

NUS UK Plan for Action

2019 - 2020

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Introduction

National President, Zamzam Ibrahim

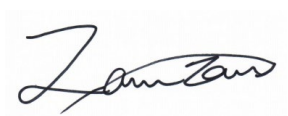
This is the first ever 'NUS UK Plan for Action', developed by the NUS UK 2019/20 full time officer (FTO) team, aka "the Executive". It is presented following significant discussion, reflection, and after detailed consideration of a) our policy, b) the current context, and c) our members' feedback. It will guide our work during 2019/20, and we will communicate it and report on it regularly, to our members and students more broadly.

After a strong start to our year, the 2019/20 FTO Executive is forging ahead with strong relationships and a clear and shared sense of purpose. I've included a picture on page 4 from our residential event because this is the first year, for many years, where we've managed to capture a photo like this, and because I'm delighted to be working with this team of excellent student leaders!

At our pre-arrival residential event in June, we set out three guiding principles for our term in office – these principles reflect what we believe are the most important things that we as an Executive must strive for and exhibit to strengthen NUS and re-build the political strength of our movement.

Our guiding principles in 2019/20 are:

- Nationally visible, championing students
- Locally present in students' unions and on campuses
- Delivering tangible impact.



Zamzam Ibrahim
NUS UK National President

Executive Summary

One of the key elements of the reforms passed in 2018/19 was the idea that NUS needed clearer, more coherent political leadership.

In response to this need, an Executive, made up of the 13 full time officers (FTOs) has been charged with the task of providing coherent political stewardship and publishing of a manifesto of campaigning work for that team's term of office.

From the NUS UK Articles

34.1 There shall be an Executive which is made up of all of the Officers from time to time. It will be chaired by the National President, and will be charged by the Directors (the NUS UK Board) with:

34.1.1 Drafting a plan from time to time which sets out the political campaigning priorities of NUS, as directed by democratic policy and officers' manifesto pledges, which may be approved by (and then its implementation overseen by) the Directors.

The NUS UK full time officer team Executive 2019/20



Back row, left to right: Piers Wilkinson, Disabled Students' Officer; Robert Murtagh, President NUS-USI; Fope Olaleye, Black Students' Officer; Zamzam Ibrahim, National President NUS UK; Juliana Mohamad Noor, Vice President Further Education; Rachel Watters, Women's Officer.

Front row, left to right: Rob Simkins, President NUS Wales; Liam McCabe, President NUS Scotland; Claire Sosienski Smith, Vice President Higher Education; Erica Ramos, Vice President Union Development; Rob Noon, LGBT+ Officer; Eden Ladley, Trans Officer; Eva Crossan Jory, Vice President Welfare.

Executive Summary

In 2019/20 NUS UK's resources and strength will be focused on the following priorities:

We will build a movement to transform education by:

1. Launching a new campaign for a National Education Service and its nations' equivalents that is accessible, funded and lifelong.

We've spent more than a decade fighting against things – it's time to fight for something again. NUS need to do something big and bold to put it back on the map. We need to build a movement to transform education across the UK.

This is imagined as a decade long campaign with three key steps:

- 1) build a new vision for an accessible, funded, and lifelong education service
- 2) win widespread public support for our vision
- 3) win the technical legislative and regulatory changes to implement our vision.

2019/20 is all about vision-building and movement-building. This campaign will act as a beacon for a changing, fighting NUS and will demonstrate the direction of travel throughout. This means a shift into mass-engagement and digital campaigning, and media facing activities that reach the public.

We will break down the barriers to accessing education and taking part in society by:

2. Winning safe, accessible and affordable housing
3. Securing affordable and accessible transport for all
4. Winning healthcare that is accessible to everyone
5. Ensuring disabled students including those with mental health conditions thrive in education
6. Stopping a no deal Brexit and improving international students' lives

We will break down the barriers to succeeding in education and society by:

7. Decolonising our education
8. Abolishing Prevent
9. Combatting sexual violence and harassment
10. Tackling transphobia in education.

In NUS Scotland the priorities are increasing the money in students' pockets, improving student housing and scrapping graduation fees.

In NUS Wales the priorities are student mental health and well-being, influencing post-16 education reforms, improving student housing, and opposing Brexit by supporting the campaign for a People's Vote.

