

# NUS-UK CONFERENCE 2019

28-29 March 2019

Everglades Hotel

## Policy Lapse

This document contains policy that is lapsing this year

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## **POLICY LAPSE 2019**

***Unless an objection is raised these policies shall lapse at the end of the last session of NUS-USI conference under standing order 14 of the constitution.***

Any objections to the lapse of policy must be delivered to steering committee by the start of the penultimate session of conference. During the last session, there will be a brief debate and vote on whether or not these policies should lapse.

In other words, a delegate must inform steering if he/she wants to KEEP a motion as part of NUS-USI policy. If no one does, all the policies will lapse and will no longer be part of the NUS-USI policy file.

You should be aware of these policies when submitting motions to conference. In many cases due to the passage of time it may be more appropriate to submit a new motion in a particular policy area rather than seeking to retain an existing policy.

Any queries on the technical procedure, please ask a member of steering committee. For questions of a political nature, please see a member of your union or a member of the NUS-USI executive.

## **NUS-USI Steering Committee 2019**

## **CAMPAIGNS**

### **PL1 - Maintaining our momentum (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

1. NUS-USI's #OwningOurFuture campaign ahead of the 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly election has been continually shaped by students and students' unions as it has developed.
2. Much of the impact and success of the campaign can be measured by the significant increase in engagement between the student movement and Northern Ireland's political parties.

#### **Conference further notes:**

1. One of the headline asks within NUS-USI's Student Manifesto calls for the formation of an All-Party Group for students at the Northern Ireland Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Conference believes:**

1. The creation of an All-Party Group for students, with secretariat provided by NUS-USI provides a strategic and sustainable channel within current Government structures to lobby and influence on behalf of students.
2. The creation of an All-Party Group for students, with secretariat provided by NUS-USI should be deemed as a priority for NUS-USI following the formation of the next Northern Ireland Executive.

#### **Conference resolves:**

1. That the NUS-USI President should seek to make preparations to ensure that NUS-USI has the resource and capacity to support the work of an All-Party Group for Students.<sup>2</sup>
2. That the NUS-USI President should engage with political parties represented at the Northern Ireland Assembly to ensure that an All-Party Group for Students is formed as soon as is feasible following the 2016 Assembly election.

### **PL2 - Online voter registration (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

That, unlike the rest of the UK, the only method of registering to vote in Northern Ireland is via paper registration forms

#### **Conference believes:**

That this is incredibly outdated and is a barrier to democracy for people here.

#### **Conference mandates:**

The Regional Executive Committee to lobby and campaign for the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland to provide the option for online voter registration.

### **PL3 - Graduate unemployment (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

The totally unacceptable levels of graduate unemployment reported in recent labour market surveys, and in anecdotal evidence provided to student representatives.

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<sup>1</sup> NUS-USI Student Manifesto for the 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly elections: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-usi/articles/nus-usi-launch-their-elections-manifesto>

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly: Rules of All-Party Groups - [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/publications/all-party-groups/apg\\_rules.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/publications/all-party-groups/apg_rules.pdf)

### **Conference recognises:**

A general right to work, and a responsibility on the part of government to ensure this right is honoured.

### **Conference believes:**

That graduate unemployment is symptomatic of an unacceptable and iniquitous labour market, and further recognises the social and economic damage wrought by youth unemployment in general.

### **Conference believes:**

That the national and devolved governments are not doing nearly enough to tackle, or mitigate the effects of graduate and youth unemployment.

### **Conference resolves:**

That the NUS-USI and its affiliated unions must work together to measure the scope of the problem in Northern Ireland in a more systematic way.

### **Conference mandates:**

The President and Regional Executive to work with member unions and NUSUK to measure the problem, develop a robust campaign centred on lobbying and media awareness and, if necessary, pursue a campaign of non-violent direct action in response to this problem.

## **PL 4 - Internationalisation and international students (2019)**

### **Conference notes:**

An increasing drive in the Higher Education sector to attract a much greater number of international students, while recognising the hugely positive affect that international students have on the student body within each institution and on the movement as a whole.

