

NUS-UI POLICY FILE 2017-2018



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This document collates those democratically decided policies that direct the work of NUS-USI and in particular it's executive committee. The policy file has been updated after the annual conference of NUS-USI Northern Ireland which took place in April 2017. We hope member unions find it a helpful resource.

There are many reasons why such a file is useful to members:

- In order to let member unions be aware of NUS-USI policy on a variety of issues.
- To ensure that member unions are aware that policy is upheld by NUS-USI executive.
- To convince member unions to submit more motions to NUS-USI conference.
- To prevent replicating of already binding motions.
- To allow NUS-USI executive to plan for the year, and allow binding policy to be incorporated into the NUS-USI executive plan of work.
- To enable Unions to answer queries on NUS-USI policies from student members

All motions passed at NUS-USI conference are then categorised by steering committee into the eleven subject areas, which are:

1. Campaigns
2. Community Relations, Human Rights and Political Issues
3. FE Student Union Development
4. Higher Education and Student Financial Support
5. International Affairs
6. NUS-USI Region
7. Sport, Clubs and Societies
8. Training and Student Development
9. Welfare and Health
10. Liberation Issues
11. Environmental Issues

All NUS-USI policy is binding on the NUS-USI executive for three years. This follows a constitutional amendment passed at conference 2017 to amend this from five years. Where a policy heading contains a year, such as 2020 in brackets, this means that a particular policy is binding until 2020 and is due to lapse immediately after the 2020 conference. We hope that all member unions add to this policy file, by submitting motions at each and every NUS-USI conference and steering committee would welcome your opinions on the document.

NUS-USI steering committee
June 2017

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CAMPAIGNS

Public Transport for Students (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Public transport in Northern Ireland is not entirely student friendly.
2. Public transport does not always prove to be the most cost effective way for students to travel.
3. Currently Translink only offers discounted travel to people between the ages of 16-23 through their Y-Link card

Conference believes:

1. Public transport should be student friendly and not a drain on students' money.
2. More could be done to make public transport more suitable for students.
3. Students over the age of 23 should be able to avail of discounted public transport

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI lobby Translink to extend the current Y-Link discount cards to all students.
2. NUS-USI identifies key public transport routes commonly used by student and lobby Translink to ensure they are student friendly.

Student Support (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Student support services throughout Further and Higher Education institutions in Northern Ireland vary greatly in terms of quality and the range of support offered to students.
2. Support services for students are not always viewed as a priority by university and college senior management.
3. Students face many challenges throughout their time in university and college many of which having damaging effects on their study and wellbeing.

Conference believes:

1. Students should have access to a wide range of support services to help them through their time in University and College.
2. Students should feel supported through any challenges they may face throughout the duration of their study

3. Students should receive high quality support no matter where they study.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI campaigns to improve support services within Further and Higher Education institutions.

Votes at 16 (2018)

NUS-USI Conference believes:

1. In November the Northern Ireland Assembly unanimously voted in favour of supporting the implementation of Votes at 16, echoing the political support across the Nations in the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament.
2. That the UK government voted to adopt Votes for 16 year olds with a clear mandate in January 2013
3. That the lack of MPs present for the vote signifies a lack of interest in youth engagement in politics
4. That the failure of the UK government to adopt this policy would be undemocratic
5. That the Scottish Parliament will allow 16 year olds to vote in the Scottish referendum in September 2014, but not currently in other elections.

NUS-USI conference further believes:

1. That citizenship education is vital to youth engagement in politics, which Northern Ireland is crying out for.
2. That the scaling back of citizenship activities in schools and colleges is just part of the on-going attack on the rights of young people
3. The Northern Ireland Assembly and Westminster would think twice about the constant attack on young people if 16 and 17 year olds had the vote
4. That the adoption of votes at 16 would be significant for policy makers and would challenge the status-quo of young people paying for the financial crisis and being excluded from having a say.

NUS-USI Conference resolves:

1. To continue the push on Westminster and the Northern Ireland Assembly to adopt and fulfil their political mandate
2. To organise around local and national elections, starting in May 2013 to get 16 and 17 year-olds along to ballot stations and stage actions in direct protest against
3. To work with partners across Northern Ireland and the other Nations to mobilise the youth vote and get 16 year olds registered to vote

4. To organise stunts as part of a “day of action” in the run-up to elections outside local authorities and electoral offices

Support for Youth Fight for Jobs & Education Campaign (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Young people are bearing the brunt of the economic crisis and disastrous austerity policies of the Assembly Executive.
2. Almost one in four young people in Northern Ireland are now without work, the highest rate in the United Kingdom. Additionally, underemployment, precarious employment, poor conditions, low pay and zero-hour contracts are now the norm for young people in work.
3. 'Welfare Reform' will drive young unemployed people further into poverty and rob them of their independence, while schemes like Workfare and Steps to Work exploit them as cheap labour - subsidised by the taxpayer - and undermine the creation of real jobs.
4. Young people from low-income backgrounds are being pushed out of education through increases in tuition fees, cuts to EMA, student support and courses.
5. Young people today are threatened with becoming a 'lost generation'.

Conference further notes:

1. Youth Fight for Jobs & Education (YFJE) has led opposition to Workfare, EMA cuts and is supported by 7 trade unions across the United Kingdom, as well as NUS Wales.
2. In Northern Ireland, YFJE has a strong record of campaigning on these issues and, last year, organised the 'March for a Future' against youth unemployment through the Shankill and Falls.
3. YFJE stands for: A massive government scheme to create socially useful jobs which pay a living wage, No cuts to EMA and the extension of the scheme to all 1-19 year olds, Defending public services, An end to Step to Work and other 'work experience' schemes as well as decent, affordable housing for all.

Conference resolves:

To provide active support for YFJE's actions and campaigning. This includes promotion of the campaigns, support for protest action and organising the student movement to support YFJE demonstrations.

Widening Participation in Tertiary Education (2018)

Conference notes:

The Education System in Northern Ireland often disadvantages the neediest in our society.

Conference further notes:

The recent cuts to widening participation funding in institutions in the region may have direct impact upon school children in Northern Ireland.

Conference believes:

Involvement in the NUS Widening Participation Champions Programme, which aims to work alongside the institutions, can have a direct impact on students from non-traditional backgrounds, leading to increased participation in tertiary education and improved retention levels.

Conference resolves:

To seek additional funding and resources to support the delivery of the NUS Widening Participation Champions Programme across the region on a sustainable basis.

Representing Apprentices and Other Diverse Learners (2018)

Conference believes:

1. The Northern Ireland Program for Government has set a target which aims to up skill 200,000 people of working age, which will primarily be done through Apprenticeships.
2. The National Minimum Wage for apprentices is £2.65 per hour. This is less than half of the general National Minimum Wage rate for those aged 21 and over, where the hourly rate is £6.19
3. According to the Skills Funding Agency 2011 Apprenticeship Pay Survey, 26 per cent of apprentices aged 24 or under were paid below the minimum wage
4. That there is a gender imbalance in some apprenticeships, with sectors such as hair and beauty offering the lowest rates of pay
5. The Program Led Apprentice scheme run by DEL does not give real world experience to students, and have faced criticisms from the private sector
6. Recent UK research has found that the return to each £1 of public funding produces a net public benefit of £16 for a Level 2 apprenticeship and £17 for Level 3, yet this group of learners continues to face inadequate funding, pastoral care, equal opportunities and pay.
7. Students' unions have varying success at engaging with apprentices
8. There are currently over 50,000 learners engaged in DEL funded programs delivered through private providers, such as those learners on Steps To Work, Training for Success and New Deal

Conference further believes:

1. The apprentice pay framework reinforces the age discrimination existing in wider society

2. Learners on Steps to Work, Training for Success and such similar programs are more likely to come from areas of multiple deprivations, and will have very little access to support in private education providers.
3. High quality IAG is crucial in redressing the gender imbalance in apprenticeships in some sectors, particularly in the STEM areas
4. Within colleges, apprentices exist very much on the periphery of student life, and have a diminished student experience as a result
5. Students' unions have varying success at engaging with apprentices
6. The lack of evidence on FE learner destinations beyond those going to university compounds the lack of support available for the transition from FE into work

Conference resolves:

1. To conduct research into students experiences as apprentices and other diverse learners and develop new modes of representing and engaging these students.
2. To create a charter outlining minimum and aspirational standards for such learning experiences, including detailed reference to pay and conditions and ensure DEL and training providers sign up to this
3. To work across the organisation to campaign to equalise apprentice pay and work with the Women's Campaign to reduce the gender pay gap for apprentices, targeting the Low Pay Commission

Student Complaints Campaign (2018)

Conference notes:

1. As part of the Higher Education Act 2004 an independent body for student complaints, The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) was established as a final point of call (once University procedures had been exhausted) for student grievances in England and Wales.
2. This part of the 2004 Act was the only part not directly applicable to Northern Ireland.
3. Even so, as part of its consultation in 2004 on the Act, the Department for Employment and Learning asked respondents to give their views on the proposal for an independent complaints body in NI.
4. Of the 47 respondents, 26 (55%) were in favour of an independent body being established, 3 against and 18 did not comment

Conference believes:

1. Any further contemplation of an independent complaints body in NI would only come once the proposed review of the remit of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman is carried out.

2. This review is a matter of urgency in order to allow students the facility for complaints open to their counterparts in England and Wales. The fact that Northern Irish students studying in England and Wales can make use of the OIAHE adds further weight to our argument.

Conference resolves:

For NUS-USI to campaign against the Student Complaints' system here in NI & to lobby both the institutions & the assembly for parity with counterparts in England & Wales

Student Travel (2018)

Conference notes:

Most 3rd level students use public transport as a means of travel, however our students feel that bus travel from bus/train depots to their accommodation at night time especially is not available.

Conference believes:

Travel from student areas to university is not frequent enough as well as from bus/train stations to student accommodation on a Sunday evening especially.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI lobbies for better student travel

Beat the Gagging Law (2018)

Conference believes:

1. The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill was brought in as the UK government's answer to the issue of commercial lobbying.
2. This bill has been rebranded by a wide civil society campaign as the 'Gagging Law'.
3. The Gagging Law places limits on the resources non-political party campaigning organisations can spend, including staff time, in the period leading up to an election.
4. The Gagging Law has been criticised by everyone from the Royal British Legion to Oxfam for silencing campaigning activity
5. Many of the motions submitted to this conference, were they to pass, would be impossible for NUS-USI to carry out due to the implementation of this bill.

Conference further believes:

1. The Gagging Law represents a chilling curtailment of freedom of speech.
2. This law is a direct attack on NUS' and Student Unions' ability to campaign and organise.
3. It is no surprise that this law has been brought in by a government which has consistently broken its promises and attacked society's most vulnerable.
4. The student movement has a proud tradition of using civil disobedience to stand up for progressive ideals in society.

5. Our movement changes lives - we can't let the important work we do be impeded by this undemocratic attack on our rights.
6. Of particular importance in the lead up to the next elections is the work NUS-USI does on liberation. Marginalised groups of students in particular rely on NUS-USI to be their voice in what is an extremely conservative and bigoted political environment.

Conference resolves:

1. To publicly oppose the Gagging Law and denounce it as undemocratic.
2. To call for the repeal of the Gagging Law.
3. To work in partnership with local campaign organisations in Northern Ireland who will also be badly affected by this law.

Against zero-hour contracts, for a Living Wage (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Many students are forced to seek employment during their studies to supplement their meagre loans and measly grants.
2. Many students, particularly in large higher education institutes, seek employment on campus as the most convenient means to support themselves.
3. Institutions are frequently outsourcing campus jobs in a bid to cut costs and undermine workers' rights in the workplace.
4. Outsourcing to private companies often results in these companies using zero-hour contracts and paying the minimum wage to their staff.
5. In-work poverty is rampant, and a high proportion of people living in poverty in Northern Ireland are from working households.

Conference believes:

1. The minimum wage is insufficient to support a person or student with no dependents, never mind supporting working students with dependents, student carers, or student parents.
2. Outsourcing leads to precarious working conditions of workers, both students and non-students.
3. Unionising student workers and non-student workers is essential to ensure that working students are protected.

Conference resolves:

1. To campaign for the minimum wage to be raised to the living wage.
2. To equip students' unions with campaigning resources and appropriate training in order to help them to campaign for the living wage to be adopted and zero-hour contracts banned at their institutions.
3. To encourage students' unions to pay their staff the living wage.
4. To campaign to unionise students who work.
5. To campaign for a national campaign for the Living Wage in Northern Ireland.

Apprentice Engagement and a National Society (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Apprentices are an integral part of our student community and that in the past year NUS-USI had made it a priority to engage this significant portion of our membership
2. There are over 10,000 apprentices in Northern Ireland studying through different mediums including FE colleges, employers and private training providers.
3. Apprentice representation in our student movement should continue to be an important part of NUS-USI's work.

Conference further notes:

1. That through the engagement work of NUS-USI with Belfast Metropolitan College, South West College and North West Regional College; apprentices have identified issues that affect them in their daily lives:
 - a. decent employment,
 - b. a fair wage and
 - c. respect as an apprentice
2. That the best people to talk about apprenticeships are apprentices themselves.
3. Both the Equality and Human Rights Commission and TUC research on access to apprenticeships identify a number of barriers to liberation groups accessing apprenticeships.

Conference mandates:

1. NUS-USI to create a National Society of Apprentices for Northern Ireland in collaboration with our members, the National Union of Students, trade unions and education stakeholders.

Protect our unions (2018)

Conference believes:

1. That in England, Scotland and Wales the 1994 Education Act and the 2006 Charities Act together establish the principle of independent, well-governed and representative students' unions.
2. As the further and higher education sectors have evolved students' unions have as well; they are diverse in mission, scope and levels of resource.
3. Students' unions are increasingly interwoven into the fabric of national education regulation: across the UK we have a presumption of student participation in governance, frameworks for learner and student voice, management of complaints and appeals and student engagement.
4. Twenty years on from the Education Act it is timely to reaffirm the right of every student to organise and seek representation through an independent students' union, and to reflect on how students' unions might evolve in the next twenty years.

Conference notes:

1. That the 1994 Education act was never extended to Northern Ireland and thus there is no such legal protection for Student Unions in Northern Ireland.

Conference resolves

1. To support NUS in its consultation within the student movement and with the further and higher education sectors on the development of a White Paper setting out proposals to ensure students' unions are recognised in law, continue to be well-

governed and are sufficiently resourced to carry out their mission of amplifying the student voice, helping students be powerful and improving students' lives.

2. To consider the diverse purposes and activities of students' unions and how these might be more fully developed and supported in a complex and changing educational environment with multiple external pressures.
3. To explore the legal and regulatory frameworks for students' unions and lobby to strengthen these.
4. To use the current legal and regulatory frameworks available to us and any future legislation we may achieve to take steps to establish independent collective student representative bodies where they currently do not exist.
5. To continue lobbying for legal protection for students unions either in the form of the extension of the Education Act, or a new Act that is fit for purpose in 2014 and into the future.

Where's our recovery? (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That in the last year, the Media & the ConDem Government have been constantly talking about Recovery, even lauding this year's Budget as a "Recovery Budget."
2. That this is a Recovery built upon the backs of Students and Workers who have had their Fees quadrupled, their EMA slashed, their living standards trampled upon and their student debt sold to the highest bidder.

Conference believes:

1. That this isn't a recovery for us, it's a recovery for Bosses and Bankers, the people who caused the crisis in the first place.
2. That Zero Hour contracts and Work for Dole schemes only serve to prop up profits to our own detriment. This Government's Austerity policies
3. That a fight for our recovery must involve an NUS-USI which actively fights for the 200,000 strong membership instead of maintaining itself as a Lobbying group. An NUS-USI that stands shoulder to shoulder with other Trade Unions to defend our interests against Government Austerity measures.

Conference mandates the NUS-USI executive:

1. To call a regional demonstration in the Autumn against cuts and privatisation in education.
2. To support the staff striking for better pay in Education.
3. To publically call for a ban on Zero Hours Contracts, unpaid internships and 'work for dole' schemes, as well as support campaigns against them.
4. To form working links with Trade Unions in Education (UCU, NIPSA, UNISON, UNITE) with the aim of working together to defend education and services.

Travel Support Funds (2018)

Conference notes:

That on many courses throughout Further and Higher Education, students are given opportunities to broaden their knowledge and enhance their studies through purposeful educational visits. However, financial support is often not available for these trips and this can have an effect on the students overall experience on the course.

Conference believes:

That the formation of a travel support fund would on some level address this issue and provide students with a greater opportunity to progress their studies by exposing them to a wider base of learning. Furthermore, the fund would be made available to students through an application and selection process to aid in covering basic costs such as travel and accommodation.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI lobby the appropriate funding bodies for the provision of a travel support/educational visits fund, to which students may apply in order to support small group trips for the purpose of enhancing their education through broadening knowledge and understanding in their field of learning.

Against Privatisation of Student Services (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That some colleges and universities outsource some of their services to outside companies when it can be done themselves, such as catering, cleaning, and security. Outsourcing of services to outside companies means that people previously working there lose their jobs, this company is also outside of the college/universities control and so the students have no control on how it is run.

Conference believes:

1. That outsourcing of facilities that colleges/universities can run themselves is a lack of student representation and doesn't allow the students to voice their opinions on the matter. This usually has a negative impact on students' experience with these services.

Conference resolves:

1. That the NUS USI should be against outsourcing of services, such as the canteen and cleaning facilities, as the students have no say in what way it is run and therefore cannot help to improve the facilities for others in colleges/universities. The conference also resolves that NUS-USI should run a campaign showing the benefits of services being run by students, and for students. NUS-USI should also act as a pressure group to try to convince colleges and universities to adhere to this motion.

Fight the Fight against ageism (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Ageism is form of discrimination which should garner the same respect as sexism, racism etc. Ageism is a problem faced within the student movement that is most felt by students under the age of 18 and students regarded as mature. NUS-USI represents students from the age of 16 till the end of their education (whatever age that may be), this means that all opinions, no matter the age of those expressing them should be equally respected. Most students under the age of 18 come from FE colleges, and mature students as well are mostly from FE colleges.

Conference believes:

1. That ageism should not be allowed in NUS-USI or within affiliated colleges and universities. It is wrong to bring someone's age into discussion when assessing their abilities. That phrases such as "S/he will know better when they are older" or "They are too old to understand" should be considered as offensive as comments which refer to gender, race or religion.

Conference resolves:

1. That a policy should be enacted which protects students from ageism within the institution they attend and NUS-USI as a whole. A safeguard should be put in place for these students. Information should be easily assemble for reporting these acts and someone outside of the NUS-USI should be made available to report to in case that this ageism is coming from NUS-USI itself.

Cross Border Funding (2018)

Proposed by Southern Regional College Students' Union

Conference notes:

1. That students from the Republic of Ireland coming up to study in Northern Ireland are not entitled to receive maintenance loans, travel, EMA, or any other form of bursary that is exceeds the cost of the course loan. We believe that this is unfair because students from Northern Ireland that study in the Republic of Ireland are able to receive all loans and bursaries that are available to any other Republic of Ireland student.

Conference believes:

1. That this is the case because students in Northern Ireland are classed as Irish citizens and are able to receive a Personal Public Service number when they move to the Republic of Ireland to study. This gives them access to the extra loans outside of the main course loan. This is not true for the reverse. Conference believes that two students each living 10 minutes away from the college in either direction, one could be across the border and the other is not. These two students would be treated differently just because of where they live, one would have to pay for travel to/from college/university themselves and the other person would not.