In NUS-USI the priorities are campaigning for a publicly-funded tertiary education system, opposing a no-deal Brexit, promoting partnership and union development, and reforming relationship and sex education.

General Election & Brexit

It's important to note that the political landscape is extremely volatile at the moment, and there are a number of eventualities that will require us to change, adapt and flex our plans. A General Election (autumn, spring or summer) and Brexit (no deal, 2nd referendum, various other outcomes) will require us to respond. We are actively planning for these eventualities.

In the case of one of these situations occurring – or should something else major arise – we will communicate our plans to the NUS boards, members and our various stakeholders as soon as possible.

NUS UK Plan for Action 2019/20

Students and students' unions have been a force for change for over a hundred years. The challenges students face today may be different to those of decades past, but the need for our movement to work together to tackle them is as great as it has ever been.

NUS work across the UK and through NUS Scotland, NUS Wales and NUS-USI to carry out essential work in the devolved nations. We summarise their priorities for 2019/20 later in this document.

We will build a movement to transform education by:

1. Launching a new campaign for a National Education Service and its nations' equivalents that is accessible, funded, and lifelong.

Education is the fuel for our society and economy. It is the gateway to equality. It's where we'll find solutions to climate change. It's how people get qualified to get a job and re-train as the economy changes. Despite education being the key to our future, politicians have failed to deliver a coherent strategy in more than a decade, and overall spend on education has fallen steeply during this time.

Politicians have neglected post study work visas, scrapped vital maintenance grants in England and increased fees in higher education, while further education has been drained of resources. Meanwhile market mechanisms like league tables, the National Student Survey (NSS) and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) have been championed, which are ineffective substitutes for enhancing quality. Apprentices all too often receive poor quality training, while their pay is not enough to cover their transport to the workplace. Students and apprentices alike want a greater focus on the ways in which their education and training enable them to meet the needs of the modern jobs and careers landscape, but don't want the only measure of value to be their future salaries.

Through public support and political care, we need to build a national strategy for education just like we have for the NHS, because it is just as vital. The market continues to fail students, staff and entire communities. In England, we believe the way forward is a National Education Service which is accessible, funded, and lifelong. And we must develop equivalent strategies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, tailored to their specific contexts.

This campaign will not be won in a year because we are seeking long-lasting change to our entire education system. Our plan for the National Education Service and its equivalents in the nations will encompass the next decade. This year, we will focus on building a vision for an accessible, funded, and lifelong education in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland by consulting with students' unions across the

UK on everything from our policy asks to our tactics. And we will begin to build a movement through specific campaign topics:

a. Winning on funding

We will campaign for meaningful action on the student funding crisis. This means putting maintenance grants and apprentice pay, as well as a specific funding package for healthcare students, back at the top of the agenda, and winning government commitments on these.

It also means campaigning for a well-funded education. We will lobby to ensure that the government commits serious money to further and higher education in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, and we will never lose sight of our end goal: a fully state-funded and liberated education system.

b. Building a democratic education for all

In a time where higher and further education and training providers are facing financial difficulty, and even facing closure, it is clear that students are experiencing the most extreme ill effects of treating our education system as a market – from having their courses closed and cancelled to the effects that this competitive system has on their mental health.

We believe in a different kind of education: one which is democratic, where power is distributed through institutions, and every student has a meaningful learning experience. We will therefore work to bring the current education system closer to this vision, by changing and influencing our regulators, supporting students on their campuses and building solidarity between students and academics.

We will break down the barriers to accessing education and taking part in society by:

2. Winning safe, accessible and affordable housing

The cost of student housing and the profits of private providers continue to rise across the UK. As rent becomes even less affordable, students are pushed further into debt to cover the cost. Too many students are still living in unsafe and unsuitable spaces. These problems are particularly pronounced for students from liberation groups, with housing providers failing to deliver suitable provision for disabled students, and LGBT+ students often denied dignity and privacy through the use of communal and gendered facilities.

We have a vision of student housing that is safe, suitable, and affordable for all students. We will push for accommodation providers and private landlords to expand their provision of adapted and inclusive accommodation ensuring all LGBT+ students can access housing that is suitable to their needs. We will support students' unions to build their capacity to campaign on a range of housing issues, giving them the power to say no to rising rents, and inadequate provision, and campaign against institutions who profiteer from the provision of halls.

