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Purpose of This Document

This document contains all the policy currently in effect for the Priority Zone.

Policy Lapse

Policy Lapses in 2 circumstances

If a subsequent policy over-rides it.

After 3 years unless National Conference votes to renew it.

Policy passed at National Conference 2014 will lapse at the end of National Conference 2017.

What You Need To Do

If you are considering submitting policy to National Conference you should first check whether any policy is currently 'live' for that issue and whether you need to change the National Union's current stance on that area of work.

If you require this document in an alternative format contact
executiveoffice@nus.org.uk

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Zone | Priority 2014

NC_P_14101: A New Deal for the Next Generation

Conference believes:

1. Continued attacks on the prospects of students both in education and in their communities represent a whole generation let down by those with power
2. A feeling of powerlessness and precariousness is increasingly common among the rising generation, squeezed by global recession and biting financial pressures, uncertain about its prospects and its future
3. We too often feel let down by politicians who fail to speak on our behalf in a world where the odds are already stacked against us
4. Young people and students' prospects continue to worsen due to rising unemployment and living costs
5. Evidence from Ipsos Mori public opinion polling shows more than two thirds of people believe the UK government does not adequately consider future generations in the decisions it makes today
6. The next UK general election is due to take place on Thursday 7 May 2015
7. The Browne Review into Higher Education funding was commissioned in 2009 and was not due to report until after the 2010 General Election
8. It was widely expected that the review would propose a rise in the cap of tuition fees in England
9. As a result NUS ran a high profile campaign with the aim of persuading any candidate running to be an MP in the UK to pledge to vote against any proposed rise in university tuition fees
10. Every Liberal Democrat MP that was elected signed the pledge with over 200 Labour Candidates and 13 Conservative candidates
11. Nick Clegg's main promise to voters in 2010 was that there 'would be no more broken promises' if voters backed the Liberal Democrats
12. After the election, the Lib Dems formed a coalition government with the Conservatives
13. On 9th December 2010 the government raised the tuition fee cap to £9k by only 21 votes
14. Every single Liberal Democrat MP that was elected to Parliament signed the pledge to vote against any rise in fees and 27 of those MPs broke their pledge, including Nick Clegg
15. We should be alarmed by the electoral rise of a "respectable" nationalist right, including UKIP.
16. Building the movement to stop the government selling off the student loan book to private companies is an urgent priority.
17. George Osborne confirmed during the Autumn Statement in 2013 that the government is going ahead with the plans to sell off student loans taken out between 1998-2012.
18. There is widespread concern that handing over our student debt to private companies will lead to an increase in the financial burdens placed on students and graduates, as the new owners of the debts hike up interest rates in order to make more profits. These concerns are well placed given the fact that:

19. A secret report for the government has revealed, in order to ensure the student loan book is profitable for private companies the cap on interest for repayments would need to be increased or removed all together. This proposal would cause student debt to soar and represents a retrospective hike in tuition fees.
20. The Minister for Universities, David Willetts, made clear to a parliamentary select committee last June that it is very easy for the rate of interest to be hiked up: "In the letter that every student gets there are some words to the effect that government reserve the right to change the terms of the loans."
21. Therefore, David Willetts' reassurances that the terms and conditions on student loans will not be changed following the privatization of the student loan book ring hollow. In the run up to the 2015 General Election we have a window of opportunity to put maximum pressure on MPs and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates to publicly oppose the sell off of student debt.
22. Education is a human right, and should not be in the hands of private financial companies.
23. A similar loanbook sell-off in New Zealand in 2012, saw interest rates on repayment for existing borrowers raised from 10% to 12%.
24. That the sell-off of student loans has the potential to adversely affect students' financial situations through higher debts.
25. Toni Pearce, NUS President, has previously said the sell-off was 'extremely concerning' as it would see 'the public subsidising a private company making a profit from public debt'.
26. In January, the NUS National Executive Council resolved, 'To support and promote the national week of action to stop the privatisation of student debt'.
27. The NUS National Executive were right to support grassroots action against the sell-off, but more political pressure is needed to prevent the sell-off.
28. NUS should campaign against this policy and build a movement against it until the government ceases the selling-off of student loans.
29. NUS research has shown that when asked what their greatest fear about the future is, more than half of students cite pathways to work or employment
30. Many students are also workers, and NUS' Pound in Your Pocket research showed more than two thirds are employed during term time or holidays
31. Our work on employment must focus on ensuring good sustainable jobs for the next generation and pathways to work which are non-exploitative and fairly paid
32. A New Deal for Work is an essential component of a New Deal for the Next Generation
33. In December youth unemployment was 920,000, 20% of 16-24 year olds.
34. Young people are at the sharp end of mass unemployment created by the capitalist crisis and a management offensive against workers in public and private sectors (2.5 million unemployed).
35. Many new jobs will be "precarious": low-paid, casualised and with few rights.
36. The campaigning partnership NUS has signed with the TUC affirms our movements' shared belief guaranteed employment and quality jobs; and where workers enjoy strong collective and individual rights at work
37. The NUS-TUC partnerships sets out a path to greater collaboration between the student and trade union movements, developing activists and campaigning together rather than apart.

