compared to their white counterparts) is nationally 16.8%.
9. A well-rounded, critical approach to education is crucial in producing active, conscious members of society.
10. For this to be possible, a wide range of teaching, assessment and curriculum formats and approaches need to be adopted – education cannot be one-size-fits-all.
11. That the student movement teaches us so much about liberation, oppression and privilege. Not all people get the opportunity to explore these topics in so much depth.
12. If we want to free ourselves from oppression in society, we need to start educating people better and making people with privilege realise the inequalities that exist in our society and the impact that has on our minority groups

13. Issues relating to diversity, liberation and inclusivity within the curriculum apply to FE as well as HE.
14. FE course content and curricula often reproduce stale and tired forms of knowledge, focussing only on European history.
15. Despite remaining a global minority, the works and theories of straight white and/or able-bodied men are promoted in education as a universal standard.
16. The related issues arising from this for students who face oppression, such as attainment gaps and increased likelihood of not completing their studies, thus also apply to FE as well as HE.
17. This should start in school age, to change the mindset of people as they grow up - to make people aware of their conscious and unconscious bias and to turn oppressors into allies.

Conference Further Believes

1. Universities are not doing enough to address the racism Black students deal with during the course of their degree.
2. The HE Green Paper talks about retention and attainment data to be considered as key metrics for university performance, identifying Black students as a particular group.
3. While it's important to see campaigning has put the issues on the national agenda, such an approach would encourage data gaming and superficial solutions that don't seek to address cultural erasure and the Eurocentrism of the HE education system.
4. Student engagement in designing curricula and assessment methods has been shown to improve degree outcomes, according to Higher Education Academy data.
5. Universities too often overlook Black academics for hiring and promotion.
6. Every student benefits from a curriculum which encompasses knowledge from all parts of the world, and every corner of Britain's former Empire.
7. A high proportion of FE students are Black
8. Liberation is just as important in FE as it is in HE
9. The aggressive promotion of 'British values' as core to all teaching under the PREVENT agenda impacts the range of material that can be studied in FE, and the range of critical perspectives that can be included.
10. A narrow approach to learning at any level is damaging to students as well as society.
11. This year the VPHE alongside the Black Students' Campaign have conducted a 'Liberate My Degree' tour across universities.

Conference Resolves

1. NUS to prioritise supporting the NUS Black Students' Campaign and HE Zone to develop strategic approaches to tackling attainment gaps and institutional racism through challenging the sector's top-down and statistic obsessed approach and instead through student engagement in transforming education and collaboration with Black academics.
2. To resource and plan a continued roll out of the new NUS Liberate My Degree campaign, in consultation with Students' Unions to develop strategic local approaches to campaigns and training.
3. NUS to facilitate and resource collaboration between zone committee and *all* liberation committees' volunteer members who wish to drive the campaign and link with local members to support them in their campaigning efforts.
4. NUS to continually develop resources on changing aspects of teaching and learning, and decolonising education, and upload them onto the existing online campaign hub and disseminate to members.

5. NUS to develop reporting back mechanisms from unions so that an up-to-date bank of case studies is maintained for members' use but also for influencing the sector.
6. NUS to develop a long-term mechanism for measuring the impact of initiatives implemented at institutional level so that best practice can be shared.
7. To build solidarity and support Black students' campaigns for anti-racism and a more inclusive curriculum on their campuses e.g. Why Is My Curriculum White? and Rhodes Must Fall.
8. For the VPFE to work with Liberation campaigns in developing a #LiberateMyFE tour of colleges promoting a liberated education and challenging the Eurocentricity of FE education – discussing approaches to learning that are race-critical, gender-critical and conscious of LGBT+ issues and Disability.
9. To produce toolkits for student reps in FE in promoting a liberated education and critical approaches to learning within their colleges.
10. To lobby to decouple 'British Values' from FE teaching and learning.
11. Lobby for liberation, oppression and privilege to be a compulsory part of the curriculum in school and FE.
12. In the short term, make the most of connections between HE and FE and give student unions the tools and resources to deliver workshops to young people on these subjects.
13. We should be aiming to use our place as an educational lobbying group to change the mindsets of young people and to do all that we can to start really shaping society through combating oppression.