### **Conference notes with concern:**

That this drive among HE institutions is founded, not with multi-culturalism or shared learning in mind, but rather on an agenda of profiteering. International students are now seen as 'cash cows' in a sector that has steadily been de-funded by government, and in an effort to drive revenue, HE institutions are actively exploiting an international 'market'.

### **Conference asserts:**

That international student fees are exploitative, and do not always reflect the quality of education and support that students receive when they arrive on our shores. Further, not only are international fees extortionate, that a lack of regulation of these fees is of particular concern and should be tolerated by the student movement.

### **Conference mandates, that NUS-USI:**

1. Actively lobby the Department of Employment & Learning, and all relevant bodies, for a regulated international fee system, coupled with a cap on international fees to prevent deliberate exploitation.
2. In all lobbying on student fees, that the international student perspective is included, to highlight disparities and unfairness.
3. In its fight against tuition fees and for a publically funded HE sector, that the issue of international fees remains a key point of contention.
4. Actively raise awareness of issues of international students in its campaigning; highlighting the

need for all students to stand in solidarity with international students.

## **PL 5 - International students and immigration law (2019)**

### **Conference notes with concern:**

The policies and actions of the Home Office under the stewardship of Theresa May in regards to international students.

That the UK Government is actively considering the inclusion of international students in net migration figures. Further, that in a recent tribunal, Mr Justice McCloskey ruled against the Home Office's forced mass deportation of students, based on very little evidence and with no right to appeal from within the UK.

### **Conference asserts:**

That the inclusion of international students in net migration will actively deny those students the chance to settle-in and contribute to our society after they have completed their studies. The contribution that these students make is immeasurable, and they should have the right to stay indefinitely upon completion of their studies.

### **Conference mandates:**

1. NUS-USI to work with, and actively support, NUS efforts to fight against the inclusion of international students in net migration figures.
2. That NUS-USI raise these issues at every available opportunity, and lobby DEL to make representations to the UK Government to that affect.

## **PL 6 - Brexit (2019)**

### **Conference notes:**

The Westminster government recently announced a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, to be held on 23 June 2016.

### **Conference believes:**

1. The UK losing EU membership would create massive uncertainty for EU students studying in institutions in Northern Ireland, putting them at risk of losing funding and student places.
2. A UK outside of the EU may see future applicants to universities in Northern Ireland from EU countries forced to pay exorbitant international student tuition fees.
3. Access to free movement and academic exchange (such as the ERASMUS programme), as well as institutional research funding, is vital for the vibrancy of Northern Ireland's education system.
4. While the EU is by no means a perfect organisation or expression of European community, we have more to lose if the UK leaves the EU than we have to gain. The UK's membership of the EU is vital for the protection of our EU students and our education system as a whole, as well as workers and communities.

### **Conference resolves:**

1. NUS-USI will take a position in favour of Northern Ireland and the U.K. remaining a member of the EU.
2. NUS-USI to make best use of the time between the Northern Ireland Assembly election and the EU referendum to support students' unions to campaign in favour of a 'remain' vote, and mobilise students to vote.

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL ISSUES**

## **PL 7 - Legalisation of marijuana (2019)**

### **Conference recognises that:**

1. Criminalisation of drug users has been an abject policy failure in combating illicit drug trade. The so-called 'War on Drugs' has failed to combat criminal activity, while ruining the lives of users.
2. Legalisation of marijuana use in some States of the USA and in other nations has seen a noticeable drop in drug-related crime and in usage.
3. A regulated system, with the necessary age and distribution restrictions, has significant economic and social benefits that far outweigh the devastating consequences of criminalising students and members of society.

### **Conference further notes:**

That the effect of criminalising those who use drugs creates a taboo culture, and a fear of seeking necessary supports, including among our students.

### **Conference mandates NUS-USI:**

1. To support efforts of students and other organisations to legalise the sale and use of marijuana.
2. To raise awareness of the negative effects of criminalising students who use drugs, and the pressing need for reform.