Conference further believes:

1. At the 2010 general election, just 44 per cent of those aged 18 to 24 voted, compared 76 per cent of the over 65s

2. The introduction of individual voter registration (IER) threatens to further reduce the number of students and young people voting
3. The gulf in voting levels between the generations leaves young people losing out in policy terms
4. That NUS' approach to the general election needs to be both local and national, supporting students to win locally and on a national level.
5. To achieve a new deal for the next generation we will need public support, and this is best achieved through working together with people in the communities we live in and finding common cause.
6. That NUS analysis of the 2011 census data demonstrates that there are over 60 constituencies in the UK with over 10 per cent full time students, and that the strength of the student voice and the student vote should be reaffirmed at every opportunity.
7. Young people are significantly less likely vote in either local or national elections than older voters meaning they are inadequately considered in party political dialogue.
8. Changes made to electoral voter registration have complicated the process and effectively disenfranchise some groups more than others, such as international students.
9. Much higher voter turnout of students in elections would be a significant demonstration of power.
10. Liberal Democrat MPs were mainly elected off the back of that pledge and had huge support from students in constituencies with a high proportion of students where they queued for hours to be able to vote in 2010
11. That Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats not only betrayed students that voted for them on the basis of that pledge but they also called into question the fundamental basis of our democracy by seemingly lying their way into power
12. The Liberal Democrats had a chance to make tuition fees a deal breaker in the coalition agreement but chose to sell out students to get into number 10
13. Since 2010 we have seen education in England be dismantled and ideological policies that prop up elitism and force a market pushed through parliament
14. Nick Clegg's 'I'm Sorry' video will come as little comfort those students who voted for the Liberal Democrats under the guise of a different type of politics
15. Since coming to power the Liberal Democrats have backed plans to introduce individual voter registration, which would in effect remove 1000s of students of the electoral register
16. NUS has a responsibility restore student's faith in politics or else face alienating an entire generation from voting and we have to hold any MP that broke their pledge accountable
17. We must fight the idea there is a problem with immigration. Strain on jobs and services is a result of the government and private sector cuts, seeking to boost profits and the rich's wealth at the expense of all workers.
18. Withdrawal from the EU would not solve these problems but simply create a more independent neo-liberal UK in which nationalism runs riot.
19. The general election provides an opportunity for an effective campaign on these issues.
20. We should oppose all cuts to jobs and fight for expanded public services to create socially useful, secure, well-paid jobs.
21. There is plenty of wealth in society: we should tax the rich to create jobs.
22. We should oppose casualisation and job insecurity, including zero hours contracts (which should be banned) and unpaid internships.

Conference resolves:

