

Ending exploitation while studying

Submitted by Leeds Beckett Students' Union

What's the Problem?

Many students work while they are in education, often in precarious and casualised employment. This includes postgraduate students, whose work is often part of their course of study. The influence of an education system which functions on market logics where the cost of learning is taken by the individual student has created an environment where it is necessary to work to get through your course of study, as well as a system where postgraduate research and teaching staff are working without contracts, without fair payment and without agency. Student volunteers, such as those who take on roles within their student unions or on committees, are often unsupported by their student union and unsure of where to go when they have negative experience in their unpaid roles.

The ongoing industrial disputes within higher and further education demonstrate the crisis of fair employment and workers' rights for staff members in our university and colleges. Postgraduate teaching and research staff have highlighted their mistreatment as part of UCU's ongoing dispute on pay and inequality. Members of the Independent Workers of Great Britain union (IWGB) and United Voices of the World (UVW) have taken action to end the outsourcing of their contracts to external companies which do not provide them with equitable rights and treatment to that of staff members who are directly employed by universities themselves. This two-tiered system of employment discriminates against outsourced workers, who are more likely to be migrants to the UK and from communities of colour.

The marketisation of education combined with the influence of private investors and landlords wishing to profit from students' need for housing has left many students suffering as private renters, with no choice but to live in unsafe accommodation. The efforts of local tenants unions are a vital intervention to a housing market that is designed to benefit landlords.

What could be the Solution?

Create a strong unionised workforce across the UK. Encourage students to join trade and tenant unions to build collective power in their workplaces, which are often their places of study, and their communities.

Students should stand in solidarity with unions as part of a collective struggle against the concentration of wealth and power between a small amount of people who profit from working people's need for food, shelter and funds.

Build power and agency for students who take on voluntary roles in their universities and colleges, informing them of their rights and offering training and spaces of organising and community to fight isolation and exploitation, as well as creating collective power. We should see this work as part of a wider resistance to

the marketisation of education, exploitation of workers and discrimination of those from liberation backgrounds

Sub-proposals

These are policy proposals which have been submitted on this theme. These would have been considered as amendments to the main proposal, however as we have moved the votes and discussion online the DPC has decided to make these separate votes on the subject, to help set the direction of future officer's work. So the below proposals will be considered separately rather than as 'amendments' to the main proposal.

Sub-proposal 1

Submitted by Westminster Students' Union

Currently any volunteering done by an International Student has to fall within their 20 hours work limit. This means students miss out on key employability skills gained through volunteering as they have to prioritise higher paid but less specialised roles. As an International Student who is a Sabbatical Officer of their SU, I've seen we also miss out by not getting as many international students volunteering in our key roles, which means we loose out on hearing a key demographics voices.

We want the following to change:

- Remove volunteering hours from the 20 hour work limit for international students
- Government to change from allowing 20 hours a week to allowing students to work more flexibly (for example 1,040 hours a year or 86 hours a month)
- Ensure there are measures in place to protect International Students from free labour

Sub-proposal 2

Submitted by Huddersfield Students' Union

International students struggle a lot with the restricted hours of working. It is currently only permitted for International students to work 20 hours per week in term time and more hours per week in non-term time.

Nearly all students work whilst they're studying to pay their rent, look after their daily expenses, travelling and food. We try to save for extra expenditure or holiday

trips or for going back home, but it is impossible with the amount we're able to earn.

It is interesting to note, that we are permitted to work extra hours in the holidays where most of the students think of going back home because that is the only period we can see our family. Those who stay back should not be given any restricted working limits.

This creates massive stress even for those who wants to legally work hard, earn and study, and the only reason we cannot do this is limited working hours.

It is important to balance studies and paid work, but this is a choice a student should be able to make freely, without restrictions in place. However, if this could be implemented emphasising the importance of the attendance in the University and complications if not followed the rules, I believe students who are really willing to do both and can organise their time very well, will be benefited from this.

Most of the students take educational or other types of loans for studying abroad, working more hours can help them save at least an amount that they can be satisfied while returning home.

International students spend huge amounts getting to and living in the UK, and do not even get permission to work without any restrictions. This restrains a lot of talented students to miss the opportunities they deserve. With the introduction of the post-study work visa it is vital that International students can gain the skills and experience that will allow them to flourish in their future careers.

Finally, restriction on working hours is not helpful for students who are desirable and want to shape their future by working hard whilst studying, it is a barrier for those who wishes to an extra mile.

What should happen?

The hours an international student can work during term time should be increased to be unlimited.

Sub-proposal 3

Submitted by National Society of Apprentices Delegate

Apprentices should be paid the Real Living Wage. The Apprentice minimum wage is too low, is frequently ignored and should be abolished. Apprentices bring economic value to their employers and society and this must be recognised in their wage. If apprentices are not paid the living wage they are, by definition, not being paid enough to live. Apprentices are both learners and both workers. The idea that apprentices should have a lower minimum wage than other workers to signify the contribution to the cost of their education is both regressive and unfair and disproportionately impacts women and disabled people