Conference resolves:

1. That all FE/HE colleges and universities should have a hardship fund, which is available to all students, not just ones that live in Northern Ireland. These hardship

funds are for people who are struggling to pay for their loans and these are funded by the individual college/universities and so are not Government money. Conference also resolves that NUS-USI should campaign for the equality of Irish students within Northern Ireland and that they should be able to apply for all loans that are available to Northern Irish students.

Assembly Election (2018)

Conference notes:

1. The next UK General Election will be held on 7th May 2015
2. The Northern Ireland Assembly Elections are due to be held in May 2016.
3. NUS-USI must reaffirm its fight with students for a better education system and for social justice.
4. Students' voices must be too powerful for politicians to ignore during an election year.

Conference further notes:

1. It is vital students are encouraged to be electorally active.
2. Voter registration is a fundamental part of NUS-USI's election strategy.
3. That in the 2010 General election, only 44% of people aged 18-24 voted, compared to 76% of those ages 65+.
4. NUS-USI must promote voter registration to make sure student voices are heard.
5. NUS-USI supports the campaign for Votes at 16 and will continue to do so.
6. That many local constituencies have significant student populations which could change the outcome of an Assembly election.
7. That NUS-USI should be responsible for the proactive organisation of voter registration within these areas to ensure that students take part in the democratic process.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI to make the Assembly Election the priority campaign in the next year.
2. NUS-USI will continue to promote voter registration and the power of the student vote to our members. We will also work with relevant stakeholders to help us do this.
3. To mandate the NUS-USI President and the Executive Officers to work with Regional Council and our membership to create and lead a powerful Assembly Election campaign, accessible to all our members.
4. To work with Trade Unions and external stakeholders who share the fundamental values of NUS-USI to make sure our voices are heard nationally.

Campaign against austerity (2018)

Conference notes:

That years of austerity implemented by Westminster governments and the Assembly Executive have had a devastating impact on our economy and people's living standards. These policies have created mass youth unemployment, reduced access to education, gutted public services and, according to Oxfam, created 'Great Depression levels' of poverty.

Conference notes:

That while we are told the economy is growing, real wages in Northern Ireland continue to fall and that, while the number of jobs is growing, this largely reflects the destruction of public sector jobs with relatively good conditions and their replacement with low-paid,

precarious jobs, often on zero-hour contracts. This paints a bleak picture of the future facing graduates on the basis of current economic policies.

Conference notes:

That the Stormont House Agreement and the Budget have seen the Stormont politicians commit to a further four years of austerity. Further and higher education funding will be cut by 10.8%, resulting in the loss of 1,500 jobs and the scrapping of many courses. Across the public sector, we will see the sell-off of public assets, ongoing 'pay restraint' and the destruction of up to 17,000 jobs, which will no longer be available for graduates.

Conference opposes:

The proposed cut in corporation tax - championed by all the Assembly Executive parties - which will see at least £400 million extra cut from public services in order to subsidise the profits of big business. This policy would see the destruction of thousands more socially useful, decent, public sector jobs in the vague hope of attracting more low-paid, precarious, service sector positions.

Conference rejects:

The need for austerity. Austerity has failed to cut the deficit as it has strangled the economy, but it has succeeded in shifting wealth from ordinary people to the super-rich. The average family's real income has fallen 13% since 2008. Meanwhile, the UK's billionaires have quadrupled their wealth and big business continues to avoid around £120 billion in tax every year. Conference believes the bankers, super-rich and big business must be made to pay for their crisis.

Conference mandates:

NUS-USI Executive - following on from the successful action on March 13th - to work towards the building of a sustained, co-ordinated and escalating campaign against austerity, involving trade unions, students' unions and communities which will be impacted upon by the cuts. Such a campaign should involve mass demonstrations, peaceful civil disobedience and strike action by both workers and students. Conference mandates NUS-USI Executive to fully support all industrial action against austerity by workers in education.

Conference believes:

That elections can also be used to challenge the austerity agenda being implemented by the five Assembly Executive parties.

The European Union Referendum (2018)

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.

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.¹

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.²

¹ 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>

² Northern Ireland Assembly: Rules of All-Party Groups -

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/publications/all-party-groups/apg_rules.pdf

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Brexit (2020)**Conference notes:**

On the 23rd June 2016 the UK voted to leave the European Union with a 51.9% majority.

Conference believes:

Universities and FE colleges have inextricable links with the EU and there is no doubt that students and staff benefit from EU funds and projects.

The potential impact of Brexit on higher education and young people is far reaching.

As negotiation plans are being drawn up its imperative that MLAs, MPs and MEPs are representing their constituents. It's imperative they are repeating young people and securing the best deal for students as the UK withdraws from the EU.

Voters in Northern Ireland opted overwhelmingly to maintain a position within the EU. It is imperative that public representatives reflect this view and argue accordingly for a special position within the EU for Northern Ireland.

Conference resolves:

The views of those in higher education and young people must be sought and considered, especially over the next two years.

NUS-USI should lobby decision makers to deliver a deal with the EU which:

- ensures the continuation of funding previously provided by the EU to higher education;
- allows for easy collaboration with universities in the EU for study and research;
- allows the continuation of student mobility both into and out of the UK.

March for Science (2020)**Conference notes:**

1. The election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States of America.
2. Earth Day takes place on April 22nd.³

Conference believes:

1. The election of President Trump has invigorated a growing movement from across society to advocate for the value of science and evidence-based policymaking.⁴

³ <http://www.earthday.org/>

2. This growing movement has particular relevance in light of the potential implications that the new US administration could have for global efforts to tackle climate change.
3. Plans are underway to hold events across the USA and globally to demonstrate how recent policy changes have given cause for concern in terms of how seriously evidence-led policy is taken and the implications that has for global issues such as climate change.⁵

Conference resolves:

1. The NUS-USI President to make contact with local campaign groups, activists, scientists, researchers, civil society networks and US citizens within Northern Ireland to determine the appetite for local action in solidarity with campaigners in America and elsewhere around the world.
2. That if there is a clear appetite for local action, to work to organise such activity to coincide with Earth Day on April 22nd 2017.

Teaching excellence framework (2020)

Conference notes:

1. The Westminster Government have, in the last year, sought to carry out the biggest overhaul to Higher Education in a decade.
2. Part of the reforms seek to introduce a, 'Teaching Excellence Framework' (TEF) as a means to measure the quality of education in Universities across the UK.
3. Much criticism has been levelled at the proposed metrics within the TEF as not being appropriate to effectively or accurately measure the quality of teaching and learning, and rather are being used as a smokescreen to further marketise education and allow higher levels of tuition fees.

Conference believes:

1. At the time of writing, none of the Institutions in Northern Ireland who are eligible to take part in the TEF have currently agreed to participate.
2. In Northern Ireland we have currently secured guarantees that, should an Institution here enter the TEF, there will be no link between TEF awards and tuition fee levels.⁶
3. This in itself is a positive development, but the TEF in its current form is still inadequate at best and poses risks and challenges to the wider tertiary education sector.

Conference resolves:

3. The NUS-USI Executive to carry out work to compose an alternative Teaching Excellence Framework, working alongside students' unions and UCU to determine a framework for what good quality teaching and learning means, without encouraging further marketisation of our education system.

Brexit (2020)

⁴ <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/scientists-march-washington-dc-21111>

⁵ <https://www.marchforscience.com/>

⁶ <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-28-11-2016.pdf>

Conference recognises:

- That on 23rd June 2016, the United Kingdom voted in a referendum to leave the membership of the European Union.
- That 56% of the electorate in Northern Ireland voted to Remain in that referendum.
- That young people and students in particular voted overwhelmingly to Remain within the EU on 23rd June 2016, in Northern Ireland, and across the UK.
- That, as a result, there exists a democratic deficit between the north of Ireland and other regions in the UK.
- That due to this democratic deficit, there exists a possibility that the rights of students, and the values of the students' movement in Northern Ireland, may be diminished, neglected or ignored during Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU.
- That there will also be a number of worrying ramifications for the Republic of Ireland.
- That there has already been a fall in the number of international students, particularly EU students, applying to study in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Conference is concerned that:

- That withdrawal from the EU will have profound political, economic and social effects on our society, and on opportunities for students.
- That hugely successful initiatives for student mobility such as the Erasmus+ scheme may be severely curtailed.
- That the number of students who are from Northern Ireland and want to study in the Republic of Ireland, or vice versa, will reduce as a result of withdrawing from the EU.
- That access to healthcare via the European Health Insurance Card will be under threat.
- That the number of people from the island of Ireland who want to access reproductive healthcare in Great Britain will now face additional barriers due to withdrawing from the EU.
- That EU nationals, including students and academics, living in the UK may be used as 'negotiating capital' in Brexit negotiations and their 'right to remain' will be threatened.
- That civic society in Northern Ireland, and the needs and interests of our society and citizens will be neglected during Brexit negotiations.
- That issues of border control and immigration in Britain will have a profound impact on the Irish border and on citizens who live there, with freedom of movement curtailed, and trade on the island hampered.

Conference instructs:

- The NUS-USI President and NUS-USI Officer Board to actively campaign to ensure that the rights and values of the student movement are not diminished or ignored, and are reflected and promoted, during Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU, and during any negotiation between Governments in London and Dublin.
- These rights, opportunities and values include, but are not limited to:
 - o Access to EU funding and participation in EU teaching, learning, travel and research programs.
 - o Freedom of movement through Europe, especially for students and academics
 - o Protection of Equality Legislation and the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in Northern Ireland.
 - o The 'right to remain' for EU nationals living in Northern Ireland and throughout the UK.
 - o Retaining the Erasmus+ Scheme
 - o Access to European Healthcare
 - o Retention of the Common Travel Area, and the right to unhindered free movement, across the island of Ireland
- NUS-USI President and NUS-USI Officer Board to highlight the democratic deficit that exists between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, and to raise awareness of its implications on life for students and citizens living here.

Irish Language Act (2020)

This conference recognises:

- That an Irish Language Act was promised within Annex B of the 2006 St Andrew's Agreement but that it has still not been passed within the Assembly.
- That every other region in the UK has passed a minority language act to protect and enhance native and minority languages, and provide adequate service provision for speakers of these languages.
- The Irish language is an official EU language, is spoken, used or understood by over 180,000 citizens, including thousands of schoolchildren educated through the medium of Irish.

This conference welcomes:

- The legal decision on the 3rd March in judicial review brought by Conradh na Gaeilge which condemned the Stormont Assembly for failing in its legal imperative to legislate for an Irish Language Act.

This conference calls for:

- NUS-USI President and Campaigns & Citizenship Officer to support An Dream Dearg (alongside USI) and other civic groups and activist networks in campaigning for an Irish Language Act in Northern Ireland.

- NUS-USI President and Campaigns & Citizenship Officer to lobby local political representatives to fulfil their legal requirement and legislate for an Irish Language Act as soon as possible.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL ISSUES

Challenging Sectarianism (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Sectarian tensions in society are being whipped up by both unionist and nationalist politicians.
2. It is students, workers and their families in both communities who will bear the brunt of an upturn in sectarian violence.

Conference affirms that:

1. People from all backgrounds have the right to engage in peaceful protest without harassment.
2. People from all backgrounds have the right to live, work and study free from sectarian threats and intimidation.
3. There is no policing solution to questions of sectarian division - solutions must be based on the coming together of ordinary people from both communities in dialogue.

Conference resolves:

1. That the students' movement has a duty to challenge all forms of sectarianism and will take action to do so, alongside the trade union movement.
2. This will potentially include calling and supporting protests, student walk-outs, strikes and other forms of action aimed at mobilising ordinary people to isolate sectarian forces.
3. The students' movement can best challenge sectarianism by building a united fight-back, alongside the trade unions, against austerity and challenging the right-wing policies of all the parties in the Assembly Executive.

Community Relations Unit (2018)

Conference notes:

The stereotypical image of students perceived by the community. This 'student stereotype' creates a negative image for students throughout NI

Conference believes:

This stereotype also clouds the hard work of the Students Unions and the Student Movement as a whole. NUS-USI needs to focus on a way to rid this stereotype.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI should form a Community Relations unit, while also involving the appropriate staff

and students within each Students' Union to deal with this issue.

Volunteer Week (2018)

Conference notes:

There are not enough university led programmes involving the local community they reside in.

Conference believes:

Volunteer week should be implemented in which university led programmes are implemented within the community they reside to develop relationships and strengthen existing ones.

Conference resolves:

A week of Volunteer activities, which involve the local community, should be implemented.

Antisocial Behaviour Task group (2018)

Conference notes:

NUS-USI recognises the ongoing problems of anti-social behaviour, particularly in the South Belfast Area.

Conference believes:

NUS-USI needs to do something about this.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI to create a task group to tackle anti-social behaviour of students, particularly in the South Belfast area, bringing together representatives from the Universities and local communities.

MLA Accountability (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Not one of our MLAs voted for the 2004 Education Act that brought in variable tuition fees. In the Party Manifestos of our local political parties the majority is negative about tuition fees being in place.

Conference believes:

Our Political Parties here in Northern Ireland need to be held to account by their Party Pledges against tuition fees and/or the increase that may arise from the review of tuition fees.

Conference mandates:

NUS-USI to hold local Political Parties and MLAs to account by highlighting their pledges which they got elected on, especially coming up to the important decision that they will be making with regards to tuition fees here in Northern Ireland.

NUS-USI's involvement in the 2015 Northern Ireland Assembly Elections (2018)

Conference notes:

1. The Assembly Elections of 2015 will shape the Political Leadership of Northern Ireland for the next number of years.
2. MLAs elected in 2015 will be part of the DEL review on funding for Universities due to be completed in 2020.
3. NUS-USI championed the first ever National Voter Registration Drive on the 5th February 2014.

Conference believes:

1. The Voter Registration Drive used by the Union of Students in Ireland in 2013 ahead of the National Budget shows that when mobilised, students are a powerful voting force.
2. That the same approach to the Assembly elections could be used effectively in promoting the National work of NUS-USI.

Conference resolves:

1. For NUS-USI to champion several more Voter Registration Days ahead of the May 2015 Assembly Elections.
2. Where the opportunity arises, for NUS-USI to lobby potential candidates for Assembly elections around issues that matter to both the students and young people that we represent.

General Election (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That we are entering into one of the most electorally active periods in many years.
2. In May 2014, European Parliament Elections and Local Council elections will be held.
3. The next UK General Election will be held in May 2015
4. The Northern Ireland Assembly Elections are due to be held in May 2016.
5. NUS-USI must fight with students for a better education system and for social justice.

Conference further notes:

1. It is vital students are encouraged to be electorally active.
2. Voter registration is a fundamental part of NUS-USI's election strategy.
3. That in the 2010 General election, only 44% of people aged 18-24 voted, compared to 76% of those ages 65+.
4. NUS-USI must promote voter registration to make sure student voices are heard.
5. NUS-USI supports the campaign for Votes at 16 and will continue to do so.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI to make the General Election the priority campaign in the next year.
2. NUS-USI will continue to promote voter registration and the power of the student vote to our members. We will also work with relevant stakeholders to help us do this.
3. To mandate the NUS-USI President and the Executive Officers to work with Regional Council and our membership to create and lead a powerful General Election campaign, accessible to all our members.
4. To work with Trade Unions and external stakeholders who share the fundamental values of NUS-USI to make sure our voices are heard nationally.

The merging of Northern Ireland Executive Departments (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That on December 23rd 2014, following 11 weeks of talks with political leaders in Northern Ireland, the Stormont House Agreement was published.⁷
2. That within this document it was agreed that the number of Departments in the Northern Ireland Executive would be reduced from 12 to 9 in time for the 2016 Assembly elections.
3. That on March 2nd 2015, the First Minister Peter Robinson made an announcement to the Assembly that the new Departmental structure would be as follows;

The Executive Office
 Department for Communities
 Department for the Economy
 Department of Education
 Department of Health
 Department for Infrastructure
 Department of Justice
 Department of Finance
 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

4. That NUS-USI currently works closely with the Department for Employment & Learning (DEL).
5. That the vast majority of the responsibilities of the current Department for Employment & Learning will be transferred to the new Department for the Economy.

Conference believes:

1. Whilst there is a clear relationship between the Northern Ireland economy & education sector, it is vitally important to ensure that the transferring of DELs responsibilities to the new Department of the Economy does not dilute the understanding of tertiary education as having value to society as a public good.

Conference resolves:

1. The NUS-USI President to meet with the new Minister of the Department of the Economy once they have taken office.
2. The NUS-USI President & Executive to work to ensure that the interests of students in Northern Ireland and the public value of education remain a priority for both the new Minister & their Department.

Fighting Sectarianism (2018)

Conference believes:

1. Northern Ireland is still affected by sectarianism
2. Students in Northern Ireland experience sectarianism on and off campus in FE and HE
3. Sectarianism is not just a problem for students from Protestant or Catholic backgrounds, but also for students from other religious or ethnic backgrounds
4. Sectarianism is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any shape or form

Conference notes:

1. Sectarian hate crimes and incidents make up the largest portion of hate crimes and incidents in Northern Ireland
2. NUS-USI has created a partnership with Unite Against Hate to tackle this problem

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI to continue its partnership with Unite Against Hate to tackle all types of sectarianism on and off campus
2. NUS-USI to encourage student unions to adopt a zero tolerance policy on sectarianism

Fighting Racism (2018)

Amendment to change title of motion to 'Ethnic discrimination' – Amendment FELL

Conference believes:

1. Students in Northern Ireland face racism on and off campus
2. Racism and racist hate crimes are soaring throughout Northern Ireland every year
3. Political parties aren't doing enough to tackle racism in Northern Ireland

Conference notes:

1. The ethnic minority population in Northern Ireland has more than doubled in ten years from 08.% in 2001, to 1.8% in 2011
2. According to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), in the 12 months to June 2014 racist incidents rose by 36%, from 830 to 1,132. In the same period, racist crimes increased by 51%, from 525 to 796⁸.
3. There is an average of 2 racist hate crimes every day in Northern Ireland with 70% of these taking place in Belfast and there is a fear that Belfast may become the race hate capital of the UK.
4. NUS-USI has partnered with Unite Against Hate to address racism and hate crime across Northern Ireland, in our communities and on our campuses.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI to continue to work with Unite Against Hate and local FE and HE student unions to provide them with the skills and knowledge to fight against racism on campus
2. NUS-USI to encourage student unions to adopt a zero tolerance policy on racism.

3. NUS-USI to encourage student unions to work with the NUS UK Black Students campaign and to encourage black students in Northern Ireland to engage in the campaign.

Strategy for Education and Skills with new Government Departments (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That the formation of the Departments for the Economy and Department for Education represents a significant restructuring of the approach that the NI Executive takes to skills and education.
2. A statement from OFMDFM notes that "No functions are being done away with, and no policies terminated."
3. The 2014/15 academic year saw significant cuts to the budgets of our higher and further education institutions; cuts which are set to continue into the 15/16 academic year.

Conference believes:

1. In light of these new departments an effective strategy to deal with education and skills will be required to meet the needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

Conference resolves:

1. For the NUS-USI President to lobby the Ministers for Employment and the Economy to ensure a holistic approach is taken to skills, education and innovation.
2. To exercise oversight of the new departments to ensure effective implementation of the Executive's strategy for the development of skills and education.

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.

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.