1. To campaign for a new deal for the next generation across the themes of education, work and community
2. To use the opportunity of the next General Election to win for students both locally and nationally
3. To continue and develop the new campaigning partnership between NUS and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to work together for a better deal for students and workers through a strong collective voice
4. To work with external allies and partners to maximise voter registration and electoral participation among young people and students to ensure their voices are heard
5. To launch a general election hub in 2014, and support every students' union to develop their own election strategy - supporting students to win both locally and nationally.
6. To empower students and to connect student communities with wider society, including through continuing our community organising work and training students as community organisers on their campuses and in their communities.
7. To campaign nationally for political parties to adopt NUS demands, taken from policies passed or ratified by National Conference, and chosen by NUS NEC.
8. To focus on cross-generational community work and voter registration strategies.
9. NUS to strongly focus on student voter registration in relation to the 2015 general election.
10. NUS to provide a consistent model or framework on student voter registration, including influencing local authorities to simplify the process of voter registration.
11. NUS should influence Citizenship in the national curriculum and provide guidance to colleges and universities on how to include citizenship education in their programmes.
12. To explore the case for automatic voter registration.
13. To stand up for those students betrayed by Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats
14. To campaign against Nick Clegg and any MP that broke their pledge to students by publicly highlighting their broken promise
15. Make opposition to UKIP and the nationalist right a central part of our campaigning in the run up to the general election.
16. Call on the Labour Party to stop pandering to anti-migrant politics.
17. Support freedom of movement and equal rights for all.
18. Organise under the banner of opposing the privatization of student loans and defending education.
19. Lobby MPs and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates to sign a pledge promising to oppose the privatization of student loans.
20. Coordinate national weeks and days of action –support and Students' Unions and campus societies to organize 'debt ins', creative stunts, mass petitioning, protests and public meetings.
21. Campaign against youth and graduate unemployment and to "fund decent jobs for all", developing a manifesto and working with trade union youth sections.
22. Campaign for the Minimum Wage to be raised to the Living Wage, without exemptions.
23. Campaign to unionise students who work.
24. To support the NUS Commission on the Future of Work.
25. To support the forging of a New Deal on the Future of Work.

100 Priority Zone 2015

NC_P_15101: A New Politics for the Next Generation

Conference Believes:

1. There are just 16 days left until a verdict on the current coalition government will be given at the general election on Thursday 7th May 2015.
2. The current government which took office in May 2010 was formed in back room deals with a limited mandate has shown contempt for democracy, failed to act on its own commitments for political reform and has used cynical acts including the 'Lobbying Act' and rushed changes in voter registration system to avoid accountability.
3. It has since presided over growing inequality and intolerance: where low income and public sector workers, women, immigrants and the most vulnerable in society have been unfairly targeted by this government's damaging programme – and this brings shame on the United Kingdom.
4. It has also presided over increasing dysfunction in our education system through disruption caused by free schools, funding cuts across further and higher education, and the trebling of university fees backed by student loans that will bind a generation and still create unsustainable levels of debt.
5. This failure of leadership has reinforced a disillusionment with the political system, turned people against each other and allowed the far right to flourish in a United Kingdom that has never been less united.
6. That distrust and cynicism of politics runs much deeper than a single government and that politicians from all sides are implicated in the way politics shuts out ordinary people and reinforces establishment elites, leaving us poorly prepared to face the challenges of the future.
7. One reason so few young people vote in elections is that huge numbers also feel uninspired by the available choice.
8. The Labour Party has made this situation worse by accepting much of the Tories' agenda – on cuts, migrants' rights
9. Many NUS campaigns, including for the general election, have been dominated by rhetoric about intergenerational injustice and the voice of young people.
10. Millions of our members are mature students and we advocate life-long learning.
11. Access to undergraduate for mature students was hardest hit by the tripling of fees.
12. Our broken political system only offers a choice between different degrees of austerity – Tory or Labour.
13. These cuts mean further attacks on students, workers, and the most oppressed groups in society.
14. NUS conference 2014 voted "to reject the absurd idea that our society lacks the resources to provide decently for its citizens, and make campaigning for the democratisation of our society's wealth a priority running through NUS's work." We said then, and now, that cuts to education, services, jobs and pay are unnecessary, and should be stopped by taxing the rich and putting the banks under democratic control. There is immense wealth in society – the Sunday Times Rich List has been enriching itself at our expense through austerity – we just need to put it to better use.
15. Unfortunately, the stance we voted for was not reflected by NUS's campaigning.

16. We can't win just by voting. Whoever wins this election, we'll have to fight the new government to fulfil our aims, with a strategy of protest and direct action from the outset. In the case of pressuring Labour, we should work with trade unions and the party's left.
17. NUS leaders have a history of refusing to stand up for students and confront the government when Labour is in power.
18. Labour leaders' talk of 6k undergrad fees and graduate taxes isn't good enough and doesn't help FE, but shows they are feeling pressure from students. We should capitalise and push for more.
19. Our broken political system won't represent our needs unless we force it to. Whoever wins the election, we must give that government no choice but to meet our demands, through a determined protest and direct action campaign. Lobbying is important – but powerless on its own.
20. Defence of migrants' rights will be one of the key issues in the General Election.
21. We should be alarmed by the rise of UKIP; but the main problem is with other parties going along with the anti-migrant agenda, which feeds UKIP
22. That this government has presided over an economically illiterate austerity agenda and justified sweeping public sector funding cuts which have impacted especially on oppressed groups.