3. Securing affordable and accessible transport for all

For students and apprentices across the UK the cost and availability of public transport can be a major barrier to accessing education and training, while for disabled students, accessible transport provision is far too limited – all this despite legal requirements on local authorities and transport providers. NUS has supported students' unions and apprentices to campaign for better transport provision over several years, pushing back against fare rises and service cuts – but we need to do more.

We will build on our previous work this year to support students, students' unions and apprentices to better understand how to secure improved public transport in their local areas and support them to achieve change; work with partners for a better transport system; and campaign for the extension of national and regional student and apprentice travel discounts.

4. Winning healthcare that is accessible to everyone

Many students still face barriers to accessing essential healthcare. Trans students are characterised by the press and in society in multiple negative ways, especially around their health. The National Health Service's (NHS) slow and bureaucratic processes, leading to excessive waits for transition related healthcare, are rooted in the prejudice and ignorance these portrayals promote. Meanwhile abortion is criminalised across the UK, even where specific exemptions are in place in England, Wales and Scotland, and access to effective reproductive information and education is limited.

We have a vision of bodily autonomy where all students can decide how and when they receive treatment, regardless of that treatment being stigmatised in wider society. This must be

supported by a sustainably funded NHS that is free to access for all.

We will campaign for improved services for trans students, that are delivered and shaped by trans people and clinicians locally on an informed consent basis. We will campaign for a legal framework that recognises bodily autonomy when it comes to reproduction including effective education to enable decisions. We will support inclusive campaigning to end all criminalisation of abortion across the UK, including that which allows for exemptions via medical practitioners.

5. Ensuring disabled students, including those with mental health conditions, thrive in education

Disabled students face multifaceted barriers in education. Inequities persist, whether in respect of mental health, physical impairment, or specific learning difference, or whether support is managed by the institution or the healthcare system. Without analysis of the intersectional challenges disabled people face, education fails to comprehensively address structural and systematic disableism.

NUS will support disabled students to get political. We will support them to collaborate and organise with teaching staff to demand digital accessibility. To empower disabled students to speak nationally on a disabled peoples' vision for social security, to call for culturally competent care from mental health to prescriptions, and to pressure the education sector to take responsibility for and implement inclusive education.

6. Stopping no deal Brexit and improving international students' lives

NUS is opposed to Brexit, as any deal secured would be worse for students than remaining in the EU. Worse still would be to leave with no deal, with potentially catastrophic consequences for peace in Northern Ireland, the position of EU students and staff studying and working here, funding for research and further education, and much else besides. With our allies across civil society we will campaign against a no deal Brexit; for a further vote on our membership should any deal be secured; and to protect international students and our institutions whatever the outcome of the next few months.

With partner organisations we will fight to protect opportunities for international education, improving immigration processes and restoring post study work visas. International students have long been the

target of hostility from successive governments with their rights and opportunities stripped back. As the government seeks to expand the number of international students in the post-Brexit world, we want to make sure that all international students are supported and valued, rather than simply being seen as a source of income for institutions.

We will break down the barriers to succeeding in education and society by:

7. Decolonising our education

Our educational structures and institutions are a product of colonialism: some have directly profited from this, while others have propagated systems that assure white privilege. This is reflected in the racist barriers and structures students face, with the attainment gap the most striking symptom of race inequity.

Thanks to NUS campaigning, the sector recognises it has a responsibility to dismantle these systems. However, there remains the need for a vision of a truly liberated education, one that can thrive free from isolated attachment to western narratives. NUS will support activists working across the UK, to understand, identify, and actively challenge the racist structures in our colleges and universities. We will ensure that these groups can collaborate and speak together about the future of our education.

8. Abolishing Prevent

The government's Prevent duty neither starts nor ends on our campuses, and students are by no means the only victim: Prevent affects many communities, especially Black and Muslim ones, who have suffered the sharpest manifestations of the agenda. Under the Prevent duty, the relationship between lecturers and students has changed, from one of partners in learning to that of suspects and informants. Universities and colleges, which should be spaces of critical thinking, are steadily becoming sites of surveillance in the name of 'security' and 'counter-extremism.' This strips away students' rights to freedom of political expression. NUS will be supporting students and students' unions to abolish Prevent on campus and challenge state Islamophobia and the crackdown on freedom of political expression within our education system and society.