Petitions of concern (2020)

Conference notes:

1. The petition of concern mechanism within the Northern Ireland Assembly was created under provisions within the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement specifically to protect the rights of minorities.⁹
2. The petition of concern mechanism was discussed as part of *Fresh Start* negotiations in 2015 but was left unchanged.¹⁰

Conference believes:

1. At its creation, nobody envisaged that any one party would ever hold enough seats within the Northern Ireland Assembly to use a petition of concern on their own.
2. In recent years the petition of concern mechanism has been used in a way which runs in contradiction to the spirit in which it was intended, such as being used to block marriage equality where there was an outright majority for it within the Assembly.

⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/136652/agreement.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479116/A_Fresh_Start_-_The_Stormont_Agreement_and_Implementation_Plan_-_Final_Version_20_Nov_2015_for_PDF.pdf

Conference resolves:

4. NUS-USI should call for the petition of concern to be reformed, ensuring there are robust protections for the rights of minorities.
5. NUS-USI should also call for enhanced checks and balances for the Assembly Speaker in relation to the conditions that must be met before they can accept a petition of concern.

Off-campus conduct regulations (2020)**Conference notes:**

1. The important role that our further and higher education institutions, and the student movement, play within the local community.
2. Those who commit criminal acts or are involved in anti-social behaviour should be dealt with by the appropriate statutory body and reprimanded in accordance with the rule of law.
3. That some higher educations in Northern Ireland impose draconian financial and academic penalties on students for off-campus behaviour that often far exceed the action taken by external agencies such as the Police, or the City Council, for the same, or a similar, offence.
4. These institutions have no statutory, moral, or ethical right to do so.

Conference believes:

That NUS-USI should play a constructive role in working with the Further and Higher Education institutions, local residents, and the statutory authorities to ensure that Northern Ireland is a safe and peaceful place to live, work and study.

Conference further believes:

Student activity that has taken place outside of an institution's property should not be subject to the relevant institution's conduct regulations, unless the students in question have been representing the applicable institution in an official capacity.

Conference resolves:

To mandate the NUS-USI President, and the organisation, to work with local unions to assist them in any campaigning activity relating to their institutions conduct regulations.

Trade union solidarity (2020)**This conference recognises:**

- The widespread exploitation of labour and the growing casualisation of labour, particularly young workers
- That the interests and values of the trade union and students' union movement are invariably aligned, as they both seek a democratic, socially just and equal society and fight for members' rights and progressive social change
- The solidarity and support historically afforded to students' unions by the trade union movement, both domestically and internationally

- That students' unions are stronger and more effective as campaigning bodies when embedded within the wider civic struggle for progressive change, allowing them to draw on support and solidarity from allies across society.

Conference also recognises:

- That in the context of higher education, the marketisation of HEIs has led to a proliferation of casualisation, corporate opacity, overworked staff, gender inequality in pay and promotion, attacks on academic freedom, damage to staff wellbeing and a redefinition of academia
- This attack on staff wellbeing, and the unions that represent them, threatens the quality of education received by our student members and the overall University community
- That students' union are ethically and politically obligated to oppose these attacks on the rights of academic workers
- The most effective way of combatting marketisation is building alliances with staff unions in Universities to combine the voices and campaigning resources of staff and student representatives in offering a vision of a democratic, public University.

Conference instructs

- NUS-USI President and Campaigns & Citizenship Officer to build stronger and more formal links with the University & Colleges Union (USU) to oppose marketisation of higher education and to protect the rights and experiences of staff and students
- NUS-USI President and Campaigns & Citizenship Officer to build stronger and more formal links with the wider trade union movement to engage with and protect student workers and non-academic staff.
- NUS-USI Women's Officer campaign alongside the trade union movement on challenges and issues faced by women student workers
- NUS-USI President and Campaigns & Citizenship Officer to offer active public support and solidarity to the trade union movement, build on the existing agreement with NIC-ICTU, and support instances of industrial action by student workers or otherwise.

NI Assembly (2020)

Conference notes:

This year has been a turning point within the politics in Northern Ireland. This year NUS-USI lobbied each party to ensure that Further and Higher Education is the top of each of the party's agenda.

Conference also notes:

Primary Education has been at the forefront of educational debates in recent years.

Conference notes with concern:

That Top up Fees were introduced in Northern Ireland with direct rule and that our education system, students and economy will now suffer under a system which is clearly not right with evidence of a drop in applications and little opportunities for our graduates here in Northern Ireland.

Conference mandates:

The President and NI Executive to continue to lobby the political parties and make them stand up and invest in an education where everyone in Northern Ireland will benefit.

The President should set up a forum where education spokesperson and policy heads communicate with the student body.

Extra resources are put into place to empower the student leaders in the students' unions around the region to use their voice.

The President should lobby for representation on committees that can raise concerns at executive level.

Community Relations (2020)**Conference notes:**

The University of Ulster Students' Union, in conjunction with the Queen's University of Belfast Students' Union, has worked hard to improve relations between students and residents living side by side within the community.

Conference further notes:

The Unions have worked closely with the Media/Press to promote the community relations work they have engaged in, and to address the negative perceptions that many people have of students living within local communities.

Conference mandates:

The NUS-USI President to work with the universities and colleges throughout the region on a campaign to further promote and enhance good relations between students and long term residents in the community.

Conference mandates NUS-USI to set up a working group to ensure the continuation of the good work of the students' unions in the area of community relations.

FE STUDENT UNION DEVELOPMENT

Further Education in the Tertiary Sector (2018)

Conference believes:

1. Further Education in Northern Ireland is often regarded as the “second choice” or “last resort” by the government, media and public, picking up those students that the Higher Education sector “doesn’t want”
2. Despite the new wave of populist views about the value of Further Education and skills based economies the parity of esteem between the sectors, policies and proposals do not reflect this in Stormont.
4. The impact of reforms to academic Further Education and schools have devalued vocational education
5. Budgets for Information, Advice and Guidance have been slashed, with students receiving inadequate advice

Conference further believes:

1. Students in the Further Education sector do not have many of the benefits that Higher Education students receive
2. Students are often made to feel that University is the only option, with Further Education as a poorly funded last resort for those not academically inclined.
2. Further education students are at the mercy of a broken information, advice and guidance system, with no guaranteed face-to-face guidance for under-19s
3. Higher education students have far better resourced advocacy and representation services than further education students

Conference resolves:

1. To consult with FE students on their views about the future of Further Education in the Tertiary sector.
2. To demand parity of esteem with Higher Education services such as advocacy and guidance and funding.

FE Students’ Union Support (2018)

Conference recognises:

The serious issues that the FE sector has been facing since the college mergers, in particular, how much the Students’ Unions are suffering.

Conference mandates:

The NUS-USI President and FEUD Officer to organise meetings with each college before the

first semester begins to schedule dates for FE elections, and to find out from each union the specific support they need in order to develop their union.

Printing Costs in FE (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Students in Further Education often have to print all of their own course related materials such as hand outs, presentations, essays, homework and assignment submissions
2. The cost of printing in FE is expensive especially colour printing
3. In some colleges, first year students all receive an equal amount of free printing credits but this is not renewed in years 2 or 3
4. Students often have to pay to have assignments bound to meet the requirements for submission set by their college or the examination board

Conference believes:

1. Students should not have to pay for printing materials as a direct result of their course for example, assignment submissions that cannot be submitted online
2. Colleges and tutors should, where possible, allow students to upload home, essays and assignment submissions online or by email to reduce paper and ink costs as some courses have already adopted
3. Colleges and courses, where possible, should adopt a paperless scheme where all course material is available online or through a student portal
4. The method of purchasing printing credits is often confusing or difficult and can be at times, inaccessible to disabled students
5. Students often have to print large e-books or PDFs in colour for their course but they should not be expected to have to print course materials that should be provided by their college or by their tutor
6. Printing costs for non-essential/non-course related materials should be reduced

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI should lobby the Department of Employment and Learning to ensure that there is funding available for Colleges to reduce or eliminate printing costs for course related materials and assignment submissions
2. NUS-USI should lobby the Department of Employment and Learning to encourage Colleges to adopt "paperless" courses and to fund IT services to enable students to access course materials online or through a student portal
3. NUS-USI should lobby Department of Employment and Learning to ensure that the methods of purchasing printing credits is simple and accessible for all students
4. NUS-USI should provide training for FE member unions to enable them to lobby their own college management or heads of school to reduce or eliminate course related printing costs and implement paperless courses

Cost of Public Transport in FE (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Most FE students use public transport to attend college
2. Public transport outside of Belfast and in rural areas is often limited and there are often timetabling conflicts

3. Translink already offer a discounted student service known as yLink. Many students are still unaware of the yLink card and the student services Translink currently offer
4. The free travel pass from Translink is funded by Education and Library Board and only applies to full-time FE students studying FE courses under the age of 19 who live 5 or more miles from their nearest college and is only valid Monday-Friday 8-6

Conference believes:

1. Transport links outside of Belfast and in rural areas needs to be improved as many students often need to use more than one service to travel to and from their accommodation
2. The restrictions on the free travel pass from Translink mean that the majority of students within colleges are unable to access it including part time students, mature students and students who don't study at the nearest college
3. The validity of the free travel pass means that students that must travel outside these times in order to attend college must pay for the extra services they use
4. Students often resort to using a car to travel to and from college as public transport just isn't an option for them due to issues such as poor timetabling, lack of services or cost
5. Students that use a car to travel to college often end up incurring more travelling costs due to the high running costs of a car
6. The yLink service is inaccessible to many students and is complicated to apply for an often students aren't even aware of the service
7. Colleges are not required to provide parking for their students and often students are left to park on the road near college or at local, private or council-owned car parks which are at a premium in availability and cost along with cost of learning to drive, car payments, insurance and petrol

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI should continue to work with and lobby Translink to improve their services outside of Belfast and in rural areas during term time to ensure that students can utilise their services to attend college
2. NUS-USI should continue to engage with Translink to encourage them to add themselves to the NUS Extra card, widening the availability of their already discounted student services or where possible, allow students to use their own student card to gain student fares on travel services without having to apply for a yLink card
3. NUS-USI should lobby the Education and Library Board to reduce the restrictions on the free travel pass to include a wider bracket of students especially those who receive little or no funding for travel
4. NUS-USI should lobby the Department of Employment and Learning to ensure students are funded for excessive travel costs, especially if the only way they can travel to attend their classes on time is by car

Access to IT resources in FE (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Access to IT resources such as PCs and Laptops in many colleges is limited due to it being in high demand

2. IT resources are often restricted due to the high demand, resulting in many students not being able to access IT resources when they need it most
3. There is a lack of computers in Learning Resource Centres, Libraries and ICT suites within colleges
4. Access to WiFi is limited and often difficult to access, with some students having no access to the internet at all within college
5. Students studying STEM subjects and other similar courses often need specialist software to enable them to complete their studies and submit assignments and this software is often expensive

Conference believes:

1. The under availability of computers within colleges often means students must buy their own PC or laptop so that they can complete their work
2. There shouldn't be restrictions placed on the IT resources that are available as this can be detrimental to students completing work on time
3. Students shouldn't have to pay for access to software that is vital to their studies
4. WiFi access needs to be improved throughout colleges so that students who do bring in their own laptop or tablet are able to still access the internet and complete their studies within the college
5. College computers and IT resources should have the most up to date software and operating so that students can not only learn how to use these services, but to ensure compatibility

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI should lobby the Department of Employment and Learning for funding for IT resources and to ensure that colleges have more than enough IT resources for all of their students, regardless of the types of courses they attend
2. Schemes such as Microsoft Dreamspark (where colleges can register their students for software that is free or at a vastly reduced price) should be introduced across all colleges and made available to all students that require it
3. NUS-USI should lobby DEL to ensure that there is funding for upgrading existing IT services within colleges and improving services such as WiFi

LGBT in FE (2018)

Conference notes:

The NUS-USI resource 'LGBT in FE' which provides advice, support and materials to support the development of LGBT issues in Further Education.

Conference also notes:

How the potential for this resource to support the creation of a vibrant LGBT student community is significant. How, in conjunction with an active NUS-USI LGBT Officer this resource could provide support for LGBT students and Student societies on campus in organising, campaigning, and challenging stigma and discrimination

Conference resolves:

For NUS-USI to work with FE Students' Union to utilise the resource in supporting LGBT students and Students societies on campus.

To create joint funding for Republic of Ireland students in FE (2018)

Conference notes:

Outside of the Back to Education scheme which only applies to those over the age of 20 and with no employment for at least 9 months, Republic of Ireland students are not entitled to any funding for FE courses.

Conference believes:

Students from the Republic of Ireland receive no financial support from either government. To use Derry as an example, if a student is living in Letterkenny and studying a full-time course in Derry they may have to pay €50.50 a week travel on the bus. This could equate to over €1,800 for the academic year. Currently, if a student moves up to Derry they will be eligible to receive housing benefit and pay subsidised rent. This service will cease to exist once the Universal Credit scheme is introduced. With such a large amount of students crossing the border, an attempt should be made by both governments to support students. EMA students only receive a small payment but it should be equalled for Republic of Ireland students. Students living in Northern Ireland would see their money spend in Northern Ireland i.e. living costs, rent. While students living in the Republic would see their money spent on transport or living costs. This is liquid income designed to alleviate pressure off parents/ the student.

Conference resolves:

FE Student Unions should meet with TDs and elected MLAs and lobby for financial support for students. To begin, a cross-border financed support fund for students from the Republic. Students receiving Back to Education or EMA should not be eligible for this fund. The fund will not cover all expenses but rather provide a small amount for students on a bi-weekly basis and should be based on attendance. The amount of £20 per week will not cover all expenses but will help relieve pressure on students struggling financially.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Student Financial Support (2018)

Conference notes:

NUSUK has recently completed a “Pound in your Pocket” research survey into student financial support, ranging from apprentice to postgraduate but for English domiciled students only.

Conference believes:

That, recognising the divergence and complexity of maintenance support across the UK, NUS-UK can resolve to build a strong case for the social and economic benefit of public investment in student financial support.

Conference resolves:

For NUS-UK to conduct its own research into student financial support, exposing the financial barriers to students being academically successful.

Students and Money: There's just not Enough! (2018)

Conference believes:

1. The single most important priority is to ensure all students have enough personal funding to meet their needs during their studies
 2. With the Assembly elections taking place in 2014, we should be ambitious about how we would add value to the financial support system and make a strong case for additional public expenditure
 3. The Pound in Your Pocket Research has highlighted the vital need for a more sustainable student support model in England.
 4. Currently certain courses cross cut departments, such as Health (nursing) and Education (numbers of students)-meaning there is no one single and cohesive funding policy for all students.
1. Student Nurses are not entitled to student loans or the same kind of student support as their peers studying History courses.
 2. Support for disabled students is inconsistent across sectors and poorly targeted and administered; sorting this mess out must be a top priority

Conference further believes:

1. Students are an easy target, it is absurd that some full time undergraduates now borrow up to £27,000 to pay for a degree but the vast majority can only borrow between £10,000 and £15,000 to meet their living costs during that degree

2. The mainstream system of student loans should enable all students to meet most of their best-estimated costs without turning to other sources of income; this means having much larger maintenance loans
3. NUS's Pound In Your Pocket research has shown that students experience significant loss of mental wellbeing when faced with financial pressures.
4. There should be a better system for recognising the different rates of costs of living outside of a narrow view of London or Home.
5. There should be an independent national student financial advice service
6. There should be a standards accreditation system for student employment opportunities
7. There should be more frequent instalments of loan payments, with a front-loaded payment of loans to help people meet 'set up' costs
8. The system of regulated discretionary bursaries and fee waivers in higher education is highly dysfunctional and has little positive effect on access
9. The multitude of discretionary funds and pots in further education is also highly dysfunctional, poorly focused, and a source of unequal treatment of students

Conference resolves:

1. To mandate the NUS-USI to carry out detailed research into the financial experiences of students in Northern Ireland across HE and FE.
2. To mandate NUS-USI to produce detailed proposals reflecting the principles set out in this motion and to pursue their implementation.

Access to Education (2018)

Conference notes:

2008/09 will see the review of Higher Education funding in Northern Ireland.

Conference believes:

The system of variable tuition fees imposed in 2004 has clearly led to a downturn in applications to higher education institutions. NUS-USI's Access to Education Campaign has highlighted all important issues to DEL including the need for an 'independent' review.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI to continue with the Access to Education Campaign until we can assure the capitation on Fees is to be retained & continue to aim for the abolition of variable tuition fees.

Student debt (2018)

Conference notes:

The majority of students leave university with a substantial amount of debt.

Conference believes:

Student debt throughout university can have a negative effect on students' studies. The additional burden after completion of the course can hold people back particularly with the rising costs of property.

Conference resolves:

For NUS-USI to campaign against student debt at both local and national level.

Access to Education Campaign (2018)**Conference notes:**

NUS-USI has been working on the Access to Education Campaign.

Conference believes:

NUS-USI needs to continue this campaign.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI to continue the work done in the Access to Education Campaign, specifically calling for the cap to be retained in the first instance, and higher education to be free, in the build-up to the Review of Higher Education Funding in 2009.

Looking after the Pound in Your Pocket (2018)**Conference notes:**

1. NUS-USI completed Pound in Your Pocket research earlier this year which focused on student finance for students in further and higher education in Northern Ireland.
2. Increasing costs including rent, food, childcare, course costs and transport can all have a detrimental effect on students potentially resulting in them dropping out of study altogether.
3. 4512 students responded to the survey and the results will be/have been discussed at Conference today.

Conference believes:

1. The results of the survey should be used as a foundation for further campaigns surrounding the level of student finance currently provided.
2. Students should be supported financially throughout the year and not just during term time.

Conference resolves:

1. To campaign against any and all cuts to student funding.
2. To lobby for increased funding – maintenance grants/loans, EMA.
3. To campaign for monthly student loan payments, including the summer period.
4. To ensure manageable payment options for self-financing students at all institutions.
5. Increased funding for student support funds and hardship funds.
6. To inform students about the dangers of payday lenders and unregistered landlords.

Campaigning against the privatisation of the student loan book (2018)

Conference notes:

1. George Osborne confirmed in the autumn statement in 2013 that the current government coalition government is planning to sell off the student loan book.
2. This means that student loans taken out from 1998 – 2012 will be put out to tender for private companies.
3. There is a concern that in order to make this 'product' attractive for private investors, the cap on repayment and interest rates may be increased, or removed altogether.
4. It is not yet clear what impact this will have on students from Northern Ireland who access funding through Student Finance NI.

Conference believes:

1. This is and should be an urgent priority for the student movement in the UK.
2. Assurances from Tory ministers that this will not happen are not particularly comforting. We must remember that this is the government who have priced thousands of potential students out of education, and their neoliberal right-wing austerity-driven agenda should be opposed at every turn.
3. Education is a right, not a privilege, and NUS-USI should be fighting for free, accessible, and fairly funded education for all.
4. This includes fighting for living grants for all students, and in the mean-time, ensuring that existing student debt is protected from the threat of the sell-off.
5. We in Northern Ireland are in a comparatively good position to our counterparts in the UK in terms of our ability to influence and work with the government to ensure that no student or past student has their loan unfairly sold off to the highest bidder.
6. We are also in a unique position in that the situation regarding the loan book in Northern Ireland does not currently look like it will change. However, it is crucial we campaign pre-emptively to ensure that it remains this way.
7. Whilst Northern Ireland-funded students may currently be protected, NUS-USI also represents many UK students who are at risk. It is crucial we fight to protect these students and campaign to stop their existing debt from being sold off.