## **PL 8 - Fresh start agreement (2019)**

### **Conference notes that the 'Fresh Start' Agreement:**

1. Paves the way for brutal cuts to benefits, which will not be mitigated by limited and temporary extra funding, and a stepping-up of harassment of welfare recipients, driving vulnerable people further into poverty and desperation.
2. Will see Stormont borrow £700 million to fund around 20,000 public sector redundancies, which will have a devastating impact on the economy, public services and job opportunities.
3. Aims to cut corporation tax to 12.5% by April 2018, transferring hundreds of millions directly from public services to the profits of big business and beginning an unwinnable race to the bottom.
4. Lays the basis for the sell-off of public assets and new austerity taxes as Stormont aims to meet "challenging cost reduction targets" across departments.

### **Conference believes:**

1. That 'Fresh Start' is a bad deal for students, workers and the people of Northern Ireland in general
2. That this deal is fundamentally no better - and, in some ways, worse - than the Stormont House Agreement which provoked the public sector strike on 13th March 2015.

### **Conference resolves:**

That NUS-USI will work with the trade union movement to rebuild meaningful resistance to cuts through campaigns, demonstrations and, crucially, co-ordinated industrial action and student strikes.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

## **PL 9 - Higher education funding (2019)**

### **Conference notes:**

1. The Northern Ireland Executive's Department for Employment & Learning carried out what was arguably its biggest ever public consultation in relation to the future of Higher Education funding earlier this year, The 'Big Conversation'.

#### **Conference further notes:**

1. The student movement became a credible and legitimate voice within the 'Big Conversation', developing a robust economic argument alongside an ideological narrative to argue for publically funded higher education in Northern Ireland, opposing tuition fees and debt.

#### **Conference recognises:**

1. The outcome of the consultation saw an options papers published by the Department which detailed a number of potential routes to resolving the current funding crisis within our Higher Education system in Northern Ireland.<sup>3</sup>
2. This paper included an option to abolish tuition fees entirely, and to meet the funding gap in Higher Education through increased public investment.

#### **Conference believes:**

1. The inclusion of tuition fee-free education as a viable option within the Department's paper would not have happened if it hadn't been for the strategic, collaborative effort of the student movement over the course of the consultation process.
2. That 'free education' does not only relate to the abolishment of tuition fee-free education, but also the need to ensure that students are funded holistically to support them financially whilst they are studying.

#### **Conference resolves:**

1. There is clear merit to developing factually-based arguments centred on social justice and fairness and grounded in economic literacy.
2. Given the sometimes complex nature of politics in Northern Ireland, continued constructive engagement with political parties has the potential to shape political decision-making in our favour.

#### **Conference therefore mandates:**

1. The NUS-USI President to continue to make the case for the abolishment of tuition fees.
2. The NUS-USI President to continue to engage in constructive political engagement as a priority, especially given the formation of the Department of the Economy which will assume responsibility for Higher and Further Education following the 2016 Assembly election.

### **PL 10 - Course costs (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

1. The findings of NUS-USI's Pound in Your Pocket research, published in May 2014.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Conference further notes:**

1. One of the most worrying sections of the research highlighted that across both higher and further education, an average of around two-thirds of students had paid for materials, activities or other costs associated with completing their programme of study
2. Within these costs, on average, just over a third of all reported costs were not known in

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<sup>3</sup> Securing a Sustainable Solution for Higher Education in Northern Ireland: An Options Paper: <https://www.delni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/del/HE%20options%20paper.pdf#page=38>

<sup>4</sup> NUS-USI Pound in Your Pocket summary report: <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NUS-USI-Pound-in-Your-Pocket-summary-report.pdf>

advance.

3. Some of the most 'hidden' costs were also some of the more expensive costs.

**Conference believes:**

1. It is neither right nor fair that students should be expected to pay for resources and materials that are often required for them to be successful in their course, which they were not made aware of in advance of enrolment.
2. Students are already under significant pressure in relation to meeting the costs of their basic living expenses.
3. Having to pay for additional course related materials can have a significant and negative impact on students' wellbeing.