Conference Further Believes:

1. We need a New Deal for students.
2. That without significant reform our political system cannot deliver a New Deal - and a 'politics as usual' approach will fail to tackle the huge challenges we face.
3. The first step in winning a New Deal must be to ensure the new Parliament delivers a politics fit for students - acting now through the ballot box and in Westminster after the election.
4. That those who have broken their promises since the last general election do not deserve a place in this new Parliament and should be held to account for their actions.
5. If the Tories remain, we will need clear and inspiring policies to fight them effectively; if Labour wins the election, we should demand they implement clear and inspiring policies.
6. These policies should include:
 - Decent, secure jobs for everyone with a Living Wage and rights at work.
 - Stopping and reversing cuts, rebuilding decent public services for everyone, and tackling inequality by taxing the rich and taking public ownership and control over the banks.
 - An end to scapegoating migrants: freedom of movement and equal rights
 - Strong action for equality for black people, LGBT people, women, disabled and other oppressed groups.
 - Strong and fast action on climate change.
7. We should aim for a government which serves the majority of society currently excluded from wealth and power
8. Some issues do disproportionately affect people by age, but most intergenerational injustice rhetoric neglects how overwhelmingly, the big injustices of our society (and of austerity) hinge on socioeconomic class and on the oppression of Women, LGBTQ, Disabled and Black people.
9. The Tories even used intergenerational justice to defend austerity.
10. We can't win just by voting. Whoever wins this election, we'll have to fight the new government to fulfil our aims, with a strategy of protest and direct action

from the outset. In the case of pressuring Labour, we should work with trade unions and the party's left.

11. That division, despondency and inequality are the symptoms of something bigger; that these social ills are the consequence of the austerity agenda and public sector funding cuts.

Conference Resolves:

1. To condemn the record of this government and take steps to ensure the public remembers those who have broken their promises.
2. In the new Parliament, work with those who commit to and deliver significant political reform – including a right of recall, online voting and extensive devolution to the nations and within England.
3. To ensure all students and young people are eligible and registered to vote for every future election; delivering Votes at 16, citizenship education and integrated voter registration.
4. Within six months of the election of the new Parliament, hold a national lobby of politicians at all levels, taking our demands for political reform to the very centre of power.
5. To work with other progressive organisations wherever possible in this mission.
6. To issue a statement in the run up to the general election on this basis.
7. To work with trade unions and other organisations on developing these demands around which NUS will campaign.
8. To stop pretending that issues that are really to do with class and liberation, are about generations, and stop distracting from the real explanations and ignoring many NUS members.
9. To stand up for students, the working class and oppressed groups.
10. To make clear that the issues we face are really to do with class and liberation, rather than generations, and to include the voice of mature students in our messaging on the general election.
11. To support and encourage SUs to campaign against local services cuts.
12. To remain committed to an economy that democratises our society's vast wealth.
13. To plan a strategy of protest and direct action to demand reversal of all cuts and expansion of public services and decent jobs, funded by properly enforcing increased taxes on the rich and taking democratic control over the banks.
14. To campaign for a proportionally representative Parliament and a preferential voting system, based on Single-Transferable Vote as recommended by the Electoral Reform Society and used by most of the student movement.
15. To plan a post-election strategy, using protest and direct action to force the government to fulfil our demands.
16. To continue to prioritise opposition to UKIP but also publicly and loudly criticise mainstream parties going along with the anti-migrant agenda, particularly Labour.
17. To work with MPs and other progressive organisations aimed at the cessation of austerity and reversal of public sector funding cuts, and to make this demand a central tenet of the lobby outlined above.

