nus NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Priority Zone Live Policy 2016-19

If you need this document in another format contact NUS on 0845 5210 262 or email events@nus.org.uk

Key information

Purpose of this document

This document contains all the policy currently in effect for the Priority Zone. This is the policy that the National President is responsible for implementing and is sometime known as 'Live Policy'.

Policy Lapse

Policy Lapses in 2 circumstances:

1. If a subsequent policy over-rides it.
2. After 3 years unless National Conference votes to renew it.

Policy passed at National Conference 2015 will lapse at the end of National Conference 2018.

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, please contact **democracy@nus.org.uk**.

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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
12. Wales, however without the same requirements for an autonomous, funded students' union in the colleges.
13. 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.

Priority Zone policy passed at National conference 2017

Motion 101 | Liberate Education

Conference believes

1. Post-16 education is facing a sustained, intense assault from the Government in terms of access, quality and scope.
2. The Government's area reviews in FE have caused some colleges to shut, while cuts have led to job losses
3. The Higher Education and Research Bill represents, even in amended form, a significant intensification of marketization.
4. Increasing fees is detrimental to the accessibility of education.
5. The new regime ushered in by the Higher Education Bill, linking TEF scores to recruitment numbers, is likely to disproportionately affect international students.
6. The government's refusal to remove international students from immigration quotas means we can expect more raids, detention, and deportations of students this year.
7. Brexit campaigns, run on anti-migration platforms, and the aftermath of the referendum have caused higher levels of insecurity and violence for migrant students and black students.

8. Securitization of education targets both international and Muslim students through the Prevent programme.
9. Accessibility to education is determine by the right to study free of intimidation and harassment, a right not afforded to women students and staff members who face endemic harassment and abuse.
10. These factors combine to result in record levels of student mental health problems, in the context of cuts to or inadequate mental health support.
11. Students are suffering the worst economic prospects for several generations
12. We have been hit by the greatest drop in income and employment in recent years compared with older age groups.
13. We face even greater barriers to achieving economic independence and success than they did five years ago.
14. Children born into poverty fare the worst in education, falling behind all other groups. Just 28.3 per cent on free school meals achieve at least five GCSEs at A* to C
15. During the recession and up to 2013, people under 34 experienced the steepest fall in incomes and employment, less access to decent housing and better-paid jobs, and deepening poverty.
16. Between 2008 and 2013, those aged 16-24 lost 60 pence an hour on average, dragging average pay down to £6.70. For the 25-34 age bracket, wages fell by an average of £1.40 to £10.60.
17. This is what living in such an extremely unequal country means. More and more people, most of them young, are being locked out of opportunities and privileges.
18. Between 2008 and 2013, black people's pay declined by an average of £1.20 an hour, almost double the overall average fall for the UK
19. Economic inequality is often reproduced and reinforced by education instead of being eradicated by it.

Conference further believes

1. We're facing a crisis in the education sector for students and staff alike.
2. This crisis has been many years in the making, emerging from the cumulative effects of repeated reforms, leaving education under-funded and marketised.
3. When discussing teaching quality and access, we must go beyond the limited framework proposed by Government – one which emphasizes a damaging role for private, profit-seeking companies.
4. NUS must propose a radically different vision for a free, liberated, and truly accessible education for all.
5. All students deserve access to education free from harassment, intimidation or violence, regardless of background.
6. Meeting the challenges outlined is a key priority for students across the UK and will require organisational unity regionally and across nations.

Conference resolves

1. To campaign with unions and grassroots groups for better and fairer funding
2. To produce materials putting forward a vision of publicly-funded and accessible education

3. To work with other organisations to nationally resist attacks on migrants and international students and forward a progressive case for migration.
4. Work with local unions on anti-hate crime work, including local reporting facilities and the creation of national guidelines, networks and resources.
5. To produce materials to support students' unions to campaign against sexual violence and support survivors.
6. To launch awareness campaigns about the student mental health crisis and support students campaigning on the issue.
7. To share information and ideas, and support efforts across campuses to liberate the curriculum including diverse approaches to teaching and assessment.
8. To encourage student unions to work with local campaign groups and union to join their work with those of the community around them.
9. To deepen the regional networks to achieve better unity of action.
10. Dedicate a section on the NUS website to share resources, ideas, and campaigns of the many initiatives around the UK including diverse approaches to teaching and assessment to liberate the curriculum.
11. To ensure that economic inequality is a central feature of our campaigns on liberating education.

Emergency Motion 1 | General Election

Conference believes

1. Prime Minister Theresa May announced a snap General Election on April 18th.
2. The General Election will take place on June 8th.
3. On April 18th Teresa May announced a snap election for June 8th
4. June is a time when campuses are quite, halls are empty and students are back home and working.
5. Millions of students are already missing from the electoral roll due to individual registration
6. We must not let students be sidelined.
7. NUS needs to show strategic leadership now about mobilising students.