**Conference resolves:**

1. The NUS-USI President should investigate what guidance, if any, is issued to Universities and Colleges in relation to transparency of additional course related costs.
2. The NUS-USI President should lead an inclusive campaign, incorporating Higher and Further education students, as well as apprentices, to highlight the impact of hidden course costs.
3. NUS-USI should lobby the relevant Northern Ireland Executive Department and members of the relevant Northern Ireland Assembly committee(s) to work to introduce guidance to Institutions making clear that the costs of all additional, mandatory course-related resources and materials must be detailed in course prospectuses and all other relevant information available to potential students.

**PL 11- Postgraduate students (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

Postgraduate students are currently under represented, and play a significant role in the up skilling of the Northern Ireland workforce and for some occupations in the private and public sectors; these qualifications are a key pre-entry requisite.

**Conference further notes:**

The funding routes to access postgraduate provision are complex and student support systems are weak.

**Conference believes:**

Part-time, flexible and accessible postgraduate provision which meets the needs of students as well as employers is critical to future expansion and should be incentivised by research and funding council funding regimes. Robust equality impact assessments should be applied to postgraduate funding regimes to ensure that they promote fairness and opportunities across all the potential postgraduate student population.

**Conference resolves:**

To encourage further detailed research to be commissioned to assess the mechanisms and the merits of alternative funding and student support models with the aim of developing a system that increases access to and expands postgraduate provision.

**PL 12 - Student parents (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

Student Parents face unprecedented difficulties in both FE and HE institutions, with the levels of



support varying dramatically from institution to institution. The proposed changes to tuition fees, the threat of EMA funding being terminated and complicated support funds put these students under extra pressures.

**Conference believes:**

Institutions need to offer accessible and uncomplicated support structures for student parents. Many students' parents feel their needs and requirements are not being met, and would welcome more collaboration with DEL and HE/FE Institutions to ascertain how to provide adequate assistance. A lack of funding and support is a massive barrier to participation in education for student parents.

**Conference resolves:**

1. For NUS-USI to instigate a review into the structures of support currently offered by DEL and the funding models used and the adequacy of these structures.
2. To work on behalf of student parents in liaising with DEL and HE/FE Institutions to improve participation and engagement.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**PL 13 - Syria & the refugee crisis (2019)**

**Conference sends:**

Its solidarity to the Syrian people, who remain caught up in a protracted and bloody civil war which has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and forced millions from their homes.

**Conference condemns:**

The reactionary barbarism and terrorism of the so-called Islamic State (IS), of which ordinary Muslims are the primary victims. Conference believes this brutal group has been able to grow due to the instability created by the Iraq war and the poverty created by the pro-capitalist policies of the corrupt regimes in the region. Conference notes the hypocrisy of the Cameron government in condemning IS while remaining allied to the Saudi dictatorship, which promotes the same fundamentalist agenda and beheaded twice as many people in the last year as IS.

**Conference believes:**

That military intervention can only add to the suffering of the Syrian people and deepen the crisis they face.

**Conference condemns:**

Moves by the EU and various member states to prevent refugees from entering Europe and exercising their basic right to asylum.

**Conference calls:**

For all necessary support for refugees.

## **NUS-USI REGION**

### **PL 14 - Regular networking (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

NUS-USI elected officers have an influential role in networking across the students' unions in Northern Ireland with information sharing and experience.

#### **Conference believes:**

A stronger connection between students' unions and NUS-USI elected officers is essential to build an accurate reflection of the cross-section of current issues faced by students.

#### **Conference mandates:**

Each NUS-USI elected officer to meet once per semester with each NI college/university.

### **PL 15 - Democracy week (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

1. Student Officers in member organisations are elected by students on an annual bases.
2. Engaging students in officer elections is extremely important to maintain strength in the student movement.
3. Many students interact with students from other institution.
4. Some member unions hold their elections around the same time of year as other member unions.

#### **Conference believes:**

1. A coordinated approach to elections by member unions across NI would help raise the profile of officer elections.

#### **Conference resolves:**

1. That NUS-USI explores the willingness of member organisations to aligning their election timetables.
2. If some member unions agree to align their timetables; NUSUSI should help coordinate joint efforts to promote elections.