9. Combatting sexual violence and harassment

Violence and harassment are gendered, and disproportionately affect the ability of women to thrive, or even just survive, in education. This problem is wider than prosecutable offences; imbalances of power often categorise continuous experiences of harassment. NUS has campaigned and raised the profile of this issue, but it is still too often that institutions manage crises instead of addressing the root causes.

NUS will support women and other marginalised groups to campaign on sexual violence and harassment, creating a blueprint for inclusive organising. We will challenge further and higher education institutions to implement the recommendations of NUS research into sexual violence in further education and staff-student sexual misconduct. We will empower students to challenge their institutions and providers to address root causes of ingrained cultures of sexual violence and harassment, and enable students' unions to facilitate real institutional accountability.

10. Tackling transphobia in education

As transphobic rhetoric becomes increasingly present on campuses and ingrained in public discourse, students' unions play a crucial role in championing the voices of trans students. We will support students' unions by developing their self-organising, educating allies within unions and making the case for why transphobia presents unacceptable barriers to trans students learning in safety and security. We will support students' unions to work with their institutions, to improve organisational processes to make them suitable for trans students. We will make the case for increased support for teaching and research around trans issues based on principles of co-production.

Additional Activity

In addition to the above campaign work, NUS will continue to engage decision-makers on other policy areas, respond to consultations and inquiries, build our relationships in Parliament, and beyond, and support grassroots political organising. We will also support a wide variety of union development and student engagement work, including areas such as advice and guidance, the learning academy and race equity, and the plans for this work will be set out separately by the NUS Charity.

Finally, addressing the climate emergency will also remain a key focus for the student movement, working with the new student sustainability charity SOS UK. Building on the previous work of the former NUS sustainability team, SOS UK will lead work on this critical area, ensuring students take action through programmes such as Green Impact and Student Switch Off, and by influencing the political agenda through climate justice campaigns.

Together, our Plan for Action outlines how NUS will transform education over the next 12 months and beyond. Our plans are ambitious, but our students deserve nothing less than an education which in all circumstances is accessible, fully funded, and life-long.

For more information on any of these campaign areas please email policy@nus.org.uk

NUS Scotland Plan for Action 2019/20

NUS Scotland Plan for Action 2019/20

NUS Scotland represents around 500,000 students in Scotland. We are the voice of students in Scotland on the issues that matter to them. Our plans for 2019/20 reflect the priorities of our members in Scotland and include student finance, better housing, an end to graduation fees, fully funded and accessible education for all, better student mental health services and tackling gender-based violence. Our priorities for campaigning and lobbying with the Scottish government will focus on student finance and housing.

Money

We know that students are struggling to get by on their bursaries and loans. Last year we were successful in winning an additional £21 million to improve cost-of-living support for students. This new funding will benefit the students who are most in need. We will campaign for further improvements, including a commitment from the Scottish government to make good on its stated ambition for a student support package that is tied to the Real Living Wage.

Housing

Students – like everyone – have a right to housing that is safe, habitable and affordable. But too often student renters are getting ripped-off, paying over the odds, with little recourse when things go wrong. We will campaign alongside Living Rent for changes in the law to make sure rents are fair and proper protections are in place for those living in privately owned, purpose-built student accommodation. We will also support students' associations to campaign for lower rents for students staying in university halls.

Graduation

Graduation should be a celebration of your achievement and a pay-off for students – not a pay-out. Yet students are often forced to pay unjustifiable fees, some over £200, before they can graduate. That's wrong.

We have successfully supported student associations across the country to abolish these fees and will work with other students' associations to do the same, if their institution is levying a graduation tax.