Conference resolves:

1. To campaign to defend education and opposing the privatisation of the loan book.
2. For the NUS-USI President & Deputy President to lobby government to ensure the student loan book in Northern Ireland is not privatised and ensure that this forms a part of our General Election campaign.
3. To release a press statement no later than a month after NUS-USI Conference 2014 highlighting the importance of the issue and indicating that it is a priority campaign for the organisation.

4. To meet with the relevant government ministers as a matter of urgency to discuss the issue, and to circulate an update on the situation to the membership when this meeting has taken place.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (2018)

Conference notes:

The recent 'Pathway Report' published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for higher education complaints in England and Wales, which shows the improvements in the student complaints system since the Board of Visitor system was replaced.

Conference welcomes:

The support that has now been given by the entire sector to the continued development of the OIA, in particular comments from the representative organisations for academic and academic support staff, universities, registrars and vice-chancellors, as well as students and the government.

Conference recognises:

That Northern Ireland is currently the only part of the UK that continues to operate the outdated Visitorial system. This is despite the changes elsewhere; the lack of student buy-in to the process; inefficiency created by the ad-hoc nature of the Board; and questions around the independence of the Visitors given they are normally educated at one of the two Northern Ireland universities.

Conference welcomes:

The indications given by the OIA that it would be willing to accept the extension of its remit to cover Northern Ireland.

Conference therefore mandates:

The President to use the opportunity posed by the Pathway Report to step up efforts to dissolve the Board of Visitors and replace it with the more transparent OIA model.

Postgraduate funding (2018)

Conference believes:

1. 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.
2. Postgraduate education is expensive and inaccessible with, historically, poorer students less likely to study at postgraduate level.
3. This announcement was welcomed as a move towards making postgraduate study more accessible, however it is limited to only English-domiciled students.
4. Through consequentiality from the Barnett funding formula, any increase in spending in education should result in the Northern Irish Assembly being offered a match level (equivalent) funding to be spent in the same area.
5. This funding is likely to come with a strict set of conditions as to how it should be spent, which would limit the ability to offer loans to students in Northern Ireland.

Conference further believes:

1. 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.
2. If 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.
3. Any delay in formulating a Northern Irish PG loan system will result in a generation of Northern Irish students unable to afford postgraduate study and being disadvantaged compared to their English counterparts.
4. The English PG loan system recommends limiting the accessibility of loans to those under 30, discriminating against those returning to education later in life.
5. Any proposal to limit loans to particular subject areas would result in certain groups of students being disadvantaged in accessing postgraduate study.

Conference resolves:

1. For NUS-USI to work closely with NUS UK officers to ensure any unintended consequences of any English loan system for students from the devolved nations don't arise.
2. For NUS-USI to ask NUS UK that 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.
3. For NUS-USI to lobby the minister responsible for tertiary education to make postgraduate study accessible to everyone.

Collaboration toward sustainable HE funding (2018)**Conference realises:**

That in the light of the major budget cuts to Higher Education and the current economic climate it is likely that political and academic appetites for raising the tuition fees will go up in order to close the funding gap that exists between Northern Ireland institutions and their English counterparts.

Conference also recognises:

The imbalance in tuition fees for other citizens of the UK and that there is solidarity in the struggle to reduce tuition fees across the UK.

Conference instructs:

That NUS-USI, working alongside Students' Unions in Northern Ireland and NUS, research all feasible models of public funding in attempts to resolve this funding issue, particularly alternatives to increasing private funding, and to lobby government to fund Higher Education publicly.

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.¹¹
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.

Course costs (2019)

Conference notes:

1. The findings of NUS-USI's Pound in Your Pocket research, published in May 2014.¹²

¹¹ 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>

¹² NUS-USI Pound in Your Pocket summary report: <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NUS-USI-Pound-in-Your-Pocket-summary-report.pdf>

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 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.

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.

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.

Students and workers - Fairer PhD terms and conditions (2020)

Conference notes:

On 21 March 2017 Ulster University Student's Union passed policy committing to working with Trade Unions on issues including PhD terms and conditions. This policy is similar to the Staff- Student Alliance policy passed by Queen's University Student's Union on 7 December 2016.

Many PhD students at Queen's University and Ulster University are in receipt of a scholarship from the Department of the Economy.

PhD Students are not classed as university employees, however many are paid to teach undergraduates. This teaching can give PhD Students valuable work experience.

PhD students at Queen's University Belfast are paid £33 per hour for teaching, and PHD Students at Ulster University are paid £15.20 per hour with some students receiving a lower £10.80 demonstrator rate. This rate is per hour of teaching and often does not include any preparation or marking time.

The UCU published a report in 2016 'Undervalued, Overworked, Taken for Granted' criticizing the rate of pay for PhD students at Queens University (<http://ucuatqub.blogspot.co.uk/2016/10/text-here-from-our-phd-student-report.html>).

PhD students pay extension fees if they submit in a fourth year. At Queen's University Belfast the fee is £290 for the fourth year, at Ulster University the extension is free for the first 4 months, the fee is £630 every subsequent 3 months.

PhD students are not entitled to any work related benefits such as statutory sick pay, paid paternity leave or shared parental leave. While there is a provision for Maternity Leave in the Department of the economy scholarship, this is only during the funding period and not in any extension period.

Conference believes:

PhD students need the support of both their Student's Union and Trade Union to campaign for better terms and conditions. The commitment by Student's Union to work with Trade Unions as outlined above should be strengthened by action at NUS-USI level.

PhD students should be treated equally regardless of the institution that they are studying at.

When preparation and marking time are taken into account many PhD students are earning below minimum wage. UCU suggests 5.5 hours of preparation work per hour of teaching.

Punitive extension fees detrimentally impact the mental health of PhD students.

There is a disparity in the distribution of Research Training and Support funds within and between institutions.

Conference resolves:

To investigate why there is a disparity between the treatment of PhD students at Queen's University and Ulster University in relation to payment, fees, and support funding.

To lobby Queen's University and Ulster University for a fair rate of pay for PhD Students

To lobby Queen's University and Ulster University for a reduction in extension fees.

To lobby the Department of the Economy for better terms and conditions for PhD students.

To work with the relevant Trade Unions to achieve these aims, in accordance with policy passed by both Ulster University Student's Union and Queen's University Student's Union.

Student Support Funds (2020)

Conference notes:

The rapidly increasing cost of living and the worsening economic conditions in Northern Ireland.

Conference further notes:

The contribution that the DEL Student Support Funds make to supporting students who get into financial difficulty or other hardship during their courses. In both HE and FE, vulnerable students benefit immensely from this.

Conference directs:

NUS-USI to campaign to ensure that the Support Fund budget is not cut, or negatively affected in any way by a changeover of departmental responsibility for HE and FE.

Governance in Further and Higher Education (2020)

Conference notes:

The publication of the recent review into education institution governance in Scotland, and the opportunities that has provided for making education in Scotland more democratic, with more opportunities and representation for students.

Conference also notes:

The anomalies and problems arising in Higher & Further Education governance in Northern Ireland – particularly the Education Order (Northern Ireland) 1996, which omits all the legal protections offered to students' unions provided in the Education Act 1994 in England & Wales.

Conference further notes:

The serious repercussions this is having at some institutions, and how this could disadvantage other students' unions in the future.

Conference resolves:

To call for a full review of Further & Higher Education Governance in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Stop the War Coalition (2018)

Conference notes:

The invasion of Iraq by superpowers has marked its 5th anniversary and has claimed the lives of over 1 million people.

Conference believes:

That tackling social injustices should be the duty of those organisations that have the support and numbers to do so.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI should support the Stop the War Coalition and support the campaign to get troops out of Iraq.

International Students Involvement (2018)

Conference notes:

A large amount of students travel from different countries to study in Northern Ireland

Conference believes:

These students find it hard to integrate into life in Northern Ireland, particularly at weekends.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI commits more resources into helping the integration of International students into life in Northern Ireland, particularly at the weekends.

International students (2018)

Conference notes with concern:

1. That international students contribute immensely culturally, academically and economically to our institutions and local communities.
2. Recent developments that have made it harder for international students to come to study in Northern Ireland and places even greater restrictions on those who do come.

3. That international students face incredible barriers because of the immigration rules. This includes bureaucratic visa procedures, new credibility interviews, police registration requirements.
4. That the Government has cracked down on international students because they are in the net migration target.
5. That international students are particularly vulnerable because they do not have access to sufficient support networks and have to navigate an unfamiliar country and culture.

Conference believes:

1. That institutions need to provide greater support to international students and stop unfair practices such as increasing fees mid-course.
2. All institutions should provide a fixed fee guarantee for international students.
3. That international students should be removed from the Government's net migration target.
4. That the Government's approach and rhetoric on immigration has been xenophobia and pandering to a far-right sentiment. This will have a profound effect on public perception towards international students.
5. That immigration restrictions are harming the UK's education sector.

Conference mandates:

1. To work with the International Students Campaign and the NUS International Students Officer on campaigning for international students.
2. To seek what pressure can be put on the Home Office through the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Living in a Multicultural NI (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Northern Ireland is no longer just Protestant and Catholic, we live in a multicultural society and NI is not now only part of the UK, it stands alone on the world stage.

Conference welcomes:

1. The continuing diversification of the student population through the growth of groups such as international, mature and disabled students entering both FE and HE institutions.

Conference recognises:

1. The work being done on student diversity issues by the Liberation Campaign, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Equality Challenge Unit and that a more diverse student population enriched and adds value to the education experience of all students.

Conference resolves:

1. To work with member unions and outside agencies to promote a calendar of events throughout the academic year to increase awareness and inclusion for everyone within Northern Ireland.

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.

Trips to Israel (2020)

Conference notes:

That each year the Union of Jewish students invite student leaders on free trips to Israel in order to campaign against and stifle Palestine solidarity activism within the student movement.

That the Union of Jewish Students has active policy, 'to oppose BDS in all its forms'¹³, which smears the BDS movement and is antithetical to the policies held by both NUS-USI and NUS in support of BDS.

That at the end of January 2017 the current NUS-USI president participated in one of these UJS trips to Israel with the Union of Jewish Students and that it is alleged they visited an illegal Israeli settlement¹⁴

That during the 2016-17 period, NUS-USI has a live policy 'Justice and human rights for Palestine (2017)', which resolves to adopt, implement and adhere to the non-violent and Palestinian-led Boycott Divestment and Sanctions campaign.

Conference believes:

That offers of fully-paid trips to Israel by organisations that advocate against furthering Palestinian human rights, liberation and justice are made specifically to student leaders because of their roles as elected representatives within the student movement in order to influence policy, undermine Palestine solidarity and promote positions that contribute to shutting down much needed Palestine solidarity activities.

That by accepting a fully-paid trip to Israel, in the context of it being with an organisation that specifically advocates for Israel, elected student officers violate the very clear guidance from the BDS movement¹⁵ and the policy on file which supports BDS.

That for any clarifications and interpretations of the BDS policy on file, student officers within NUS-USI should engage directly with the BDS movement and also consult with the wider membership.

That visiting Israel-Palestine in order to learn more about the conflict is not an issue or violation of BDS; but rather the agenda underpinning free trips that are offered to students and student leaders by organisations is and thus must be carefully considered after consultation with relevant stakeholders.

That NUS-USI should encourage solidarity visits to Occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) and Israel as long as such trips ensure non-participation in activities sponsored or supported -- directly or indirectly -- by the Israeli government or any of its agencies or organisations seeking to stifle Palestine solidarity.

That trips to Israel-Palestine should, ideally, occur under the auspices of ethical organisations that do not seek to undermine Palestine solidarity and which promote genuine approaches to human rights, social justice and an end to violent conflict.

That a boycott of Israel, as defined by the BDS call and guidelines, is explicit in terms of Israel's entire oppressive regime, including all of the Israeli companies and institutions that are involved in violations of international law, and is a reasonable non-violent activity that can be taken to register opposition to such crimes.

¹³ https://www.ujs.org.uk/pageassets/conference/motions-2016-4_12.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/nus-settlement-story-1306623668>

¹⁵ <https://bdsmovement.net/call>

That the Palestinian-led BDS campaign does not target anyone or anything based on identity, religious background, ethnicity or race; but is actually based solely on actions, political views and complicity in denying Palestinian rights.

That BDS is a strategy for effective solidarity, not a dogma or ideology and certainly not an attack or threat upon Jewish communities or individuals and absolutely doesn't require student officers to boycott communal Jewish organisations or the Union of Jewish Students in its entirety - only its Israel advocacy activities.

That it remains unclear where the Union of Jewish Students and other organisations receive their funding in order to carry forward Israel advocacy activities and trips to Israel.

That the UJS and other organisations should reveal all their funding sources publicly for transparency and accountability reasons.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI elected officers should not accept fully-paid trips to Israel offered by organisations that are advocating against furthering Palestinian human rights, liberation and justice.

That should those bound by NUS-USI policy mandate wish to travel to Israel and Palestine then due consideration and diligence must be taken, including consultation with the BDS movement and the NUS-USI membership.

That visits to illegal Israeli settlements on any kind of trip to Israel and Palestine cannot be perceived as an act in the best interests of the student membership, especially Palestinian students in Northern Ireland and trips to illegal settlements are not acceptable.

To condemn student executive officers accepting paid trips to Israel provided by organisations that actively advocate against furthering Palestinian human rights, liberation and justice.

That NUS-USI commends the work of the Union of Jewish students and shall continue working with the Union of Jewish Students in areas unrelated to Israel-Palestine and that elected officers should aim to draw a clear distinction of non-participation where the Israel advocacy policies of UJS are concerned.

Anti-Semitism (2020)

Conference notes:

That 'anti-Semitic attacks are on the rise in Britain', with incidents such as brick attacks on synagogues, anti-Jewish graffiti and even bomb threats occurring in recent years.¹

The Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 924 anti-Semitic incidents across the United Kingdom during 2015.²

Northern Ireland's only Rabbi, David Singer, told BBC Radio Ulster's Sunday Sequence on Sunday 2nd October 2016 that he has received suspicious e-mails and came across anti-Jewish graffiti in the centre of Belfast.³

The national student movement has been rocked by allegations of anti-Semitism and the concerns of Jewish students have been repeatedly downplayed by some of those in leadership positions.⁴

NUS motion 404 'Anti-Semitism on campus' resolved to lobby Students' Unions in order to encourage them to have clearer policies on responding to anti-Semitic incidents and situations in which Jewish students feel threatened.⁵

April Rosenblum, in her 2007 pamphlet 'the past didn't go anywhere: making resistance to anti-Semitism part of all our movements', expands in great detail on the nuances surrounding modern day anti-Jewish oppression and why it is absolutely vital to integrate a radical analysis of, and opposition to, all manifestations of anti-Jewish hatred and oppression into the work we already carry forward.⁶

Conference believes:

Regardless of whether an anti-Semitism problem exists or not on our own campuses it would still be advisable to hold a policy that addresses anti-Semitism on campus, provides a workable definition of anti-Semitism and gives guidance on what steps can be taken to combat this particularly odious form of hatred.

All forms of racism and oppression are abhorrent and should be uncompromisingly opposed with as much effort and energy as can be mustered.

Anti-Semitism is a specific form of racism, relating to Jews and Judaism.

Anti-Jewish oppression is the system of ideas passed down through a society's institutions to enable scapegoating of Jews, and the ideological or physical targeting of Jews that results from that.

The definition of anti-Semitism has been debated and disputed as a result of political influences relating to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

A workable definition of anti-Semitism can be found provided by noted scholar Brian Klug who has defined anti-Semitism as a '*form of hostility towards Jews as Jews, in which a Jew is perceived as something other than what they are*'.⁷

Anti-oppression ethics, coupled with a thorough understanding that multiple oppressions can manifest at one time and are often complex and multi-layered, is crucially important in our efforts to acknowledge anti-Semitism as still being a major problem in society today.

That anti-Semitism includes, but is not limited to:

- (i) Questioning the loyalty of Jews to their state of citizenship simply on the basis of their Jewish identity, which includes claims that Jews as a collective or a community engage in efforts to subvert or mislead the general population, as well as the claim that Jews are more loyal to the state of Israel than their country of citizenship, is an anti-Semitic position to hold;
- (ii) Claiming or making any effort to create a reality in which Jews do not have the same rights as any other religious, cultural or ethnic group, including the right to free speech, free practice of religion, free use of native languages (i.e. Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, etc.) and self-determination;

- (iii) Denying, trivializing and misconstruing the Nazi Holocaust. This includes denying the fact, scope, method, or motivation for the genocide of six million Jews at the hands of the National Socialist regime. It also includes the accusation that Jews or the state of Israel have fabricated, cause or over-exaggerated the Holocaust;
- (iv) Calling for, aiding or justifying the killing or harming of Jews for the sake of their Jewish religion, ethnicity or identity;
- (v) Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as Jews or for being Jewish. This includes accusations of Jewish control of the world, of our political structures and government, the media, as well as blaming Jews collectively for imagined and real atrocities;
- (vi) 'Equating Jews or maliciously equating Jewish organisations and the polity of the state of Israel with the Nazi Regime. This includes, but is not limited to equating Zionism with Nazism and claiming that 'History is repeating itself' with regards to the Nazi Holocaust and the state of Israel. This also includes using Jewish symbols and religious imagery alongside Nazi symbols and imagery. However, this does NOT necessarily include reasonable analogies between historical events';
- (vii) Using Jewish symbols to antagonize, harass, and intimidate Jewish students.
- (viii) Assuming that because a person is Jewish that they will automatically hold particular political views and positions regarding Zionism and Israel;
- (ix) Demanding a Jewish person or group of Jews collectively to present an opinion or position on the Israel-Palestine conflict and where those demands are often aggressive, intimidating and harassing;
- (x) Labelling Jews that hold differing political positions on Zionism and Israel as 'kapos', 'self-hating Jews' or 'traitors';
- (xi) Deliberately using terms 'Zio' and 'Zionist' as pejorative terms of abuse in order to isolate and attack Jewish students and members of Jewish communities.

Criticism of the Israeli government, its policies and actions are not inherently anti-Semitic and neither is reasoned criticism of Zionism and its impact in Palestine and upon the Palestinian people.

Conference resolves:

NUSUSI is mandated to publicly oppose actions on campus that are anti-Semitic based on the aforementioned definitions.

NUSUSI be mandated to publish a bi-annual report detailing all incidents of racism, including anti-Semitic incidents and instances of anti-Jewish oppression.

NUSUSI executive should communicate and engage with the Jewish Community in Northern Ireland - particularly the Rabbi and the Belfast Synagogue in order to discuss issues affecting them and also Jewish students in Northern Ireland.

NUSUSI is mandated to work with relevant educational institutions in order to address racism and anti-Semitism on campus and methods to alleviate it.

The work of organisations such as Jewdas⁸, NUS, Jewdents⁹, Community Security Trust (CST) and the Union of Jewish Students is to be consulted when developing work against anti-Semitism so as to ensure resources are provided to help Students to understand the nuances and fully comprehend these policies.

The pamphlet of April Rosenblum¹⁰ is viewed as a key resource and must be made available

(once permissions have been sought and granted) for students and relevant parties to access on the NUSUSI Website, under a section specifically designed to tackle all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, in order that the NUSUSI might better promote and enhance legitimate debate regarding the morality, problems and human rights issues surrounding international conflicts whilst also remaining resolutely committed to opposing the manifestation of illegitimate and illegal acts of anti-Jewish oppression on campus.

¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/israelgaza-conflict-rise-of-antisemitic-attacks-in-uk-as-crisis-rages-in-the-middle-east-9631174.html>

² <https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2016/02/04/cst-antisemitic-incidents-report-2015-published-today>

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-37533746>

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-37489745>

⁵ https://nusdigital.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/24818/Welfare_Live_Policy_201417.pdf

⁶ <http://www.buildingequality.us/prejudice/antisemitism/rosenblum/the-past.pdf>

⁷ See Brian Klug, 'The collective Jew: Israel and the new Anti-Semitism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2003, 117-138.

⁸ <http://jewdas.org/how-to-criticise-israel-without-being-anti-semitic/>

⁹ <https://facebook.com/jewdents/>

¹⁰ <http://www.buildingequality.us/prejudice/antisemitism/rosenblum/the-past.pdf>

Justice and human rights for Palestine (2020)

Conference notes:

1. That the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the State of Israel and occupied Golan Heights is progressively worsening in terms of equality, justice, human rights and sustainable peace for all.
2. The discussion surrounding the Israel - Palestine conflict is often polarized, with the radical viewpoints espoused usually given precedence, resulting unhelpful propaganda battles being fought which moves focus away from human rights and political focussed progressive debate.

Conference believes:

1. Israel is currently occupying Palestinian territory in the West Bank and Gaza strip.
2. That Israel is in breach of International law in respect to its obligations as an occupying power which are stipulated within the 1907 Hague Regulations (arts 42-56) and the Fourth Geneva Convention (GC IV, art. 27-34 and 47-78), as well as in certain provisions of Additional Protocol I and customary international humanitarian law.
3. Israel is using an oppressive regime which fits the legal definition of Apartheid as stipulated within the 2002 Rome statutes and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid
4. Israel follows a policy of home demolitions and forced relocations to effectively control the demographics of those deemed undersirable by the state.

5. Israel does not allow Palestinian refugees or their descendents to return to the territory from which they were expelled in 1948 by Israeli forces both before and after the existence of the Israeli State.
6. The refusal to accept responsibility, or permit a viable solution to the refugee crisis which Israel itself created, is an obstacle to a just peace in the region.
7. A diverse range of Palestinian and Israeli organisations have called for a policy of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel pertaining to goods, services, economic ties and any other activities which assist the Israeli government in the continued oppression and occupation of Palestine.
8. The National Union of Students - Union of Students Ireland has so far held no policy in support of the growing movement to support Palestinian & Israeli human rights.
9. That there is no excuse or justification for the abuse of human rights and international law.
10. Terrorism, in all its forms, must be fully condemned and organizations which are defined as terrorist do not hold the principles or interests of the basic rights of Palestinian and Israeli people as a priority and cannot be said to represent the population of the region as a collective whole.
11. Palestinians have a right under international law to resist occupation and to democratically determine their own future.
12. Settlements built by Israel or Israeli citizens within the Occupied Palestinian territories are illegal as stipulated within the 4th Geneva Convention and other relevant international law.

Conference resolves:

1. That support should be given to individual students and student groups within Northern Ireland that work in a progressive, human rights based manner to ending the Occupation of Palestinian territories deemed occupied by the International community in 1967
2. Where "support" is to be taken as meaning: The facilitation of events, speakers, positive engagement, debates, nonviolent direct action that is within the law and support for student members of NUS-USI within Israel - Palestine itself.
3. To demand freedom for Palestine, calling for an end to the military occupation of the Palestinian territories and the right to return for refugees who chose to exercise that right.
4. That a progressive adoption of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions campaign should be implemented and promoted with a focus on the educational aspects so as to Boycott goods made in Israel's illegal settlements and divest from any company which is complicit in the abuse of Palestinian human rights and the occupation of Palestinian territories.
5. To implement the BDS campaign using a progressive approach that utilizes an assessed look at companies and products to determine if they fit the Palestinian call

to BDS.

6. To use the much needed educational approach that sends a clear message as to why there is a BDS campaign along with what it is and is NOT about.
7. That we must support Israeli and Palestinian Human Rights NGO's such as that of B'tselem. Organisations such as these are typically demonised and attacked by the Israeli government in an undemocratic way.
8. Strongly condemn Israel's activities and policies which allow for continued human rights abuses and the perpetuation of a conflict based status quo that allows for such things as home demolitions, evictions and the brutal use of military power to put down nonviolent demonstrations for civil and human rights.
9. To support the Palestinians right to education by building links with Institutions of Education such as Bethlehem University and other such educational Institutions.

Internationalisation of Students in Northern Ireland (2020)

Conference notes:

There are an increasing number of international students coming to study at FE and HE level in Northern Ireland.

Conference further notes:

There is a lack of integration between international and local students.

Conference believes:

Internationalisation of students within Northern Ireland will not only be beneficial to the international student experience but also help submerge our home students in a more diverse range of cultures and experiences.

Conference resolves:

For NUS-USI to promote and raise awareness of the benefits of internationalisation within our institutions and community.

Internationalism and Europe (2020)

Conference notes:

1. When students come from abroad to study within the UK from outside the EU, they are expected to pay huge fees in order to study.
2. These fees are extremely high when talking in terms of British pounds and even higher when these figures are converted into most currencies.
3. International students who do not have access to loans have difficulty paying these fees. Along with living expenses this puts a huge burden on these students.

Conference believes:

These financial burdens stop people from abroad coming into the UK to study.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI to put pressure on government to review this.

NUS-USI REGION

NUS-USI Communication Strategy (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Students' Unions on the ground need to be adequately informed and kept up to date with the work of NUS-USI.
2. Communication between NUS-USI and member unions is a two way process and requires commitment from all.
3. Not all member unions can attend all meetings on Regional Council to receive communications for NUS-USI.

Conference believes:

1. By improving communications between NUS-USI and member unions will encourage better support and co-operation for national issues and campaigns.
2. There are countless ways of communicating and we should make best and appropriate use of all methods.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI develops a communication strategy together with member unions to strengthen links and the fluidity of information sharing between all.

Regional Conference (2018)

Conference notes:

The lack of Regional Council meetings that have taken place throughout the past year.

Conference believes:

The lack of Regional Council meetings limits discussion and debate between the organisation and member unions, as well as weakening accountability.

Conference resolves:

This conference mandates the President to ensure such meetings take place regularly and will be held on dates, agreed in advance, by member unions.

NUS-USI Website (2018)

Conference notes:

The lack of regular updates provided by the NUS-USI website in recent years.

Conference believes:

This has drastically limited the organisation's communication with its membership on various student issues, policy decisions and also with regard to promoting events.

Conference resolves:

The organisation will ensure the NUS-USI website is updated regularly so as to provide updates on policy, actions as well as events planned by the organisation.

Online Officer Reports (2018)

Conference notes:

Accountability of the NUS-USI Regional Executive is vital to the legitimacy of the National Union.

Conference believes:

Reports from each Regional Executive member should be available to all student members.

Conference resolves:

That the organisation shall regularly upload the reports of Regional Executive members on to the organisation's website for all member to view.

NUS-USI Constitution Corrections (2018)

Conference notes

1. The NUS-USI Constitution has become larger over the years.
2. That there are some errors in the NUS-USI Constitution.
3. That this is natural due to constitutional amendments from the NUS-USI membership

Conference mandates:

1. That the NUS-USI constitution should be reviewed in the next year in consultation with our membership to make it simpler and more accessible.

A fight against the Belfast centralisation (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That NUS-USI represents the interests over 200,000 students in Northern Ireland. NUS-USI represents students from all over Northern Ireland, to colleges as far Enniskillen and Strabane. For these students and other students within FE colleges transport to Belfast can be difficult and usually unfunded by their college. Unlike FE, HE union members are paid and this allows for them to travel. Not only is this travel unfunded, these meetings are usually held in the evening, making traveling home difficult for some as public transport services to rural areas only run until certain times. In most cases, conference calls are unable to be set up.

Conference believes:

1. That it is unfair for these students who do not have their transport reimbursed to travel long distances for meetings. This cost is putting FE unions off attending meetings and leaves that these meetings are dominated by Belfast Unions which are mostly HE unions. This means that NUS-USI is not hearing the problems these FE colleges face and their students are virtually ignored.

Conference resolves:

1. That REC meetings should at least at one point in the year be in a location that is not Belfast central but which travel to is efficient. Meetings should also at least at one point be held on a day which is not during the working week as travel home (usually after six o'clock) from these meetings is difficult, as is getting out of class to attend them.

Regional Executive Plan Of Work (2018)

This conference notes:

1. That this year the Regional Executive operated under a Plan Of Work passed at the first Regional Council.
2. That for the first time, the Northern Ireland President and PT officers have a clear agenda to work for and goals to achieve throughout the year.
3. That it is most welcome and more professional for the workload to be decided at the outset of the term of office of the Regional Executive.

This conference resolves:

1. That the Plan of Work should be presented at the first Regional Induction and training events of the year for discussion.
2. That the Plan should be put to the first Regional Council of the year for ratification.

This conference mandates:

Every Northern Ireland President (or whatever the title may be) to consult with other members of the Regional Executive immediately into their term of office on the preparation of a detailed Plan Of Work. Such a plan is to be presented to the first regional council of the year.

NUS-USI Region (2018)

Regional Executive positions

Conference notes:

The hard work that is undertaken by part-time members of the Regional Executive Committee in assisting the President in fulfilling their role and ensuring co-ordination between the member unions.

Conference further notes:

That officer positions have been created on an ad hoc basis and that there are now ten part-time officers in addition to the President.

Conference recognises:

That the positions on the Regional Executive were not examined as part of the recent Governance Review.

Conference therefore resolves:

To establish a sub-committee of Regional Council to be made up of two members nominated by each member union, which shall review the current positions, examine any gaps or overlaps that exist and report back its findings.

Regional Council (2018)

Conference notes:

That all Higher Education and Further Education members are not adequately represented at NUS-USI Regional Council, this is in according with attendance monitoring, and not to the fault of efforts of NUS-USI. Also Council has shown that it is not willing to travel across all member institutions in order to encourage this participation of members.

Conference believes:

That through the academic year Regional Council should adopt the same policy as USI National Council in that Regional Council should move more freely across its jurisdiction and quorum cannot be made without representation of all members.

Conferences notes:

1. That NUS-USI should hold Regional Council in all regions across its jurisdiction to encourage participation and that quorum can only be made if all members are present.
2. It was agreed that the words 'and quorum cannot be made without representation of all members' be removed to read: -

Conference believes:

1. That through the academic year Regional Council should adopt the same policy as USI National Council in that Regional Council should move more freely across its jurisdiction.

Conferences notes:

That NUS-USI should hold Regional Council in all regions across its jurisdiction to encourage participation.

Communication with member unions (2018)

Conference recognises:

That there is currently a lack of information and contact from the Regional Executive Committee relating to the operation of NUS-USI.

Conference believes:

That communication is essential for a strong regional voice to emerge and to ensure that issues are highlighted as they arise.

Conference mandates:

The President to hold a monthly meeting with the Presidents of each member union.

Class reps (2018)

Conference notes:

That the quality and effectiveness of student representation varies from institution to institution, as well as inside each institution.

Conference believes:

That there is a need for additional resources to be provided to member unions in building strong representation structures.

Conference hereby mandates:

The Regional Executive to develop the materials already created by the NUS and the AMSU to improve the quality of class representation in Northern Ireland.

Constitutional Review Group (2018)

Conference notes:

1. The constitutional review group which met in 2005 made a number of welcome changes to tidy up the constitution.
2. Since then, there have been many constitutional amendments and external changes (changes in FE colleges), etc.
3. The constitution is now very long and outdated to the current needs of the organisation.

Conference believes:

1. The constitution needs to be updated for the organisation.
2. Students' unions and NUS-USI regional executive committee, should agree the new constitution, advised by the steering committee and, if possible, national student representatives, working together to update the constitution.
3. All issues, especially the make-up of the executive committee, votes, the organisation of regional council, should be discussed.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI regional council to establish a constitutional working group for 2015/2016 to meet roughly once a month with mandate of recommending a new constitution to trilateral and then NUS-USI conference 2016.

Conference mandates:

1. The NUS-USI executive to nominate at least two representatives to the committee and to work with NUS-USI steering committee to set up the sub group to update the constitution.
2. Steering committee to ensure sub group should be made up of the NUS-USI executive, student union officers and steering, with administration support from NUS-USI.
3. Steering should nominate a member to chair the meetings and ensure it meets the timetable, but also is a comprehensive review of the constitution, bringing into line with other equivalent modern constitutions.

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.

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.

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.

NUS-USI 2nd 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 2nd 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 2nd NEC Position should produce a report detailing their work to NUS-USI Regional Council.

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 the 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 officer 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.

'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.

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.

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 of peacefully.

Conference believes:

That these resources could be much better spent by holding some other form of even 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.

Implications of Brexit for the student movement (2020)

Conference notes:

1. That on June 23rd 2016 a UK-wide referendum on membership of the European Union was held.
2. The UK turnout was 72.2% and delivered a 51.9% *leave* result, with 48.1% voting to *remain*.
3. Regionally, the turnout here was 62.7% with 56% voting to *remain* and 44% voting to *leave*.
4. Scotland, Gibraltar and the London region also voted by majorities to *remain* whilst the remainder of England and Wales voted to *leave*.

Conference believes:

1. Clearly, the various regions of the UK have a different view in regards to their future relationship with the European Union.
2. NUS-USI should prioritise working to eliminate or at least mitigate the potential negative implications that leaving the European Union will have for students, for higher and further education and for Northern Ireland generally.
3. Some of the specific areas of concern relate to:
 - (i) Human Rights & Equality under the Good Friday Agreement
 - (ii) Continued access to EU funding

- (iii) Freedom of movement for students and academics across Europe and continued access to the Erasmus/Erasmus+ programme
- (iv) Retention of the Common Travel Area and the freedom of movement across the Island of Ireland
- (v) The 'right to remain' for EU nationals living in Northern Ireland and throughout the UK.
- (vi) Workers' rights, and the implications any lessening of those rights could have for students and apprentices.

Conference resolves:

1. For the NUS-USI President and Regional Executive Committee to make use of all possible networks, within NUS UK, USI and the European Students' Union to elevate the specific and unique circumstances that Northern Ireland now finds itself in regards to the areas outlined in *Conference Believes 3. (i) – (vi)*.

Special status for Northern Ireland in Brexit negotiations (2020)

Conference believes:

1. The majority of the population in Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU in the referendum.
2. It is clear that we will be at the bottom of the list in the negotiations for the British exit of the EU.
3. Northern Ireland will lose £2.5 billion in funding for cross-community programs that help keep young people away from paramilitaries.
4. It could lead to a 'hard border' with the Republic, which will lead to further degeneration of relations between the unionist and nationalist communities.

Conference further believes:

1. The economy of Northern Ireland will be severely affected if not given any representation in the Brexit negotiations.
2. Funding for all institutions, including HE and FE, will be in jeopardy.

Conference resolves:

1. Campaign for better representation of the interests of the students and people of Northern Ireland in negotiations.
2. Provide information to students on the possible effects, both positive and negative of Brexit.
3. To provide students with information involved with a border poll should one be called.

SPORT, CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Students Participation in Sporting Activities (2018)

Conference notes:

That in many cases students who may have been previously physically active can fall into a rut of inactivity once they attend University. Not only does this result in the depreciation of their physical health but also affects their mental well being.

Conference believes:

That institutions should invest money in order to provide appropriate on campus facilities for students to take part in sport at a recreational level. Failing these institutions should work with local Sports Centres/ complexes to provide students with easy access to facilities at a subsidised rate.

Conference further believes:

That this will have a positive effect on the general well being of students.

Conference therefore mandates:

NUS-USI to work alongside appropriate sporting bodies with in institutions to provide campaigns in order to increase the level of student participation in sporting activities, pushing the idea that a healthy body = a healthy mind.

Union Support for Clubs and Societies (2018)

Conference recognises:

Clubs and societies may sometimes be disengaged from the Students' Union.

Conference believes:

We need to develop and engage with unions to support clubs and societies and develop their role within the Students' Union.

Conference resolves:

To role out the NUSUK Activists Academy model on a local level within the unions to help develop their clubs and societies.

Student Volunteers (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That thousands of students across Northern Ireland engage in voluntary activities whilst they study.
2. That this activity demonstrates how students value their local communities and actively contribute them.

Conference believes:

1. That volunteering, in students' unions, in clubs or societies, or with local or national charities provides experiences for students to develop both personally and professionally.
2. That education should be about more than just formal learning in a classroom setting and that there is significant value to both individual students and society as a whole in students engaging in activities beyond their studies.

Conference resolves:

1. The NUS-USI president & Exec to ensure that SUs are provided with info in order to encourage their volunteers to avail of accreditation schemes.
2. The NUS-USI President & Executive to engage with organisations such as Volunteer Now to ensure that student volunteers in Northern Ireland are valued and recognised for their contributions as active citizens in society.

Recreational Sporting Activities (2020)

Conference notes:

Student sport is an integral part of student life for many of our members.

Conference further notes:

Sport has many benefits for students for both personal development and physical wellbeing.

Conference believes:

By increasing recreational sport within member institutions we can not only get more students involved in our unions but also promote a healthy lifestyle amongst students.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI should develop a campaign to promote student sport focusing on recreation, social and health benefits to students

Sport (2020)

Conference notes:

Due to the pressure of finding time for all lessons there is not much time available in many colleges when all students are free to participate in clubs and societies.

Conference believes:

That a time on the timetable should be made when all students are free.

Conference further believes:

1. That this free time can also be used for Tutorials, Student Union and Class Reps Meetings.
2. That if the same time, such as Wednesday afternoons, was made free throughout colleges this would allow colleges to compete with each other.

3. This would improve students' lives at FE colleges.
4. This would provide equality for all students as they would all have access to participating in all clubs and societies.
5. This would also provide many health and social benefits.
6. This would also help in developing the students' union clubs and societies.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI puts pressure on DEL to enforce that every college has a time slot on Wednesday afternoons when all students are available to participate in clubs and societies.

TRAINING AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Structuring Training (2018)

Conference notes:

The training provided to student representatives provided and facilitated by NUS-USI.

Conference believes:

With the sabbatical positions usually being filled by a new person annually, there is a lack of structure for the representatives training.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI to form a structured training regime in advance, that may be adapted for each students' union and for this to be confirmed by the elected representatives of each union.

Student Opportunities (2018)

Conference notes:

One of NUS-USI's main focuses is student development.

Conference believes:

NUS-USI should help student development by providing and supporting Unions to provide more student opportunities.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI investigates the feasibility of running short work-placements for students, or actively supports member unions in doing so.

Progressing from FE into HE (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Many students in NI study HNDs or equivalent level 5 qualifications
2. Students are able to progress from FE into HE by gaining direct entry to level 2 in University
3. This is becoming a popular pathway for students in NI

Conference believes:

1. That many students who progress onto HE often struggle with the transition into HE, as well as their finances and pastoral support.
2. That because students have bypassed year 1, they can struggle to access many HE support mechanisms.
3. Anecdotally, there have been instances where NI students have had to withdraw as they realise they were not equipped with the right skills to complete their course. This has happened to NI students most recently in Scotland and they were told that their HND did not match that of an HND in Scotland and were left with the only option to withdraw, even though the university should never have given them an offer in the first place, leaving the

students in debt.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI to investigate if there is disparity between the quality of HND qualifications between NI and GB and also to investigate the retention rates of direct entry students.
2. To encourage student unions to ensure direct entry students are fully aware of the support to them at their new institution
3. Ensure direct entry students are not disadvantaged by progressing their studies academically or financially

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.