### **PL 16 - Fair Representation (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

1. That NUS-USI Conference should be as representative as possible.

#### **Conference believes:**

1. That a large proportion of our student population are women yet women are continually under represented at all levels of the student movement including on the NUS-USI Conference floor.
2. If the NUS-USI Conference floor is more reflective of the student population who identify as women we can begin to ensure women's issues are not neglected by the student movement.
3. Ensuring that at least 50% of NUS-USI Conference floor is made up of women students is the key next step to ensuring fair representation of women within the student movement

### **Conference resolves:**

1. That all delegations to NUS-USI Conference must be made up of at least 50% self-defining women, rounded down.
2. That NUS-USI produce guidance and support Member Unions on how best to apply this policy during their election of delegates for Conference.

### **PL 17 - NUS-USI 2<sup>nd</sup> NEC position accountability (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

2. The National Executive Council is NUS' interim decision-making body between meetings of NUS National Conference.
3. The NUS-USI 2<sup>nd</sup> NEC Position is elected annually at NUS-USI Conference and represents students from across NI at meetings of the Council.

#### **Conference believes:**

1. Our elected officers should be accountable to those who represent them.
2. Elected officer of NUS-USI are asked to produce a report of their work to be presented at Regional Council.

#### **Conference resolves:**

3. That the office bearer of the NUS-USI 2<sup>nd</sup> NEC Position should produce a report detailing their work to NUS-USI Regional Council.

### **PL 18 - Officer networking (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

1. The tri-lateral agreement that gives members of NUS-USI membership to NUS and USI.
2. That Conference is often the first time in the year that Students' Union Officers across the NUS-USI membership meet and get the opportunity to network
3. That Conference is often attended by a number of officers of NUS and USI

#### **Conference believes:**

1. That collectivism is key to the student movement and through unity we are stronger.
2. That this collectivism must be nurtured and enhanced early in the year in order for the entire membership to work together throughout the year.
3. That geographical barriers often make it hard for officers in Northern Ireland to engage with NUS and USI

#### **Conference mandates:**

1. The NUS-USI President to organise and facilitate an event at the earliest opportunity for officers from HE & FE Students' Unions to network and build on the collective nature of NUS-USI
2. To extend an invitation to all officers of NUS and USI to this event to maximise on the potential for engagement with all of our national unions.

### **PL 19 - 'Consumer'-oriented language (2019)**

#### **Conference notes with concern:**

That students are commonly referred to as 'customers' or 'consumers' in government policy and institutional publications.

#### **Conference asserts:**

That students are not customers, and that such language devalues the inherent value of education, and subtly reflects the unacceptable transition towards a market in education.

**Conference mandates:**

The President and Regional Executive to work with member unions to erase this way of thinking from existing policy and practice.

**PL 20 - Volunteering (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

The increasing competitive nature with regards to jobs for new graduates. With increased volunteer opportunities students can enhance employability skills and build life experience.

*87% of employers think that volunteering can have a generally positive effect on career progression for people aged 16-25.*

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/News/mediacentre/keyvolunteeringfactsandfigures>

**Conference resolves:**

NUS-USI to practice small scale volunteer schemes striving towards the future development of volunteer centres in each institution.

**PL 21 - St Patrick's day preparations (2019)**

**Conference recognises:**

The hard work put in by a number of organisations in trying to avoid a repeat of the scenes of St Patrick's Day 2009.

**Conference notes:**

That a large amount of resources both physical and financial are required to ensure the day goes as peacefully as possible and there is never a guarantee that the day will pass off peacefully.

**Conference believes:**

That these resources could be much better spent by holding some other form of event such as an open air concert in Botanic Gardens or a street carnival like Notting Hill as these events could be much easier and more effectively managed and stewarded.

**Conference mandates:**

The President of NUS-USI to make contact with relevant government departments such as DEL and DCAL to establish if this would be possible and how plans could be formulated to make this a reality.

**TRAINING AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

**PL 22 - Part-time officer training (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

That Part Time Officers play a significant role in their Student Unions and are essential to the growth, development and representative nature of the Student Movement.

**Conference believes:**

That training is essential for Part Time Officers to maximise on their time as officers.

**Conference commends:**

The work done by NUS-USI to ensure that Part Time Officers in Further Education Students' Unions are adequately trained.