Motion 206 | Qualifications - Once the golden rule...now just pieces of paper

Conference Believes

1. From 2013 students aged 16-18 studying in FE who had not achieved at least a grade C in either/both Maths and English GCSE at school have had to repeat this qualification within their Study Programme.
2. Previously those without these qualifications would do an English or Maths Functional or Key Skills qualification in addition to into their chosen qualification.
3. From 2013 institutions receive funding "per student" rather than "per qualification" and this has impacted on the amount of funding colleges receive for most 16-18 year old students, which is now around £4200 per student.
4. A new grading system for GCSE will be introduced in 2015 with 9-1 rather than A-G where a good pass becomes a grade 5.

Conference Further Believes

1. The government wants Colleges and sixth forms to achieve in a year what schools have failed to do in 12 years with less money than schools receive.
2. This is a disproportionate problem for FE Colleges as their entry requirements tend to be lower than sixth forms and sixth form colleges.
3. Maths and English qualifications are a good thing but only if they are inclusive of student needs for progression and relevant to their ambitions.
4. The new grading scale for GCSE will confuse both students and employers and may mean more students retaking at College.
5. College's failing to improve students GCSE scores can lead to poor Ofsted grades affecting recruitment and staff morale.

Conference Resolves

1. For NUS to research and suggest alternate methods of delivery of Maths and English qualifications using technology and contextualised examples with modular assessment for implementation by awarding bodies.
2. NUS to lobby national government to review the current situation and push for greater funding for English and Maths in FE colleges
3. For NUS to campaign to remove retaking GCSE Maths and English as a mandatory part of a study programme with other alternatives more suited to a broader range of students within FE.
4. NUS to work with the Education & Training Foundation on the review of Functional Skills for Maths and English to ensure it meets students needs.

Policy Lapse

NC_HE_13215 : HE To Left Of Me FE To The Right, HE In FE Stuck In The Middle Confused

Conference Believes:

1. In 2012-2013 close to 10,000 'margin' places students started studying in FE colleges due to number control decisions.
2. That where colleges and higher education institutions have previously had franchise arrangements reforms to higher education have led in many cases to competition between HE and FE providers of higher education.
3. That this will lead to a loosening of ties between HE and FE unions where they exist.
4. That colleges will in some cases need to work very hard to ensure a high-quality higher education environment for HE students eg in the area of access and admissions.
5. That not nearly enough has been done to understand the different learning context of HE in FE students, and how these students can best engage with their learning and be represented to their institution(s).

Conference Further Believes:

1. That 10,000 students left in limbo between NUS zones is not a good thing
2. That FE students' unions do not always have the experience and/or resources to support issues HE students face
3. Both HE and FE institutions see HE in FE students as the other institutions problem
4. HE unions do sometimes not know they have HE students they represent at FE institutions

Conference Resolves:


1. To mandate the HE Zone to work closely with the FE Zone to undertake research to more fully understand the motivations, experience and aspirations of students studying higher education in further education.
2. For the FE and HE Zone to collaborate on the best way for the NUS to represent HE in FE students.
3. For the HE and FE zone to decide which zone HE in FE students fall into.
4. For the UD zone to work with FE unions to make sure they are resourced fully to support HE in FE students.
5. For the UD zone to consult with both HE and FE unions to develop and produce briefings, reports and other information as appropriate to support HE and FE unions to understand and represent these students.
6. To ensure that the different models of delivering higher education in further education (for example in different Nations) are taken account of in any work undertaken.
7. To take steps to bring together HE and FE unions to agree appropriate mechanisms for supporting students studying HE in FE eg service-level agreements.

8. To work with appropriate sector bodies including Association of Colleges, the Mixed Economy group of colleges providing HE in FE and the funding councils to advocate for the necessity of ensuring a robust student voice for HE in FE students.
9. The HE zone to run training events and create resources that self-awarding FE colleges can easily access to ensure HE quality is an important issue



National Union of Students

Macadam House
275 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8QB

 0845 5210 262

www.nusconnect.org.uk

For general event enquiries contact:

 events@nus.org.uk

For content of the conference, democratic
procedures and elections enquiries contact:

 executiveoffice@nus.org.uk