Course Reps (2020)

Conference notes:

That student reps are an invaluable group amongst the student body. Conference also notes that Student's Unions have limited resources to support these students.

Conference believes:

That student reps are at the heart of our institutions. Conference also believes that there is a need for additional resources and support to improve how effectively we represent our students.

Conference hereby mandates:

The Regional Executive to lobby, and support our Student's Unions when they lobby, both their institutions and government for more funding to support student reps.

Street Reps and Community Funding (2020)

Conference notes:

The inception of the Street Reps Scheme at Queen's Students' Union, which connects students more closely with their local neighbourhoods and improves community relations.

Conference also notes:

The wide range of funding that is available for community groups and community initiatives from various agencies.

Conference resolves to:

Work to expand the Street Reps scheme to other institutions and to use NUS-USI's influence to push for funding to improve the initiative.

WELFARE AND HEALTH

Abortion Rights and Supporting the Pro Choice Movement (2018)

Conferences notes:

1. Last year NUS-USI took an historical step forward in the fight for women's body autonomy by adopting a formal pro-choice policy.
2. Shortly after this in 2012 the first ever private Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Service clinic, Marie Stopes International opened on this island in Belfast.
3. In March 2013 an unsuccessful amendment to the Justice Bill was tabled by the DUP and SDLP jointly, seeking to outlaw the private provision of such Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Services.

4. A Petition of Concern was proposed in relation to this amendment which was spearheaded by Sinn Fein MLA for South Down, Caitriona Ruane.
5. Northern Ireland's Department of Health has taken 11 years to publish guidance on the legal framework for abortions in Northern Ireland; the new guidelines remain unclear and will require women seeking a medical termination to acquire two doctors' signatures in order to access safe abortions
6. The NUS-USI Women's Campaign, NUS-USI Women's Officer and USI Equality and Citizenship Officer have worked and are continuing to work extensively on this issue.
7. Several students' unions across the UK have taken their pro-choice policy a step further by directly affiliating to Abortion Rights, the largest national pro-choice campaign in the UK.

Conference further notes:

1. Abortion Rights works to defend (and extend) the 1967 Abortion Act, and protect access to safe and legal abortion services.
2. The Family Planning Association has estimated that 40 women a week travel from Northern Ireland to England to access safe and legal abortions, often costing up to £1800 for the procedure. This is an unacceptable situation for women to be in.
3. Abortion Rights receive no government or church funding and rely almost entirely on donations and fundraisers.
4. That women's rights to accessing safe and legal abortions are under heightened attack by many politicians in Northern Ireland, and we must stem this tide.
5. The National Union of Students and the Trade Union Congress are two of many official affiliates/supporters of Abortion Rights.

Conference resolves:

1. For NUS-USI to continue supporting UK and Irish campaigns for full, safe access to abortion services.
2. For NUS-USI to continue to show solidarity with the Marie Stopes International Clinic, by supporting their cause to remain in operation in Northern Ireland.
3. For the NUS-USI REC to condemn the Health Minister in the failure to timely deliver clear and acceptable guidelines for the legal and safe access to abortions in Northern Ireland.
4. For the NUS-USI leadership to publically congratulate those elected politicians in Northern Ireland who supported the Petition of Concern in this instance and support the right of a woman's life to be saved when at risk, through safe and legal medical abortions.

Off-Campus Conduct Regulations (2018)

Conference notes:

1. The important role that our further and higher education institutions, and the student movement, play within the local community.
2. Those who commit criminal acts or are involved in anti-social behaviour should be dealt with by the appropriate statutory body and reprimanded in accordance with the rule of law.
3. For example, that the Conduct Regulations of Queen's University Belfast can impose draconian penalties on students that often far exceed the action taken by external agencies such as the Police, or the City Conference, for the same, or a similar, offence.

Conference believes:

That NUS-USI should play a constructive role in working with the Further and Higher Education institutions, local residents, and the statutory authorities to ensure that Northern Ireland is a safe and peaceful place to live, work and study.

Conference further believes:

Student activity that has taken place outside of an institution's property should not be subject to the relevant institution's conduct regulations, unless the students in question have been representing the applicable institution in an official capacity.

Conference resolves:

To mandate the NUS-USI President, and the organisation, to work with local unions to assist them in any campaigning activity relating to their institutions conduct regulations.

Housing standards in private rented accommodation (2018)**Conference believes:**

1. There is limited understanding of how housing can impact on students' health, wellbeing and academic achievement.
2. Students are often targeted by commercial companies seeking to make profit without regard to student welfare or property standards.
3. Governments across the UK have taken steps to improve standards in the private rented sector. Scotland has introduced compulsory landlord registration schemes and eliminated unfair fees and charges by letting agents, and the Welsh government has recently consulted on a mandatory register and code of conduct for both landlords and letting agents.
4. Tenancy deposit schemes in Northern Ireland are only a first step in ensuring students are not exploited by rogue landlords in the Private Rented Sector.

Conference further believes:

1. All students have a right to safe, warm, good quality housing which provides a strong

foundation for their studies.

2. Accreditation can play an important role in driving up standards as well as informing and influencing student choice.
3. Letting agents are currently a largely unregulated sector in much of the UK and this has a detrimental impact on housing standards.
4. Benefit cuts combined with the shortfall in social housing supply leave young people, disabled students and those with caring responsibilities increasingly vulnerable in the housing market.
5. Changes to education funding and rapidly increasing living costs mean that many students feel forced to live at home due to inability to access a decent standard of housing elsewhere.

Conference resolves:

1. To examine issues students face in relation to quality of accommodation, and particularly how this impacts on health, academic attainment and social inclusion.
2. To fund and introduce a yearly student housing survey focussed on housing conditions, service provided by estate agents and landlords, hidden tenancy costs, rogue landlords, time taken to deal with repairs and whether outside organisations had to become involved.
3. To develop a UK wide, robust evidence base on students' experience of housing, either by undertaking research or by working with other bodies in the housing sector.
4. To support students' unions in ensuring students are well-informed and empowered to make good housing choices and encouraged not to rush into renting.
5. To ensure that housing research is inclusive of FE students and their living situations.
6. To work with the NI Private Tenants Forum in their campaign to increase standards in the sector.
7. To liaise with the Housing Rights Service, the Landlords Association of Northern Ireland, Unipol and the Accreditation Network UK to develop a student housing accreditation scheme.
8. To lobby the NI Assembly to commit more resource to local accreditation schemes.
9. To work with other organisations to lobby government to regulate letting agents so that they are less able to exploit student tenants and provide substandard properties.
10. To lobby the government to increase provision of affordable, good quality housing.
11. To lobby the Universities to increase the provision of halls of residence.
12. To investigate the viability of more innovative types of housing provision, such as co-operative models, as potential solutions to student housing problems.

Fuel Poverty (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Research has suggested that many students live in fuel poverty, but are often not visible in research statistics and are therefore overlooked by policy-makers.
2. The majority of students are unable to access benefits, including winter fuel payments and the social fund.
3. Buying groups have been recommended by the Consumer Council NI.
4. Buying groups set up by various Councils in NI are not student friendly.

Conference resolves:

1. To develop an understanding of the scale of the problem of fuel poverty among students.
2. To lobby for students to be included in work undertaken to alleviate fuel poverty.
3. To develop a partnership with Boilerjuice, or a similar company, to enable students to manage fuel payments more effectively whilst driving down prices.

Rented Accommodation (2018)**Conference notes:**

There are many students living in rented accommodation which is of risk to their health.

Conference believes:

Annual Checks should be carried out on rented property and halls of residence to ensure they are up to standard in line with current legislation.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI to lobby local government to have such legislation implemented.

Suicide amongst students (2018)**Conference notes:**

The high rate of suicides within the Student Body of Northern Ireland.

Conference believes:

There is a need for more awareness amongst the student body about suicide and the advice and support available for students.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI runs a campaign aimed at decreasing suicide rates amongst the student

body.

NUS-USI Mental Health Campaign Strategy (2018)

Conference notes:

1. In 2007 a partnership between NUS-USI and Mindwise was made to create the Open Your Mind Project
2. From 2007 till 2012 the project was a huge success
3. In early 2013 due to leftover funding from the Public Health funding the project was able to have a short lived re-launch
4. That the Open Your Mind Project was able to offer students training and opportunities to peer-educate other about Mental Health problems

Conference further notes:

1. From the Open Your Mind survey in 2013 it was reported that 68% of the applicants suffered from mental health problems
2. NUS-USI should support unions to move away from awareness raising and towards evidence based campaigns that can enact real change.

Conference mandates:

1. NUS-USI Officers to support students unions in their mental health campaigns and to promote the 'take the pledge' campaign from Time to Change, a charity which works to end mental health discrimination.
2. NUS-USI to continue working with Mindwise to identify more opportunities for funding
3. NUS-USI to continue to lobby the Health Minister to create more funding opportunities for peer-led mental health campaign

Contraceptive Options (2018)

Conference notes:

1. There are many different contraceptive options available both privately through National Chemists and publicly through the NHS and Family Planning Clinics.

Conference believes:

1. Many people are unaware of the options when choosing contraceptives and also of the many associated health risks of using them incorrectly or not at all.

Conference resolves:

1. That NUS-USI should work closely with the Public Health Agency and local Health Trusts to promote the availability of contraceptives and to educate students in safe sex, the use of contraceptives and emergency contraceptives. Conference also resolves that NUS-USI should continue to support College Health Clinics and Sexual Health and Guidance Week.

Organ Donation Opt-Out (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That NUS-USI do not have an official stance on whether or not people should be automatically registered for organ donation or not. Organ donation is vital because around 5,000 people die each year in the UK in circumstances where they can become a donor, these are thousands of organs which are buried that could be used again by a different person to help save their lives.

Conference believes:

1. That viable organs should not be wasted as people die while they are on the waiting list. Each year approximately 200 patients in Northern Ireland are on transplant waiting lists. If all viable organs were used in transplantation, the waiting lists would be drastically reduced and the unnecessary deaths of waiting list patients would be reduced also.

Conference resolves:

1. That NUS-USI should have a stance of automatic registration of organ donation, with an option to opt-out. The conference also resolves that NUS-USI lobby legislators to change the law so that the law reflects NUS-USI's stance and until this happens, NUS-USI should promote this stance by running campaigns and help Students' Unions run registration days to get people to register to donate their organs.

Human Trafficking (2018)**Conference notes:**

1. That human trafficking is a rising problem within Northern Ireland with 41 potential victims last year, a considerable rise from 17 potential victims in 2012. Victims are often led to believe they are traveling to Northern Ireland for legitimate employment, but are then exploited by their captors. Human trafficking comes in many forms including sexual exploitation, forced labour, and domestic servitude. It is an horrendous abuse against those most vulnerable in our society.

Conference believes:

1. That more needs to be done in relation to this issue and that we should support initiatives against human trafficking put forward by the government. Students should be made aware of the issue and its importance both around the world and locally.

Conference resolves:

1. That there should be a policy showing NUS-USI's support of the abolishment of human trafficking. That NUS-USI should support the movement and the event that is anti-human trafficking day on the 18th of October, by raising awareness within all HE and FE institutions that it is affiliated with. Students should be educated around the issue and enabled to spot the signs of human trafficking and encouraged to report any human trafficking activity to the relevant authorities.

Gambling Addiction (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That the number of students who are becoming addicted to gambling is also on the rise with one in five turning to gambling to find extra funds to pay for the cost of living and their fees. Smartphones and online gambling are playing a big part in the rise of young people developing gambling problems. Gambling is an addiction and should be recognised as such. Conference does not have a policy on gambling.

Conference believes:

1. That it is important that we support these students in the same way we would if had any other mental health problem. They should not be punished by their university or college and should instead be given extra guidance and assistance to help them.

Conference resolves:

1. That support systems need to be put in place in order to protect these students from both financial and emotional backlash that may come from being removed from college/university, unable to pay debts or ostracised because of their addiction.

Fighting for student carers (2018)

Conference notes:

1. A student carer is a student of any age who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.
2. Student carers are under-represented in further and higher education. The difference is particularly stark for women aged 16–24; 10% of women carers in that age range who care for more than 50 hours per week are in education, compared to 17% of men carers.
3. The NUS Women's Campaign produced 'learning with care' in 2013 which was the first ever comprehensive research into the experiences of student carers in the UK
4. Only 36% of student carers felt able to balance commitments such as work, study, and family/relationships, compared to 53% of students without caring responsibilities.
5. More than half of student carers (56%) had seriously considered leaving their course, compared to 39% of students without caring responsibilities.
6. Student carers had experienced varying degrees of support from their institutions, but in all cases there was a lack of coordinated, systematic support.
7. Two thirds of student carers (67%) regularly worry about not having enough money to meet their basic living expenses. Many student carers have had to sacrifice all or some of their social life in order to study and provide care
8. Student carers who were in receipt of Carer's Allowance did not feel the benefit was adequate, but the fact that full-time students are not eligible for Carer's Allowance was considered unfair and contributing to their financial hardship.
9. Student carers were three times as likely to have taken on high-risk debt as students without caring responsibilities, even though they were less likely to have taken out low-risk debt.

Conference believes:

1. Access to education is a key social justice issue and it is important that within the context of austerity cuts which are decimating public services including support for carers, that women who care in particular are not denied or deterred from entering apprenticeships, further and/or higher education.
2. That due to patriarchy, the nature of caregiving in the UK is gendered, with women expected to be the primary caregivers and as with other areas of work which are dominated by women this work is devalued in society.

Conference resolves:

1. That NUS-USI should conduct research on the number student carers in further and higher education in Northern Ireland, their experiences in education and what institutions should be doing to support them.
2. To work with Carers Northern Ireland to ensure that support for student carers is on the political agenda in the run up to the forthcoming elections.

Student housing (2018)**Conference notes:**

1. That the majority of students are forced to find accommodation in the private rental sector. Particularly in student areas, this accommodation often extremely expensive and of a poor quality.

Conference believes:

1. That this problem is greatly exacerbated by the lack of university-owned accommodation.
2. That students need to organise to fight for better conditions in housing and that NUS-USI has a vital role to play in this.

Conference resolves:

1. That NUS-USI campaigns for statutory rent controls in areas where large numbers of students live.
2. That NUS-USI will support the establishment of a tenants' union to enable students to work together to tackle slum landlordism and abuses by landlords.
3. That NUS-USI will campaign for universities to significantly invest in affordable, high quality accommodation for students.

Cyber-bullying (2018)**Conference notes:**

1. The lack of policy in the area of Cyber-bullying. Given the increased use of social media, there are more risks for young people to become targets or victims and even aggressors of Cyber-bullying.

Conference believes:

1. There is a lack of awareness and understanding on the topic of Cyber-bullying.

Conference resolves:

1. That NUS-USI:
 - Provide guidelines on this issue
 - Adopt and promote a Cyber-Bullying Charter
 - Work towards ensuring all officers, SU staff and student representatives are appropriately trained and informed in relation to the issue
 - Ensure that information and resources on the identification, prevention, reporting and response of cyber-bullying are made available and promoted

#MyBodyMyRights campaign (2018)**Conference notes:**

That Amnesty International NI has called for abortion to be permitted in Northern Ireland in cases of fatal foetal abnormality, rape and incest in line with international human rights standards.

Conference is concerned:

That 59,614 women have been forced to travel to access reproductive healthcare and abortion since 1970, including women who have suffered a sexual crime or have received the devastating news that their foetus has fatal foetal abnormalities.

Conference affirms:

That 7 in 10 people in Northern Ireland support such a reform of such restrictive laws.

Conference supports:

The Amnesty International NI #MyBodyMyRights campaign and asks that the Executive Committee join with Students' Unions, Alliance for Choice and Belfast Feminist Network and other groups to campaign for change.

Consent survey mandate (2020)**Conference notes:**

The Association of American Universities conducted a survey of students at 27 universities across the US and uncovered nearly 1 in 4 undergraduate women were the victims of unwanted sexual contact, either by force or because they were unable to consent due to drugs or alcohol. The survey collected responses online from 150,000 graduate and undergraduate students, approximately a 19% response rate from the 779,170 students who were asked to participate in the research. While the rates of reporting varied by institution, from a low of 17% to a high of 46%, the most common reason for not reporting it was that the respondent didn't consider it "serious enough." A third of those girls also felt "embarrassed, ashamed or [thought] it would be too emotionally difficult."¹⁶ While the most extensive research has been done surveying women students' sexual assaults against men and transgender students occur and are to be condemned.

¹⁶ <http://bit.ly/2mAPq6n>

Conference believes:

NUS-USI have a duty of care and a duty to educate our students. Many are leaving Secondary School without a full understanding of consent due to poor sex and relationship education. Students should have a full understanding of the importance of consent and should know how to report a sexual assault if they are the victim of unwanted sexual contact.

Conference resolves:

NUS USI should carry out a consent survey, focusing on HE and FE institutions, to gauge students understanding of sex and relationship education. NUS-USI should collate the finding and present them to government as part of efforts to lobby for the improvement of sex and relationship education in schools. The research may help shape the direction of the sexual health campaigns that some Students' Unions may undertake.

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.

Housing survey mandate (2020)**Conference notes:**

Students have far too often been mistreated and taken advantage of by renting agencies and landlords. It should be noted that in NUS' Homes Fit for Study research (2870 students – UK wide),

- 61% had damp, mold, or condensation in their home
- 24% had slugs, mice or other infestation
- 52% have felt uncomfortably cold in their home.

These are unacceptable standards of living.

UUSU has experienced first-hand some of the issues relating to students not knowing their rights when it comes to renting for the first time.¹⁷

Conference believes:

Students deserve and should have a right to good quality, affordable and suitable student accommodation. NUS-USI has a duty of educating our students and lobby for improvements in the standard of housing.

Conference resolves:

NUS USI should carry out a housing survey across the region, focusing on HE and FE institutions, to find out the issues students face in renting accommodation. NUS-USI should then collate their finding and use the results to lobby for improvements to the private rental sector.

Private Rented Sector Tenants' Association (2020)

Conference notes:

The poor state of private rented sector accommodation in Northern Ireland – way behind the rest of the UK and Ireland. Damp, cold and poorly maintained student accommodation is rife and often peddled by unscrupulous landlords.

Conference further notes:

That the NI Housing Executive expects the private rented sector to continue to expand, and if that is to happen, tenants need a dedicated representative body to represent their interests to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive and

Conference resolves:

To support the efforts of the Housing Rights' Service to establish a Northern Ireland Tenant's Association.

Suicide Awareness (2020)

Conference notes:

¹⁷ <http://bit.ly/OE5XS3>

There has been an increased level of work on mental health campaigns amongst the student population.

Conference further notes:

Suicide awareness is key to suicide prevention.

Conference believes:

By training students beyond the regional executive will help our message to reach a wider range of students who may not necessarily engage with their students' union.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI provides a platform for suicide awareness training to larger groups of students within the various institutions.

Campaign for More Sexual Health Clinics (2020)

Conference recognises:

The importance of sexual health clinics in providing testing for sexual transmitted infections, information on sexual health, and contraception and specifically the positive impact this has in women student's lives.

Conference notes with concern:

The worryingly small number of sexual health clinics across Northern Ireland and the reduced funding for provision of this key service, particularly on campuses in rural areas.