[A bespoke plan](#) for NUS Scotland has been produced and circulated to Scottish unions. For

more information on any of these campaign areas please email Jack.Ferguson@nus-scotland.org.uk



Liam McCabe
President NUS Scotland

NUS Wales Plan for Action 2019/20

NUS Wales Plan for Action 2019/20

NUS Wales develops its priorities through an annual Work Plan, a process that directly links policy to the priorities of the political leadership and member students' unions. These are the four priority areas for 2019/20:

Student mental health and well-being

This year we will campaign for free, fully-resourced mental health and well-being support services for students in Wales, no matter what you study and where you study. We will work to improve the links between local health services and institutions and help students to access support in their first language. We seek to achieve this by working with students' unions to evidence the impact of current initiatives seeking to improve health and wellbeing services and campaign for long-term investment from the Welsh Government into support services for student health and wellbeing

Post-16 Education Reforms

NUS Wales believes that all post-16 providers in Wales should have fully-funded, structurally independent and politically autonomous student representation structures. These structures should embed students in every level of decision making, as equals and partners. This year, the Welsh Government intends to introduce legislation that will transform the tertiary education sector. We will lobby for any reforms to include parity of student voice across the tertiary education sector.

Student Housing

NUS Wales believes that all students have a right to good quality, affordable student accommodation, no matter what you study and where you study. We will work with students' unions to create a policy proposal for one, central place in Wales where students can access support, advice and guidance on housing. We will then build consensus on our proposal with influencers in Wales and the housing sector for support and action.

Brexit

NUS Wales supports the People's Vote campaign, we believe that students in Wales, many of whom were unable to vote in 2016, deserve a #FinalSay on any Brexit deal. Whatever the outcome of Brexit, we will campaign throughout the year to preserve student-facing rights and benefits enjoyed via

our existing deal, as members of the European Union. These include areas like Erasmus+, research funding, poststudy work visas and long-term funding arrangements. We will work with existing influencers, such as Wales for Europe, and connect students' unions to activists in their areas. We will work hand-in-hand with colleagues across NUS UK to stop a "No Deal" Brexit.

A [bespoke plan](#) for NUS Wales is produced and circulated to Welsh unions ([copi Cymraeg](#)). For more information on any of these campaign areas please email Joe.Atkinson@nus-wales.org.uk



Rob Simkins
President NUS Wales

NUS-USI Plan for Action 2019/20

NUS-USI Plan for Action 2019/20

NUS-USI develops its priorities through an annual Plan of Work, a process that directly links policy to the priorities of the political leadership and member students' unions. The work not only joins up with that of NUS UK, but also of the Union of Students Ireland (USI) through the unique trilateral relationship. These are the four priority areas for NUS-USI in 2019/20:

Publicly-funded tertiary education system

NUS-USI believes that people should be able to access further or higher education free from worry about tuition fees. We believe that government must invest more in tertiary education to maximise student opportunities and to grow the skill base here to help create jobs and increase salaries. NUS-USI will use the evidence we have to develop proposals for change. We will work with our students' unions, the trade union and voluntary sectors to build support for fully and publicly funded further and higher education, and the removal of barriers to participation in tertiary education in NI.

Brexit

NUS-USI sees a no deal Brexit as the biggest existential threat in decades to peace, progress, and educational and economic opportunity in Northern Ireland. Stopping a no deal Brexit and protecting opportunities and rights for students if Brexit happens is a priority for NUS-USI. NUS-USI will conduct policy work examining the impact of a no deal Brexit and will work with students' unions, NUS and USI through the trilateral structure to campaign to stop a no deal Brexit.

Partnership and union development

Northern Ireland is in the midst of reviewing its tertiary education structures, specifically related to quality. NUS-USI believes the principle of student partnership is central to the quality of education. This approach delivers optimal educational outcomes for students. Currently, Northern Ireland is one of the few areas in the UK and Ireland where Government doesn't fund work to develop student partnership. NUS-USI will bring our member students' unions' objectives on partnership through lobbying and campaigning. We aim to seek commitment from the Government to create a student partnership project in Northern Ireland. We will work to ensure that in-built within such a partnership project are mechanism that will lead to

students' union development in further education.

Consent and reform of Relationship and Sex Education

NUS-USI recently conducted an online student survey into unwanted sexual experiences. The results from more than 2,200 students across the North led to a report containing survey findings and recommendations, which was launched in spring 2019. The findings were troubling, particularly around unwanted sexual experiences. NUS-USI will continue its work to lobby and campaign for decision-makers in Northern Ireland to create inclusive, standardised and comprehensive Relationship and Sex Education (RSE).

A bespoke plan for NUS-USI is produced and circulated to member unions. For more information on any of these campaign areas please email Nora.Duncan@nistudents.org



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