**Conference mandates:**

NUS-USI to offer training to Part Time Officers in Higher Education Students' Unions and to work with NUS and USI where relevant to deliver this training.

**WELFARE AND HEALTH**

**PL 23 - Mental health (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

1. For many years NUS-USI carried out significant campaigning work in relation to mental health.
2. In recent years this work ended due to lack of sustainable funding.

**Conference believes:**

1. It is of vital importance that NUS-USI continues to campaign on the issue of mental health.
2. There are a number of charities and organisations which exist within Northern Ireland that work in the field of mental health.
3. NUS-USI should take an evidence-based approach to campaigning on this issue.

**Conference resolves:**

1. The NUS-USI President and NUS-USI Welfare Officer to seek to convene a student mental health working group, comprising:
  - (i) Representatives from NUS-USI Regional Council
  - (ii) Representatives from the various organisations and charities operating within Northern Ireland
  - (iii) Relevant officers from NUS UK & USI (as deemed appropriate by the President)
2. The NUS-USI President and NUS-USI Welfare Officer to seek to use the expertise of this working group to inform and structure a piece of research with the aim of examining the current state of affairs in relation to student mental health in Northern Ireland.

**LIBERATION ISSUES**

**PL 24 - SRE (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

1. The standard of age appropriate Sex and Relationship Education in the region is patchy and barely meets the bare minimum necessary at best, if it is even taught at all beyond a few squeamish sentences in a biology class.
2. Primarily, abstinence is taught as the only real option and scare tactics and guilt trips are used to caution teens into not engaging in sexual behaviour.
3. There is also no consideration given beyond heterosexual couples and that sex is primarily for procreation.

**Conference believes:**

1. Age-appropriate sex and relationship education should form part of the national curriculum at

- all levels of education. This will allow a consistent building of knowledge and understanding
2. SRE should be a dialogue that continues through life during and beyond education.

**Conference resolves:**

1. To lobby government to make improvements to SRE at all levels of education into the national curriculum, as age appropriate.

**PL 25 - Breast ironing (2019)**

**Conference commends:**

The hard work NUS-USI has previously done on lobbying Stormont for a change in Law on Female Genital Mutilation.

**Conference notes:**

Breast Ironing, where hot instruments are used to mutilate a girl's chest, is becoming a growing concern in the UK, where it is believed at least 1,000 girls in are at risk. Conservative MP Jake Berry and Home Office Minister Karren Bradley want to bring the debate to Westminster to make the practice illegal.

**Conference further notes:**

That an emergency forward was brought to USI congress by QUBSU, where it was passed. They now a policy to support the campaign of criminalisation of FGM in all its forms, including supporting the North.

**Conference believes:**

FGM, no matter in what form it happens, should be illegal and awareness of these practices is vital to help both present and potential victims seek support.

**Conference mandates:**

The NUS-USI President and Women's Officer to campaign for the criminalisation of Breast Ironing. They are also to promote awareness of FGM, and work alongside USI in this struggle.

**PL 26 - Disabled students in NUS-USI (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

The work done to date by NUS-USI to raise awareness of disabled students' issues and to engage disabled students in the student movement.

**Conference notes with concern:**

That the NUS-USI Disabled Students Officer role has been vacant now for some time, and in this academic year there was no Conference for disabled students'.

**Conference further notes:**

That there is a distinct lack of policy specific to disabled students. No doubt exacerbated by the lack of an Officer or an effective conference to discuss the issues and policies relevant to disabled students.

**Conference mandates:**

1. That NUS-USI work with Member Organisations (MOs) and with disabled students' to urgently look at the issues faced by the disabled student community in the North.

2. That NUS-USI work with MOs to develop disability awareness campaigns that are easily transferable across all MOs, if they wish to roll them out.
3. That NUS-USI look for innovative ways to engage disabled students, recognising that a physical Conference is not always the most accessible forum for these students.

### **PL 27 - Disabled students' allowance and needs assessment (2019)**

#### **Conference condemns:**

The attack on the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) by the UK Government, which will result in hardship, illness, and the death of UK domiciled students with disabilities.

#### **Conference notes:**

That the cuts to DSA have not been replicated by the Northern Ireland Executive, but Conference recognises the danger that the UK Government may in future try to force a further alignment of the welfare system across the UK.