Conference resolves:

To lobby local government and to campaign for more funding in this area, in order to provide more sexual health clinics across Northern Ireland.

Student Mental Health (2020)

Conference notes:

1. Students are faced with increasing financial and academic pressures coupled with part time work commitments.
2. In their attempts to balance all these pressure, their mental health and well being is affected.

Conference notes with concern:

A recent MORI poll illustrates that year-by-year more students are experiencing stress.

Conference mandates:

The NUS-USI to continue their student mental health campaign in partnership with local Unions and to help coordinate mental health campaigns on an annual basis in all member colleges.

Mental Health (2020)

Conference recognises:

That it is commonly referred to that young members of the LGBT community are at a higher risk of suffering from mental health issues.

Conference is disgusted:

By the lack of actual research undertaken on this issue.

Conference mandates:

NUS-USI to undertake a national survey on the mental health of LGBT Students.

LIBERATION ISSUES

Discrimination in Societies & Sports Clubs (2018)

Conference believes:

1. That societies and sports teams are commonly places where LGBT Students regularly feel uncomfortable- particularly in Further Education.
2. The culture within some sports clubs and societies excludes LGBT students by the nature of their activities.

Conference further believes:

1. That the NUS LGBT campaign has a commitment to creating inclusive environments for all whilst studying. They recently launched the Out In Sports research and campaign with very worrying evidence regarding the discrimination LGBT Students face in these instances.
2. That negative perceptions of LGBT people are common amongst the sporting environments at university and colleges.

Conference resolves:

1. To mandate the NUS-USI REC to support HE and FE students unions in equipping LGBT Societies with the tools to challenge exclusive behaviour.
2. To mandate the NUS-USI REC to support the other liberation officers to campaign on mandatory training for leader of sports clubs and societies in unions.
3. To mandate the NUS-USI REC to work with Northern Ireland sporting authorities such as Sports Northern Ireland and groups such as the GAA to campaign to promote diversity and tolerance in sport.

Yes, that's Consent (2018)

Conference believes:

1. The majority of sexual assault victims are women
2. PSNI statistics show that around peak student times such as Freshers in September and Halloween in October- reports of sexual assault increase.
3. There has been a rise in the number of websites such as HolylandLAD and Spotted, which are counterproductive to the safe space ethos that students unions strive to achieve and promote behaviours which are harmful towards women.
4. That traditional campaigns to reduce rape and sexual assault statistics often focus on the survivor and not on the rapist (ie telling women to get taxis home rather than walk as opposed to telling people not to rape)
5. The recent "don't be that guy" ad campaign in Vancouver aimed at telling people not

to rape resulted in a 10% reduction in sexual assaults in the area, out of sync with neighbouring areas which experienced a 22% rise in sexual assaults.

Further believes:

1. Consent is complicated and is more than simply not saying no - sometimes "maybe" and "yes" can actually be "no's" when people feel coerced into situations. Consent can be affected by all sorts of power dynamics; gender, sexuality, class, race, (dis)ability, etc.
2. Active consent is the idea of seeking an enthusiastic YES! as "best-practice" with regards to consent.
4. "Rape culture" is a term to describe how acts like victim blaming, placing emphasis on potential victims rather than perpetrators in anti-rape campaigns, etc. leads to a culture of legitimising rape and sexual assault.
5. Most people see consent as simply "not saying no": education at all levels on consent issues would be useful at combatting this element of rape culture.

Conference resolves:

1. To lobby the Northern Ireland Executive to require schools and colleges to teach about consent in schools, echoing the sentiments already laid out.
2. To mandate the NUS-USI REC to support the Women's Officer and LGBT Officer to campaign on addressing the lack of understanding around consent.
3. To condemn all media that promotes such behaviours and attitudes that contribute towards the systemic rape culture faced by Northern Ireland.
4. For NUS-USI to continue working positively with the PSNI to tackle these issues.
5. To advocate for similar campaigns to the "dont be that guy" campaign here in the UK.

Take back our Campuses, and stop the victim blaming (2018)

Conference believes:

1. The NUS Hidden Marks report found that one in seven survey respondents had experienced a serious physical or sexual assault during their time as a student.
2. The report also showed results that 'more than one third of respondents reported they sometimes felt unsafe when visiting their university or college buildings in the evening'.
3. That every woman has the right to feel safe on their college or university campus.

Conference further believes:

1. That even with positive action taken by students' unions across the UK, there are still instances of sexual assaults on campuses.
3. That all too often, campaigns focusing on safety can place the responsibility on the victim

of a sexual attack and not the perpetrator.

4. That victim blaming perpetrates a culture in which women do not feel supported enough to report sexual offences, especially on campuses when far away from home and family.
5. That the NUS-USI Women's Campaign must take action to tackle the abhorrent culture of victim blaming.

Conference resolves:

1. For the NUS-USI Women's Campaign to launch a campaign focusing on busting rape myths and tackling the victim blaming that is endemic on our campuses.
2. For the NUS-USI Women's Campaign to produce briefings for all officers so that they feel enabled and confident in tackling these issues in a college and university environment that is often dominated by men.
3. For the NUS-USI Women's Officer to ensure there are strong links between institutions, student unions, the police, local Health Trusts, and special voluntary services, and to support student unions in building these links.

Take back our boardrooms! (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That believing in equality is about recognising privilege which exists in society and being proactive in taking measures to redress imbalances and structural inequality which still have a disproportionately negative impact on women.
2. That men still dominate in every sphere of power in society, and that this is shamefully reflected in the gender make-up of university and college boards, which barely even reach 5% of boards in some cases.
3. That university and college boards also fail to reflect the society that they serve in a number of other ways, including in terms of class, race, age, profession.
4. Boards that fail to reflect the diversity of society that funds them will fail to adequately serve the needs and aspirations of that society.
5. In Northern Ireland, there is currently only 1 Woman Principal (BMC) within all 6 of the FE Colleges, and 1 Woman VC (Stranmillis) within our Universities sector, and no women chairs of either HE or FE Governing Bodies.

Conference resolves:

1. To lobby the government to force universities and colleges to make arrangements so that at least 40% of governing body members are women.
2. To work with students' unions that have two student representatives on governing bodies to find methods of ensuring that at least one of those representatives is guaranteed to be a woman.
3. To make it clear that we will push for longer term penalties for boards who do not meet the diversity competency requirements.
4. To lobby universities and colleges to take action to make their governing body membership better reflect the diversity of Northern Ireland society.
5. To support students' unions in widening the background in particular of the 'independent members' of university and college governing bodies.

Supporting student parents to stay in education (2018)

Conference believes:

1. In 2009 NUS completed the first study into student parents, the Meet the Parents Report
2. Since Meet the Parents was published NUS has produced a series of briefing for unions on the subjects it covered
3. The vast majority of student parents are women
4. Education cuts are hitting the most vulnerable the hardest
5. The changes proposed by the welfare reform bill will have a disproportionately negative impact on single mothers
6. NUS' Meet the Parents Report showed that 60 per cent of survey respondents having thought about leaving their course. This figure rises to 65 per cent for lone parents.
7. When asked what one thing would most improve their experience as a student parent, half of the responses to Meet the Parents related to funding

Conference further believes:

1. For decades the women's movement has campaigned for better access to childcare
2. Cuts to support services and nurseries are seen as soft cuts
3. The government's economic changes are reliant on a social model that sees women do the majority of childcare

Conference resolves:

1. To produce a resource for education officers and students unions on the impacts cuts to budgets are having on student parents
2. Work with unions to ensure there is flexibility in courses for those with caring responsibilities
3. Work with unions to ensure that childcare is available over holidays
4. Continue to campaign for childcare funding in FE to come from a dedicated pot and not be discretionary
5. To continue to work with groups in the third sector such as Gingerbread.
6. That the NUS – USI Women's campaign will empower and provide students' unions with resources to improve the representation of student parents on their campus

Reclaiming the F –Word, That's right I'm a FEMINIST (2018)

Conference believes:

1. Patriarchy has been quite successful in back lashing against feminism and turning feminism in popular culture into a dirty word
2. There are a lot of women students who believe that regardless of our gender identity we should be treated as equals and that women deserve to have equal access to power, decision making and an equal stake and influence in our education and in society but would not define as a feminist
3. Discussions on feminist principals are often prefixed by 'I'm not a feminist, but' indicating women are not comfortable associating themselves with the term but sharing the values

Conference further believes:

1. That one of the problems that women's groups have in attracting members to the group is women having the perception of feminism as man hating female supremacists
2. That this is simply not true
3. In order for the women's campaign to empower even more women students to

understanding feminism and building and developing feminist activists as well as introducing feminist principles into the mainstream of student's association culture it is important that the women's campaign fights against the patriarchy and the misrepresentation of feminism in media and popular culture

4. Feminism can be used as an empowerment tool to recognising injustice exists and the first step to engaging a wider group of women in the women's campaign

Conference resolves:

1. For the NUS-USI women's campaign to provide materials and an activity and campaign resource pack about different ways in which student's unions can 'reclaim feminism' through campaigning for change

2. For the NUS-USI women's campaign to support students unions in educating students about feminism and how this can be incorporated into the curriculum and within core work and training of the student's association

Women and work (2018)

Conference notes:

1. There are now over a million unemployed women in the UK – the highest rate in 20 years.

2. Women's unemployment is currently rising at a disproportionate rate to men's – 78% of the increase in redundancies that occurred April-June 2011 was a result of women losing their jobs.

3. Just 16 of the FTSE 100 companies have female executive directors.

4. In Northern Ireland, women are paid significantly less than male counterparts and comprise the largest section of the unemployed and part time workers.

Conference believes:

1. Many women may be put off starting up businesses or aiming for high-level positions in industry because they see so few examples of successful businesswomen.

2. The Fawcett Society's recent research, entitled Sexism in the City, highlights the numerous barriers women face in the workplace, including harassment and discrimination against them for becoming pregnant.

Conference resolves:

1. That the NUS-USI Women's Campaign should invite a speaker from Fawcett society to speak at next year's conference, or Activist Training Days, specifically about their Sexism in the City report, and how the situation for women in business and the workplace is changing and could improve.

Misogyny is not just for men (2018)

Conference believes:

1. LBT women are often forced to feel like they should embrace gender stereotypes

2. Outdated perception of the concept and necessity of butch/femme is a product of patriarchal assumptions of passive women and masculine men

3. Women can have very misogynist attitudes towards other women

4. The dominant discourse of LBT women as sex objects, particularly the role of gay women fulfilling male fantasy, is detrimental to our community and should not be tolerated

Conference Resolves

1. To challenge patriarchy and misogyny perpetrated by women, by confronting any misogynistic comments and producing educational material
2. To combat discourse of gay women as sex objects by running a 'hands of my sexuality' campaign in conjunction with the LGBT campaign

Getting back to basics (2018)

Conference believes:

1. That Feminists in the 1970s created these 7 demands for women:
 - Equal pay for equal work
 - Equal education and job opportunities
 - Free contraception
 - Free 24-hour community-controlled childcare
 - Legal and financial independence for women
 - An end to discrimination against lesbians
 - Freedom for all women from intimidation by the threat or use of male violence. An end to the laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and men's aggression towards women
2. All of these demands were seen as basic rights.
3. None of these demands has yet to be achieved.
4. The strength of feminism is that it is a movement that spans generations.

Conference further believes:

1. Over the past decade the women's movement has made great strides, but we are now fighting to hold on to what we've got, not moving forward.
2. The government has vested interests in maintaining the status quo
3. There is a need to re-examine some of our most basic demands and use them as the basis for our campaigns.
4. The original 1970s list of demands should be used as a basis for our work.

Conference resolves:

1. To create a list of women students' demands which provides the backbone of our work.
2. To create this list using conference policies and the original demands of the women's liberation movement as a basis.
3. To produce policy guides on these demands that also support women to make the case for them on campus

Winning women's representation (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Women remain significantly under-represented in positions of power throughout society.
2. There are more millionaires in David Cameron's cabinet than women.
3. Only 22% of MPs are women and just 31 per cent of elected councillors are women. At the current rate of progress it will take women decades to achieve equal representation in

the most powerful political institutions in Britain. If the rate of change does not speed up, baby girls born this year will be drawing their pensions before they see an equal number of women in Parliament.

4. A Guardian report in December 2011 revealed that 78% of newspaper articles are written by men, 72% of Question Time contributors are men and 84% of reporters and guests on Radio 4's Today show are men.

5. Only 16 FTSE 100 companies have female executive directors.

6. Despite forming a majority of students in higher and further education, women are under-represented in powerful positions in universities, colleges and students' union.

Conference believes:

1. NUS-USI Women's Campaign has an important role to play in defending and extending women's representation in universities and throughout society.

2. Guaranteed women's representation in universities and students' unions, including women's officer's elected by and accountable to women, is vital to women's equality and to overcoming the bigotry, inequality and discrimination we face.

3. There have been many attempts to abolish Women's Officer positions in Student Unions across the country in recent years. In many cases it is proposed to replace the Women's Officer with an 'Equality Officer' – which cannot properly represent women, or other groups who face discrimination.

Conference resolves:

1. To launch a priority campaign for 'A Women's Officer in every Students' Union' – aiming to defend and extend women's representation throughout the student movement. This should include producing a briefing and action pack equipping women students to establish women's representation in their Students' Union and providing workshops and speakers at the Sister ACTivist training days on how to win women's representation.

2. To campaign on increasing the number of women who run for all sabbatical positions, all councillors and voluntary roles within FE students unions.

Representation of LGBT Women (2018)

Conference believes:

1. Women are chronically underrepresented in all aspects of public life. Students' Unions and the National Unions are no exception.

2. Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans and Queer women are even more underrepresented in Student Unions and the National Unions

3. Change begins within our own movement, in order to be inclusive we must encourage and support LBT and queer women to stand for elected roles

Conference further believes:

1. That many women, particularly in Northern Ireland, feel they need to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression when running in elections.

Conference resolves:

1. Reaffirm the women's movements commitment to strengthening LGBT women's

representation

2. Ensure the inclusion of LGBT specific content at I WILL and Sister ACTivist training days

Fighting government and institutional ignorance on rape (2018)

Conference believes:

1. It is vital that an understanding of the facts surrounding rape and rape culture are embedded throughout our criminal justice system and our government.
2. A current lack of understanding in the justice system and in society is still preventing the appalling rape conviction rate of 6% from rising.

Conference further believes:

1. Proposals from government ministers such as Ken Clarke's proposal to give rapists shorter jail terms in return for early guilty pleas are a dangerous threat to women's safety.
2. Feminist outrage and lobbying by women's organisations played a part in the scrapping of this proposal for convicted rapists shortly after it was announced, as it also did with the earlier proposal to grant anonymity to people accused of rape.
3. Proposals such as this and the subsequent comments made by MEP's are part of a wider lack of understanding of violence against women from a deeply sexist government.
4. The Northern Ireland Executive and the PSNI have demonstrated a number of times that they have dangerously ignorant and misinformed attitudes towards the crime of rape, which have resulted in outrageous information leaflets and campaigns being displayed across the country.
5. Similar proposals are likely to emerge in the future, and in the face of such ignorance, women's organisations need to stand together and be a strong voice against the government.

Conference resolves:

1. For the NUS-USI Women's Campaign to respond strongly to any future government proposals on rape that would be damaging to survivors' wellbeing and women's safety, and to be prepared to organise a national campaign against any such proposals.
2. For the NUS-USI Women's Campaign to join with other women's rights organisations to call on the government to change its attitude towards rape and rape survivors.
3. For the NUS Women's Campaign to produce resources on the myths surrounding rape, and to encourage women activists to lobby their local MLA's and MPs to recognise and oppose ignorance over rape in the Executive and Westminster.
4. To lobby the PSNI to create an informed and victim sensitive set of resources and campaign that will stamp out the rape blame culture that is so prevalent within the law and institutions.

Reclaiming the Word 'Feminism' (2018)

Conference believes:

1. Feminism has been transformed by popular culture into a pejorative and negative term or word.
2. There are a lot of women students who believe that regardless of our gender (or non) gender identity we should be treated as equals and that women deserve equal

access to power, decision making and an equal stake and influence in our society – but would not define as a 'feminist.'

3. Discussions on feminist principals are often prefixed by 'I'm not a feminist, but' indicating women are not comfortable associating themselves with the term but sharing the same values.

Conference further believes:

1. That one problem women's groups have in attracting members to the group is women having the wrong perception of feminists as 'men haters'
2. This perception is false and misconceived
3. Feminism should be used as a tool for recognising injustice exists and the first step to engaging wider groups of women.

Conference resolves:

1. For the NUS women's campaign to provide materials and information in order to educate both male and female students on real feminist issues.
2. For NUSUSI to run a campaign to 'reclaim feminism.'

Women representation (2018)

Conference believes:

1. That women are still significantly underrepresented in Students Union politics as well as nationally.
2. That only 38% of Sabbatical Officers in the UK are women. Only 21% of UK Students Union Presidents are women.
3. That female representation in Students' Union Council, and at national conference is worryingly low.

Conference further believes:

1. That women's issues are less likely to be considered in discussion in a sabbatical team when women are not present.
2. That less women stand for positions than men, this reflects stereotypes of men dominating in these areas.
3. That women have been hit hardest in the period of austerity and it is crucial that the movement has a strong voice in the face of these threats.

Conference resolves:

1. For NUS-USI to run a national campaign and create a support network in order to encourage more female candidates to run for election.
2. To empower and educate females in elected positions through feminist activist training, so they can lead on women's issues.

End violence against women (2018)

Conference believes:

1. For years women have been the target of violence and harassment.

2. On night's out it is not uncommon for females to be touched inappropriately.
3. This should not be tolerated at any level, especially not in our Students' Unions.

Conference further believes:

1. Many individuals, both male and female, do not realise what actions actually define 'harassment.' They may not realise their actions actually constitute harassment.
2. Education and reasonable enforcement is needed.

Conference resolves:

1. That Students' Union's throughout Northern Ireland should strive towards the NUS 'Zero Harassment Accreditation.'
2. For NUS-USI to provide the information and resources in order to strive towards this.

Women's Campaign (2018)

Conference notes:

The strengths and successes of the NUS Women's Campaign.

Conference believes:

If NUS-USI were to work closer with the NUS Women's campaign we could also achieve the same successes here in NI.

Conference resolves:

NUS-USI to be in frequent contact with NUS Women's Campaign and implement the same campaign strategy in NI.

International Women's Day (2018)

Conference notes:

That international Women's Day is marked on the same day every year

Conference believes:

This day needs to be celebrated throughout the student body.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI holds a networking event for International Women's Day to celebrate this occasion.

Women in Leadership (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Women make up the majority of the student population but are underrepresented in positions of power and decision making in the student movement.

2. This includes course representatives, sabbatical officers, and delegations to national decision-making conferences.
3. Despite accounting for 45% of the academic workforce, women make up only 20% of professors in UK universities and only 17% of vice-chancellors.
4. Black, LGBT and disabled women are marginalised further, with only 1.4% of professors in the UK being black and minority ethnic women.