Conference further believes

1. Many students across the UK will be concerned about the implications of this election, which will effectively be a referendum on the terms of Brexit.
2. Theresa May's government has already made clear that its approach to leaving the EU is harsher border controls and a deepening regime of cuts and privatisation of public services – from education to the NHS.
3. Now is a moment for our movement to come together, to hold politicians to account, and to put forward the demands of students across the UK.
4. The manifesto will focus on the key issues that our members have put forward in the last year: the rights of international students, the safeguarding of education and funding agreements, and a proper investment strategy into our public services.

5. The coming months will be crucial for our movement. As well as making sure students come out and register to vote, we will need to use our national networks to influence the outcome of the elections.
6. NUS' strategy must respect the diversity amongst our members not seeking to be divisive or partisan but focussing on the issues.
7. Conference policy should be turned into a manifesto for students and presented to the major parties
8. NUS must harness the power of digital to transform the landscape of this election.
9. We should help students to register to vote at both there term time and home addresses.
10. We should launch our largest ever virtual GOTV campaign
11. It is vital that we hold politicians to account for the decisions they have made and the votes they have cast.
12. We need a strategy for first 100 days of a new government to get our priorities to the top of their agenda.

Conference resolves

1. To communicate with all students in our NUS Extra Card database on polling day, reminding them to vote.
2. To collaborate with Students' Unions to hold hustings for candidates across the UK.
3. To organise national days of action, encouraging voter registration.
4. To work with student accommodation providers to facilitate registration drives.
5. To write to all political parties making clear our demands, and hold mass lobbies of prospective candidates.
6. To divert resource to running the biggest voter registration drive in NUS' history.
7. To support SUs to seek meetings with candidates across the political spectrum and to track results so that we can apply pressure to local candidates.
8. To mobilise every NUS committee member on election day, with people in every city supporting GOTV activities.
9. To publish a guide to each parties policies on the issues which affect students: Brexit, Education funding, Housing and Welfare.
10. To publish student guides on voting process.
11. To publish toolkits for students on how to see the voting record of MPs.

Emergency Motion 2 | General Election

CN: Sexual Harrassment, Sexual Assault and Rape

Conference believes

1. There is a systemic societal problem with preventing, tackling, and convicting, sexual assault and rape.
2. NUS has a moral and ethical responsibility to campaign on this issue, but in order to be taken credibly as a campaigning force it is essential that we have our own house in order

3. On March 24th 2017, two days before NUS Women's Conference, an anonymous social media account began trolling the event hashtag with wildly inaccurate and inflammatory victim-blaming and rape apologist statements.

Conference further believes

1. Approximately 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped in England and Wales alone every year. These figures include assaults by penetration and attempts.
2. Nearly half a million adults are sexually assaulted in England and Wales each year
3. 1 in 5 women aged 16 - 59 has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16
4. Only around 15% of those who experience sexual violence choose to report to the police
5. Approximately 90% of those who are raped know the perpetrator prior to the offence
6. The conviction rate in 2015-16 was 7.5% of recorded allegations
7. The above statistics clearly demonstrate the chasm which exists between survivors' experiences, and justice.
8. This now-deleted social media account referenced in CB3 used the event hashtag to push an anti-survivor narrative, targeted specifically at the women's campaign which has always been the part of NUS which carries out high profile work against sexual violence.
9. This action enforced a power dynamic which attempted to silence, or undermine, survivors.
10. It is unacceptable that perpetrators of sexual violence are able to infiltrate both our social media and physical spaces unchecked.
11. NUS states that we have a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment, but our current mechanisms to protect victims where an incident has occurred at an NUS event – physically or online - or where the perpetrator and victim are NUS members, are inadequate.

Conference resolves

1. To reaffirm our commitment to zero tolerance for sexual harassment.
2. To reaffirm our values; that we believe the victim.
3. To immediately convene a taskforce to critically assess and review the NUS processes for reporting code of conduct violations, with a specific focus on effectively supporting survivors of sexual assault and rape, ensuring the survivor's needs are prioritised, and removing perpetrators from NUS membership without relying on the criminal justice system.

