

# NUS Poverty Commission - Students' Union Guide

## #ClassDismissed

NUS' Poverty Commission aims to address barriers working class students face with regards to access and success in post-16 education, and deliver a series of policy recommendations in February 2018.

### The Commission

The Commission will meet three times to hear a range of oral evidence and discuss recommendations from both these sessions and the written evidence submitted by students' unions and stakeholders.

Once we have a series of policy recommendations NUS, along with students' unions, will design a campaigning and influencing strategy based on the recommendations produced in the report.

### Why are we consulting?

We know that for many students in higher education, poverty is a real issue, from increases in the cost of living to changes in student support. However, the issue of poverty and its impact on post-16 education spans far further.

The Poverty Commission will address the realities of working class people wanting to enter and re-enter education and training, the experiences of apprentices and the impact education has on social mobility on leaving education.

### Who are we consulting?

We are inviting submissions from further and higher education students' unions, representative bodies of apprentices, youth and community organisations, education institutions, non-formal education providers and projects, education sector stakeholders, trade unions, professional bodies, think tanks, campaigning and lobbying groups, charities and NGOs, and academics and education professionals.

### What can students' unions do?

Students' unions have a unique perspective on the needs of students and are well placed to represent their views and opinions.

The Poverty Commission is an opportunity for students and students' unions to have their voices heard on the issues that affect them, and feed into the evidence gathering process. We want to hear your thoughts and base our report and recommendations on the experiences of a wide range of people and communities.

We're inviting students' unions to get involved in the Poverty Commission by encouraging you

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to fill out and return our written submission and to run activities locally to support your students to share their stories and discuss the barriers they face in accessing and excelling in education. The responses we receive to our consultation will be discussed by the Commissioners and form part of the report.

The written submission process will be open on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October and will close on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December at 1pm. Please return completed submissions to [povertycommission@nus.org.uk](mailto:povertycommission@nus.org.uk)

## What can you do locally?

- Run panel discussions or round-table events where you discuss the barriers facing working class people in education. Panellists could include students, academics and staff from working class backgrounds and from your widening participation or student services teams. They can also include representatives from organisations in your local community with experience in supporting working class people into education.
- Raise awareness by creating Humans-of-New-York style profiles where you collect portraits of students and other local people from working class backgrounds and encourage them to tell their stories in their own words. You can post these on social media using the hashtag #ClassDismissed, and/or compile them in a report to send it to us.
- Ask students to take selfies and share their stories on social media using the #ClassDismissed hashtag.
- Get your newspaper to write an article about the Poverty Commission, featuring the stories of students from working class backgrounds.
- Invite budding filmmakers and vloggers in your student body to film themselves

and their friends talking about their experience of accessing and excelling in education as working class students.

- Contact local organisations such as your local Citizens Advice Bureau, JobCentre and local charities, asking them to submit evidence about their experience of supporting working class people to access and excel in education.

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the theory of how different forms of oppression intersect and impact on people's lives.

We recognise that when classism is discussed without also looking at other types of identities and oppressions, the dialogue often revolves around the experiences of those with more relative privilege in society. This can mean that the issues and experiences of those who are more socially marginalised are overshadowed, dismissed or erased.

Intersectionality is understanding that one person's oppression will be different to another person's when multiple oppressions are at play. For example, class, gender and racial oppression will work together to make a working class Black woman's struggle different to a working class white man's.

When planning events and campaigns, you can ensure you consider and practice intersectionality by:

- Including and collaborating with liberation reps, campaign groups, clubs and societies when planning and running events
- Ensuring all types of access needs are considered when organising events and running online campaigns e.g. physical access, prayer space, dietary requirements, quiet or safe space, large print, coloured paper (this is not an exhaustive list).

- Reviewing the NUS Women's Campaign's Feminist Society Toolkit, which go into more detail about how to include disabled people, trans people and sex workers in your campaigns. You can find it [here](#).
- Checking out the NUS Disabled Students' Campaign Toolkit for further information [here](#).

## How can I follow the progress of the Commission?

The Poverty Commission is due to report towards the end of February 2018 and we will circulate the final report and recommendations at that time. However, alongside the formal evidence gathering of the Commission, NUS will be working with students and community members to tell their stories and experiences of accessing and succeeding in post-16 education via social media. You can follow and engage with us using the hashtag #ClassDismissed on Twitter.

We will also be announcing who our Commissioners are on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to coincide with the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. For more information visit [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

## Keep in touch

### Let us know how you get on!

Email us at [povertycommission@nus.org.uk](mailto:povertycommission@nus.org.uk)

Tweet us: @nusuk, @nusconnect

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