Conference believes:

1. The issue of women's inequality and underrepresentation will not be solved simply by getting more women into positions of leadership.
2. This is particularly important when talking about the underrepresentation of women in university management positions – a vice-chancellor who supports an increase in tuition fees or outsources to private companies who use zero-hour contracts is not a vice-chancellor who works for the betterment of and supports women students, even if they happen to be a woman.
3. Women in leadership is fundamentally about radically altering the structure of power, how we conceptualise power, and how it is used.
4. There are several strands to tackling the underrepresentation of women in students' unions. Structural barriers such as reserving places for women and further marginalised women in democratic structures and conference delegations are extremely important; as is changing the organisational culture, which includes (but is not limited to) tackling lad culture and everyday sexism, in addition to ensuring students' unions are accessible and child-friendly; and individual capacity building for women students, including public speaking workshops are run and protecting (and creating) women-only spaces on campus. These are all ways to start tackling the issue of women's underrepresentation in positions of power.
5. Black, LGBT and disabled women face further oppression, and any policies, schemes and programmes aimed at increasing the representation of women must take this into account and target these women in particular.
6. Intersectionality is at the core of the NUS-USI Women's Campaign. The first ever NUS-USI Women's Committee has been elected, and is proudly intersectional. We must ensure that any work we do on women in leadership has intersectionality at its core.

Conference resolves:

1. To support students' unions in improving their democratic legitimacy by improving the number of women in leadership positions as well as the diversity of women in leadership.
2. For a women-only session at NUS-USI summer training to be compulsory, where women officers can share their experiences with one another whilst having the political experience of the power of a women-only space.

Liberation Training (2018)

Conference notes:

1. There are a number of Liberation Officers both within NUS-USI and member union but there is currently no role specific training in Northern Ireland for new liberation students.

Conference believes:

1. Fledgling Officers may not previously have the relevant experience or contacts when beginning their office and can take a while to find their feet.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI should work alongside NUS UK and USI to introduce a new, overarching campaign for liberation and to offer appropriate training to Students Union Officers.

Recognising Diversity (2018)

Conference welcomes:

The continuing diversification of the student population through the growth of groups such as international, mature and disabled students entering both FE and HE institutions.

Conference notes however:

That NUS-USI, many member unions and institutions have failed to fully engage with what have been traditionally under-represented groups.

Conference recognises:

The work being done on student diversity issues by the Liberation Campaign, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Equality Challenge Unit and that a more diverse student population enriches and adds value to the education experience of all students.

Conference mandates the Regional Executive Committee:

1. To produce a report and guidelines for member unions highlighting areas of excellence and successful initiatives in students' unions, colleges and universities, to be used as a guide for student officers of member unions.
2. This report shall cover (but will not be limited to) student parents and carers; students with disabilities; students from various political and religious backgrounds; international, Great Britain and Republic of Ireland students; women; and part-time, postgraduate, mature and LGBT students.

Marriage Equality (2018)

Conference notes:

1. Conference notes that the Marriage Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 states that there is a legal impediment to marriage if the parties are of the same sex.

Conference recognises:

1. Conference recognises that the current Marriage Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 discriminates against LGBT people. Conference further recognises that changing to Marriage Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 to allow parties to be of the same sex does not weaken the institution of marriage – on the contrary, it strengthens it.

Conference resolves:

2. To mandate the NUS-USI regional executive to strongly campaign for marriage equality to ensure that the ban on same sex marriage and mixed sex civil partnerships in Northern Ireland is removed.

Women in STEM (2018)**Conference notes:**

1. The demand for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills is ever increasing within Northern Ireland
2. There is a huge gender imbalance within the STEM subjects at all levels, with men making up 70% of STEM graduates
3. With funding from DEL, The Engineering Training Council in Northern Ireland (ETCNI) and gender diversity specialists Skills 4 have joined forces to support 20 small and medium sized enterprises and four large companies in developing 50 women in STEM careers, and will also be promoting STEM careers to 1,000 schoolgirls and establishing a network to mentor and support women and girls

Conference believes:

1. Girls continue to outperform boys at GCSE and A Level but are less likely to apply for courses in the STEM sector
2. STEM subjects are male dominated and are often stereotypically described as “mens jobs” leading to many women not fulfilling their potential within the sector or being put off by entering the industry
3. Women have few role models or representatives within the STEM subjects
4. Women and girls should be encouraged to pursue courses and careers within the STEM sector
5. STEM courses and businesses should ensure that women have full access to work/life balance facilities including maternity leave, parental leave and carers leave
6. The work being done by ETCNI and Skills 4 should be replicated/applied to students studying in FE colleges and universities

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI should work with organisations such as ETCNI and Skills 4 to bring promotion of Women into STEM and the support network to students FE and HE sectors
2. NUS-USI should lobby the Department for Employment to promote and encourage women and girls to study STEM subjects to reduce the gender imbalance within the sector
3. NUS-USI should promote research into why women are less likely to study STEM subjects and use the evidence to aid the encouragement and promotion of Women in STEM subjects

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.

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 bought 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Flexibility in assessment (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That students in FE and HE are required to complete assessments in their respective courses, which could include examination, coursework, group work or other;
- 2) That different students have different preferences for learning and can work better under certain circumstances;
- 3) That the majority of courses only offer a singular form of assessment, universally applied to students;
- 4) That certain kinds of assessment may be an incompatible option for disabled students;
- 5) That students perform better academically in certain kinds of assessment, and poorer in other kinds;

Conference believes:

- 1) That students should be allowed to choose an assessment which offers the student flexibility and preference;
- 2) That colleges and universities should be expected to provide a learning experience, including assessment, that meets the needs of students;
- 3) That institutions rarely actively promote the alternative forms of assessment that are available to students, unless they are registered with their disability services;
- 4) That it would not be overly logistically different for academic staff to offer different kinds of assessment;
- 5) That choosing from a list of options would lead to better student satisfaction and better academic results;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To work with institutions to ensure students receive an education which is fit for purpose, which then allows them to be assessed in a way which is suited to the needs of the student;
- 2) To encourage academic staff to offer multiple options for any assessment to allow the student choice;
- 3) To do this at an early stage in the module to minimise additional stress;

Ramifications of PIP (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was ended, and replaced with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in Great Britain and later extended to Northern Ireland;
- 2) That this has led to a number of reassessments for disabled people;
- 3) That a large number of disabled people have either not applied because of changes, or had their applications rejected;
- 4) That thousands of people have had their cars or wheelchairs and equipment taken away from them

Conference believes:

- 1) That these reforms have been incredibly damaging for disabled people;
- 2) The application process and assessment process is deeply stressful and harmful for disabled people;
- 3) Disabled people are being unfairly attacked by the Government;

Conference resolves:

- 1) That Disabled Students Campaign write to the Minister for Communities and the Executive Office expressing their disapproving and condemnation of reforms to PIP;
- 2) To emphasise that the Government has a duty to provide proper, adequate welfare to disabled people and PIP does not currently provide this;
- 3) To express solidarity to any protests against PIP;

Promotion of Institutional Disabled Support for International & GB Students (2020)**Conference notes:**

- 1) That disabled students from Great Britain or International countries are not entitled to Disabled Students Allowances (DSA);
- 2) That because of the reforms to DSA in Great Britain, institutions in Northern Ireland are now required to pay for any support for GB disabled students from their own internal sources;
- 3) That some institutions only have ad-hoc provision for international disabled students, determined on a case-by-case basis
- 4) That whilst the Equality Act 2010 does not extend to Northern Ireland, Institutions must provide reasonable adjustments for their students and staff;

Conference believes:

- 1) That all students, home and international, should receive access to the same levels of support;
- 2) That institutions should provide information about support they are eligible to at all stages of the student's course;
- 3) That institutions should have written policies on the support they will provide for all disabled students;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To encourage Institutions to have specific policies on disabled student support services for home and international students;
- 2) To ensure this information is widely circulated to all students who may need it;

Guidance on benefits for Students (2020)**Conference notes:**

- 1) That some students are unaware that they may be eligible for some benefits, including Housing Benefit and Employment Support Allowance, depending on their circumstances;

Conference believes:

- 1) That students should be provided with accurate, up-to-date information on their eligibility for social security benefits;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To produce guidance which outlines in a clear and accessible format what benefits students may be eligible for, particularly those who already receive student finance;

Disabled people in leadership (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That the number of elected representatives who are disabled is extremely low;
- 2) The Stormont Assembly does not reflect the diversity of Northern Ireland including gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, or disability;
- 3) Disabled people face a huge number of barriers for being in positions of leadership;

Conference believes:

- 1) That disabled people should not be prevented from being in positions of leadership;
- 2) That programmes and initiatives which support and mentor disabled people are extremely useful in addressing the systemic barriers;
- 3) That diversity in positions of leadership leads to better decision-making;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To develop a workshop or similar event which specifically looks at and endeavours to address the underrepresentation of disabled people in positions of leadership;

Extending the Equality Act 2010 to Northern Ireland (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That the Equality Act 2010 does not extend to Northern Ireland;
- 2) That our equality laws are made up of a series of acts and regulations;
- 3) That these series of laws are now weaker than that of Great Britain's laws;
- 4) That section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 does not extend to schools;

Conference believes:

- 1) That our Equality laws should consist of one single, comprehensive act which strongly protects the rights of individuals, including disabled people;
- 2) That this law should apply to all public and private sector organisations, including schools;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To lobby all MLAs, especially the Executive Office and Department for Communities to extend the Equality Act 2010 to Northern Ireland, or create a law which is just as robust, if not more robust, than GB's Equality Act 2010.

Ratification of UNCRPD in Ireland (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That Ireland is the last member state in the European Union to not ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- 2) That this important document protects the rights and dignity of disabled people internationally;
- 3) That Ireland has had over a decade to ratify the convention;

Conference believes:

- 1) That Ireland has already signed the Convention, but now must ratify it;
- 2) That the Irish Government must be held accountable for failing to ratify the Convention, despite making promises that they would;
- 3) That the rights enshrined in the Convention would dramatically improve the quality of life and protection for disabled people in Ireland;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To lobby Irish TD's and the Taoiseach to ratify the UNCRPD in 2017 as soon as possible;
- 2) To make a strong statement to support the provisions and ethos of the UNCRPD;

Accessible Housing (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That much of the housing in Northern Ireland, particularly in student areas is inaccessible for a number of reasons;
- 2) That disabled students find it difficult to find housing which is suitable for them in meeting their needs such as accessibility, budget, and location;
- 3) That it can be of greater financial cost to disabled students to find accommodation which is suitable for them;

Conference believes:

- 1) That disabled students deserve to live in accommodation which is accessible and of a decent standard;
- 2) That there is currently very little regulation for landlords to make their housing more accessible;
- 3) Disabled students should not be exploited nor used as a cash cow for rent costs;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To campaign for more availability for accessible housing for disabled students;
- 2) To write to councils in Northern Ireland demanding stronger regulation and scrutiny of the accommodation landlords provide to tenants;

Accessible Activism (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That activism is something which is to be welcomed from citizens and a great way to express a political viewpoint;
- 2) That the student movement has a proud history of being at the forefront of effecting change for social issues;
- 3) That this activism tends to take the form of marches, rallies, or speeches;
- 4) That this can be inaccessible for disabled people;

Conference believes:

- 1) Activism which is accessible should be promoted;
- 2) Disabled people should be allowed to lead and participate in activism without any barriers;
- 3) That activist events being organised by others should be mindful of those with disabilities;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To have an appointed access officer for NUS-USI's activist events;
- 2) To campaign on making activism accessible to everyone;

Repeal the 8th and Abortion Rights on the island of Ireland (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That women & trans men are not permitted access to abortion in the North and South of Ireland, except for very limited circumstances;
- 2) That Article 40.3.3 of the Irish Constitution prevents a woman from accessing reproductive healthcare;
- 3) That the Abortion Act 1967 does not extend to Northern Ireland;
- 4) Dozens of women travel every day to other countries in order to access healthcare;
- 5) That people are being harassed outside healthcare clinics by anti-choice protestors;

Conference believes:

- 1) That abortion should be free, safe, and legal;
- 2) That the Government should not be limiting the bodily autonomy of its citizens;
- 3) That forcing women to travel to another country to access healthcare is physically, emotionally, and financially difficult
- 4) That the Irish Government should hold a referendum on repealing the 8th Amendment;
- 5) That the Stormont Assembly should allow bodily autonomy to its citizens;
- 6) That people should not be abused, harassed or intimidated by anyone for accessing healthcare;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To support access to abortion;
- 2) To stand in solidarity with those who have been prosecuted for accessing reproductive healthcare;
- 3) To publicly campaign and support for free, safe and legal access to abortion;
- 4) To publicly campaign and support for the creation of legal buffer zones, which would protect people for entering healthcare facilities without fear of harassment;

Protection of Rights of Disabled People in a Post-Brexit Society (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That the United Kingdom voted in a majority to leave the European Union;
- 2) That Northern Ireland and Scotland both voted to Remain, whilst England and Wales voted to Leave;
- 3) That the European Union currently provides a number of rights for disabled people;

Conference believes:

- 1) That the democratic wish of the people of Northern Ireland should be respected and upheld in any Brexit negotiations;
- 2) That if we are forced to leave, the rights of disabled people will be fully protected;
- 3) That there cannot be any dilution of the rights and protections disabled people currently receive;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To publicly lobby all MLAs, MPs, and other key stakeholders to protect the rights and protections of disabled people in a Post-Brexit Society
- 2) To monitor the effects of any Brexit and ensure politicians and decision-makers are held to account for any unsatisfactory effects;

Accessible Public Transport (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That Disabled people are required to give 24 hours' notice for wheelchair access;
- 2) That wheelchair users should receive priority access as a result of the UK Supreme Court judgment;
- 3) That public transport in Northern Ireland can be at sporadic times with many difficulties for disabled passengers;

Conference believes:

- 1) That the 24-hours' notice requirement is hugely inconvenient and inaccessible;
- 2) Disabled passengers should not be discriminated against by public transport companies or its employees;
- 3) Disabled passengers should be permitted the same flexibility with travelling as any citizen;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To write to Translink NI calling for a more robust framework for disabled passengers;
- 2) To lobby for passengers to be more considerate and accommodating of those with additional access requirements;

Student Support for Disabled Students (2020)

Conference notes:

- 1) That Disabled students face an additional number of barriers to access to FE and HE;
- 2) Many of these barriers are financial in nature, including hidden course costs, additional costs to living, transport, and bills;
- 3) HE Institutions currently do not publish a detailed summary of hidden course costs for prospective and current students;
- 4) The Competitions & Markets Authority (CMA) have outlined that Universities are required to produce a list of hidden course costs;
- 5) DSA does not cover many of the financial elements of studying as a disabled student. Of the few that do, it is based upon expenditure and reimbursement, which can be overly administrative for disabled students;

Conference believes:

- 1) That education should be a public good, including disabled students;
- 2) That education as a disabled student should not be hindered by the financial implications;
- 3) That students should be able to make an informed choice based on any hidden course costs;
- 4) This information should be easily accessible and clearly written;
- 5) That Universities and Colleges should be required to support their disabled students financially and pastorally;

Conference resolves:

- 1) To make NUS-USI lobby for a student access bursary for Disabled students;
- 2) To inform Universities and Colleges to produce a detailed list of their hidden course costs, including but not limited to, additional expenses, books, other learning materials, materials fees, specialist equipment, uniforms or other clothing required for work placements, field trips; accommodation and travel costs;

LGBT Rights and Israel (2020)

Conference notes:

1. That the State of Israel engages in Human Rights abuses against its minorities and those it occupies in the Palestinian Territories and Golan Heights
2. Israel partakes in the phenomena known internationally as "Pink Washing" which is the calculated flaunting of LGBT rights in an area, region or State that is designed to cover up or "wash" human rights abuses.

Conference believes:

1. LGBT rights are a fundamental part of any equal and diverse Society
2. That LGBT rights in Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories should not be detremented because of the Palestinian cause however LGBT rights should also not be used to hide Israel's Human Rights abuses.
3. The State of Israel's LGBT Rights record should be commended and celebrated.

4. Israel uses malicious and manipulative rhetoric to shift focus from the plight of the Palestinian people in order for the International community to focus on the LGBT rights record of the Palestinian Authority and Terrorist Organization Hamas which is then used to create a false judgement of the Palestinian people as a whole.
5. Use of "Pinkwashing" for any purpose should be condemned, particularly in regards to the Israel - Palestine conflict

Conference resolves:

1. To declare solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine and work with Al Qaws (the rainbow) for gender and sexual diversity in Palestinian society.
2. To oppose the use of "pinkwashing" by the Israeli State and Foreign Ministry.
3. Condemn the abuse of LGBT rights within the occupied Palestinian territories by the so called "Palestinian Authority" and the Terrorist organisation Hamas
4. Progress a dialogue to discuss the merits of Israel's LGBT rights whilst maintaining a firm stance against the Human Rights abuses of the State of Israel.

Engagement with LGB and T People (2020)

Conference notes:

There are an increasing number of transgender people studying in Northern Ireland.

Conference further notes:

There is a lack of understanding between LGB and T people.

Conference believes:

That transgender student issues are different to mainstream LGB issues, as it is gender orientation, not sexual orientation.

Conference resolves:

For NUS-USI to promote and raise awareness of transgender issues and recognise the need for transgender student peer support with in LGB and T societies.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Environmentalism (2018)

Conference notes:

That climate change poses a very real and severe threat to the future of our planet.

Conference notes with concern:

That prominent voices in Northern Ireland politics have recently been dismissive of this important issue and have irresponsibly denied that climate change is man-made.

Conference believes:

That urgent and radical action is required to stop climate change.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI must provide strong leadership on environmental campaigning.
2. NUS-USI should emphatically challenge any future attempts by politicians to trivialise the issue of climate change.
3. NUS-USI must set an example by operating in an environmentally responsible way and support and encourage member unions to do likewise.

Environmental Awareness Committee (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That there is not a formal committee or student support system in place within NUS-USI or the colleges/universities in NI for the officer position of environmental awareness officer in order to plan and organise campaigns for unions.

Conference believes:

1. That in the coming turbulent months and years within the Environmental sphere a stronger environmental voice must be heard from within NUS-USI. This is in order to protect the students and their futures in Northern Ireland.

Conference resolves:

1. That an environmental committee should be formed with at minimum 3 members including one from an FE background and one self-identifying woman; at maximum it should have 6 members. They should meet at least once a semester in order plan and formulate what is needed for unions within NI.

Fracking (2018)

Conference notes:

1. That there are plans to begin using the controversial method of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in Northern Ireland to exploit shale gas reserves in the region.
2. That the process involves pumping huge volumes of water laced with hundreds of chemicals into the ground at high pressure poses a significant threat of water and air pollution and can release chemicals connected with various cancers, birth defects and our health problems.
3. That the fracking has been met with opposition across the world and is currently banned or legally halted in Scotland, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Tunisia, Quebec and Vermont.
4. That the main parties in the Assembly Executive have failed to use their veto to take the threat of fracking off the table.

Conference believes:

1. That, despite the claims of Stormont and the drilling companies, fracking doesn't provide sustainable employment but rather short-term labour that is low paid - not the jobs we deserve!
2. That because this gas will be extracted by big businesses for profit and sold on the international energy markets, ordinary people in Northern Ireland will receive no benefit from the so called 'shale revolution' but will be lumped with all the consequences of the destruction of our environment in the pursuit of profits.

Conference supports:

1. A ban on the fracking process in the interest of environmental protection and public health.
2. The building of grassroots opposition to fracking using a variety of tactics including education, protest, electoral challenges and peaceful direct action.

Conference resolves:

1. To retain the Environment Officer position, as it will be essential in mobilising students to get involved in opposing fracking alongside local communities, environmentalists and the trade unions.

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.

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.
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.