100 Priority Zone 2016

Motion 101 | Working for students' unions, winning more power for students

Conference Believes

1. National Conference 2014 stated that students are at their most powerful when they organise collectively.
2. Student unionism, the collective action of students, is a long and proud tradition in the UK.
3. Students' unions are the collective action of students in colleges, universities and all other providers of further and higher education.
4. Students' unions work to make education better and more accessible, secure students more power, distribute it more equally and ensure every individual student is just as powerful as their institution.
5. Students' unions are the grassroots who offer students independent advice, world-class facilities and unrivalled opportunities to expand their knowledge and political awareness.
6. Students' unions defend students' interests and work to ensure that students are safe, supported and are not exploited and are the best progressive force students have in forging a better society.
7. Every student should have access to an independent, autonomous and student-led students' union and through the extension of student unionism, through students' unions, students will win more power.
8. One of the many worrying aspects of the government's HE Green Paper is the announcement that it is 'currently taking steps through our trade union reforms to improve union practices and increase transparency around how funds are spent'.
9. At the same time the government has announced the tabling of its trade union bill, in which it aims to undermine the right to strike by increasing limitations on legal industrial actions.
10. The Trade Union Bill would criminalise many forms of trade union activity; further limit the already very limited right to strike; and obstruct trade unions and the workers' movement from maintaining political representation.
11. Even before this Bill, there was a whole raft of laws aimed at crippling trade unions and stifling workers' rights, dating back to the Thatcher government.
12. The Tories are blatant hypocrites, requiring 40% or more for a strike when their party took office with less than 25% of the electorate.
13. The TUC has termed these attacks on TUs as the biggest attacks in 30 years.
14. The tone was set in the Queen's speech last year, which identified the human rights act as a key target of the Tory government.

15. We have seen similar attacks on student and trade unions take place under most Tory majority government in recent memory.
16. The NUS has started to raise awareness about these threats through its #loveSUs campaign.

Conference Further Believes

1. The Westminster government's area reviews in FE and its Green Paper on the future of HE threaten student representation and the autonomy of students' unions.
2. Rising numbers of students, mergers in colleges, the government's policies on apprenticeships, devolution and changes to the funding of education have changed the landscape of education and the priorities of institutions and providers and threaten the campaigning power of students' unions.
3. These changes have put pressures on students' unions which are underfunded or not funded at all – particularly in FE – and now have less access to national funding and grants.
4. Students' unions affiliate to NUS and form its membership and NUS exists to champion, safeguard and make students' unions stronger.
5. The government's attacks on SUs are part of a wider climate of attacks on civil liberties that extend well beyond our unions.
6. The weakening of trade unions is a big reason why so many graduates and others face low pay, insecurity and a lack of rights, even when fortunate enough to find jobs.
7. Unions are a key aspect of a democratic society that allow us to debate, decide and take action on key issues, which affect us as students or employees.
8. Limitations on the right to organise and on the autonomy of unions is a worrying sign of a government clamping down on dissent.
9. It is crucial to offer a broad, united, opposition to these attacks.
10. NUS should concretely help the campaign for trade union rights.
11. Universities are increasingly providing higher education through franchised further education colleges in Wales, however without the same requirements for an autonomous, funded students' union in the colleges.
12. Students receiving higher education through a franchised college have a right to an autonomous representation structure that supports their needs.

Conference Resolves

1. Work to increase the number of students who are represented by an autonomous students' unions and work with members to ensure more students are directly involved with their students' union.
2. Launch a programme of work to increase the block grant of every students' union and launch specific research to campaign for the statutory funding for student representation in FE.
3. Learn from changes to provision in the nations to extend and prioritise NUS' work in FE union development and ring-fence funding for FE students' unions to campaign on area reviews in England, and devolved elections in the nations.

4. Continue to defend students' unions against any moves to restrict their autonomy or right to organise, campaign or represent students, together with trade unions.
5. As Northern Ireland is the only region of the U.K. which has no legal requirement or obligation on institutions to have a students' union; that NUS continue to support the ongoing work of NUS-USI to introduce legislation through the Northern Ireland Assembly for independent, autonomous and fairly resources students' unions across higher and further education institutions.
6. Lobby sector bodies and mission groups to support and defend students' unions and work with their institutions to provide an increase in block grant for their students' unions.
7. Support students' unions in local areas through the #LoveSUs campaign to work together to influence local decision makers to support and deliver for students' unions
8. Ensure that students' unions are consulted in the creation of all NUS projects and campaigns.
9. To work with unions, the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom and Right to Strike to oppose the TU Bill.
10. To demand the repeal of all anti-trade union laws and a positive charter of rights: to join a union, organise, strike and do things which make strikes effective, including picketing and solidarity action.
11. Work and campaign alongside trade unions and civil society organisations to launch a broad campaign against the government's attempt to limit our ability to act in an autonomous and effective way.
12. Produce and promote useful materials explaining the implications of the government's proposals for student unions and trade unions, how the two are linked, and what kind of actions can be taken.
13. To create a section of the NUS website to promote union membership and highlight the fight for workers' rights.
14. Encourage local Student unions to approach trade unions and civil society groups in their localities in the context in order to hold joint events and initiatives to protect our democratic rights.