#### **Conference further notes:**

1. That currently DEL is responsible for the administration and oversight of over £200,000 annually in DSA payments to 5 HE institutions.
2. That the current framework for Needs Assessment means that students are often not receiving the necessary adjustments until a considerable length of time after their initial assessment.
3. That any changes to an individual student's needs assessment mid-term causes significant delays and problems, which create huge issues around student health, safety, and retention.

#### **Conference mandates that NUS-USI:**

1. Work with Member Organisations and disabled students to take an evidence based approach to the issue of needs assessment reform.
2. That NUS-USI actively lobby and raise awareness with DEL the issues of needs assessment and the effect of delays in implementing reasonable adjustment and supports for disabled students.

### **PL 28 - Gender neutral toilets on and off campus (2019)**

#### **Conference recognises:**

1. That Transgender and non-binary students face incredible barriers in society and in their education.
2. That transphobia is rife in our society, and that there is a lack of awareness

#### **Conference notes:**

The work of Member Organisations and the student movement on Trans\* rights to date, including work to implement gender neutral toilets on campus. Further, that these efforts are an important step towards creating an inclusive, understanding, and safe environment for all students regardless of gender identity.

#### **Conference mandates:**

1. That NUS-USI facilitate and support MOs to lobby for and implement gender neutral toilets across their campuses, not just in their SU facilities.
2. That NUS-USI work with other organisations to lobby for the implementation of gender neutral toilets across the public sector and in public places, recognising that gender identity does not begin and end at the boundaries of tertiary education campuses.

### **PL 29 - Abortion guidelines for patients (2019)**

#### **Conference notes:**

Current legislation is currently being challenged in the Courts, but that recent changes to guidelines are not too dissimilar to the previous ones.

**Conference further notes:**

That when registering with a GP, even students from GB to not get the same access to services as they would expect.

**Conference believes:**

That women when registering at a GP in Northern Ireland are not fully aware of their reproductive rights. Since all the available leaflets are focused on GB rather than NI, or with very sparse detail, it is not easy to understand their rights until they happen to have a pregnancy. We believe this adds unnecessary stress and is not helpful.

**Conference mandates:**

The NUS-USI President and Women's Officer to lobby Stormont and associated organisations for the creation of a simple health information leaflet which outlines current legislation and guidelines that could be given to women when they register at a GP surgery.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

**PL 30 - Climate Change (2019)**

**Conference notes:**

1. Climate change presents a significant danger for the future.
2. All people and organisations should seek to be aware of their individual impact on the environment and to adjust themselves accordingly where that impact is excessively wasteful.

**Conference commends:**

The work that has been done by NUS-USI and that is currently being done to ensure the organisation is run efficiently and with its impact on the environment in mind.

**Conference mandates:**

The Regional Executive Committee to conduct a review of the events and work of NUS-USI to determine how we can reduce the impact of the organisation on the environment.

The review should include, but not be limited to

- Assessing the impact of Conference and other events
- Initiatives undertaken by member Students' Unions to address climate change
- Assessment of the impact of how NUS-USI works

**Conference further mandates:**

The review to include recommendations as to how NUS-USI could better tackle issues around climate change on an on-going basis.

**PL 31 - No drilling at Woodburn (2019)**

**Conference opposes:**

Plans to drill in Woodburn forest near Carrickfergus, destroying a pristine natural habitat and threatening the pollution of a major water reservoir which serves the greater Belfast area.

**Conference condemns:**

1. That underhand tactics used by drilling company Infrastrata and its legal threats against peaceful protesters.



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2. Heavy-handed tactics used by the police and failure of local politicians and statutory bodies to ensure that necessary planning, safety and environmental measures are rigorously adhered to.

**Conference calls:**

For an immediate and outright ban on fracking.

**Conference notes:**

That mass community mobilisation and direct action such as blockades defeated plans to frack near Belcoo, County Fermanagh, and believes that these tactics will be key to preventing drilling at Woodburn.

**Conference resolves:**

That NUS-USI will give its full support to the community campaign to resist this development.

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