Priority Zone Policy passed at National Conference 2018

Motion PC101 | Student Poverty

Conference believes

1. The NUS Student Poverty Commission has told us something clear and simple – it is time to get real about student finance.
2. Nearly half of Britain's students are worried about having enough money to buy essential groceries such as bread and milk from an average weekly food spend of £24.32, according to NUS research.
3. Research also found that almost half of all students are struggling to get together enough money to cover basic costs such as travel and textbooks.
4. Travel costs of £17.35 a week are also a cause for concern, with 43% of students worried about daily travel to university or college.
5. Almost three-quarters of students (71%) cite worries about money as a cause of mental health issues.
6. 23% have used non-government loans to extend their finances.
7. In 2015 student rents in London averaged £226 a week compared with £147 elsewhere, eating up their maintenance support before all other costs.
8. The current minimum wage rate for an apprentice is a shameful £3.50 per hour.
9. The Government is in denial about what is in reality a student poverty crisis. When challenged on the gap between maintenance and costs for university students in October 2017, the then Universities Minister Jo Johnson argued that students should "live more frugally".
10. The Department for Education has repeatedly refused to publish research into Student Income and Expenditure carried out in 2014/15.
11. Universities, Colleges and Training Providers are also in denial - often making decisions on the way they run programmes that make the problem worse for students.
12. A large proportion of students simply can't afford to participate in education- but are blamed for a "lack of aspiration".
13. The intense focus on the £9k paid to universities means that the amount FE, UG and PG students actually have to live on rarely gets discussed, underlying issues rarely debated, and the impacts ignored.
14. Universities promoting first year accommodation as the only way to make friends that then profit from that rent should be banned from doing so.
15. The main source of income for the majority of undergraduate students is a maintenance loan from Student Finance England (SFE).
16. Maintenance grant and loans are means tested for the majority of undergraduate students against their parents' income.
17. Maintenance support is not enough to cover a large proportion of students living costs[1]

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/29/maintenance-loans-are-leaving-students-265-short-every-month

18. Many students now rely on additional income to be able to cover basic living costs[2]
19. A large number of students experience some level of mental health and stress whilst at University[3]
20. Young people aged 18 are treated as an adult by the law.[4]
21. Students are struggling to afford the cost of living whilst at university. The cost of living for students is an ever-increasing problem, and has increased at a higher rate than maintenance funding.
22. NUS research shows that many students find it difficult to budget and hardship funds see a spike in applications at the end of each term.
23. Student finance is often paid in excess of two weeks after the stated payment date
24. Students should not be subjected to unnecessary financial stress like this
25. Financial pressures, and their impact on student drop-out rates, are particularly high during the first few weeks of study.
26. The interest on the student loans presents an ethical dilemma for many Muslim students who want to attend higher education.
27. The rate of current tuition fees coupled with the absence of interest free student finance is preventing thousands of students from accessing higher education every year and resulting in disenfranchisement.

Conference further believes

1. An NUS that believes in a Living Wage in wider society should develop proper proposals on a Living Income for Students.
2. So that all students benefit, proposals should ensure that help goes to those that need it most- where costs are higher, work is more scarce or where parents can't help.
3. NUS should cause universities and colleges to make a commitment to working to reduce both direct and indirect costs that students face and expanding the number of opportunities to work within institutions.
4. As a movement, student discounts on core costs should be something we spend more time campaigning for and less time profiting from.
5. We should demand that detailed research on student income and expenditure for all our members is carried out, published and acted on by Government.
6. Needing to have a job to cover basic living costs whilst studying can be a cause of additional stress and mental health issues.
7. Maintenance grants and loans should be sufficient to cover basic living costs of all students
8. Students are being negatively affected by means testing when their parents are unable to financially 'top up' or support students financially.
9. University students are considered to be independent adults however are still expected to be reliant on their parents' income after moving out for University.

[2] https://www.endsleigh.co.uk/press-releases/10-august-2015/
[3] https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/08/09/quarter-britains-students-are-afflicted-mental-hea/
[4] https://www.gov.uk/age-of-criminal-responsibility

10. Many households have an income above £30k however can still struggle to financially support students who are living away from home during their time at University but still have a reduction in maintenance and bursary support.
11. That the replacement of grants and bursaries with loans has caused additional pressure and financial difficulty for students.
12. That maintenance funding support should reflect the reality of students' needs and should cover basic living essentials.
13. That estranged students become particularly vulnerable during the summer, and their finance packages are often insufficient to meet their living costs.
14. That final-year students experience a steep decline in maintenance funding while many costs (such as rent) do not end early, and current employment rates mean a significant number of students are unlikely to guarantee a salary will be able to compensate for the reduction in support.
15. All students should receive their student loan at least one week before their course start date.
16. All forms of student finance should be paid in advance of course start date.
17. Some of the measures that have been taken by students to avoid the current model to finance their studies can have an adverse impact on their health and studies.
18. The government has developed an alternative model which will be available to ALL students who wish to access it. It has identical costs and repayment terms to the current student finance model, however is administered through an interest free finance mechanism. Although the government initially planned to introduce this model by September 2016, they are yet to do so and refuse to provide information to students affected.
19. That it needs to be acknowledged that this issue is negatively affecting the socioeconomic mobility of Muslim students for generations to come. It is vital that that our student guild lobby the department of education to work with priority for the launch of the alternative model.

Conference resolves

1. For NUS to actively campaign and lobby the government and Student Finance England to scrap means testing parents income for maintenance support.
2. To actively campaign and lobby the government for maintenance support over the summer period.
3. To reaffirm our commitment to lobby the government for a more realistic student maintenance funding system.
4. To lobby for Student Finance England and equivalent bodies to make the first student loan payment a minimum of a week before the course start date.
5. To lobby for Student Finance England and equivalent bodies to make termly payments in advance of each term's start date.
6. To set a deadline for Student Finance England and equivalent bodies to implement these changes.
7. That NUS lobby the Department of Education to provide ethical Alternative Student Finance.