

Union Development Zone Report

Author: Richard Brooks, Vice President (Union Development)

Date Produced: 07/02/2017

Committee: National Conference

Action: Approve

Section 1 | Priorities for 2016-17

Projects	Progress
Write here a title or name which most closely describes your project	How has this area of work progressed since it's commencement
21 st Century NUS Democracy	<p>Ever since I was a student in Hull (based in UK's City of Culture, 2017), there were rumblings of discontent about the way NUS' democracy worked. Around this time, an independent commission was set up, with the express aim of understanding the costs and benefits of being a member of NUS. The recommendations, accepted by Students' Unions, suggested democratic reform.</p> <p>http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/shape-our-work/articles/a-new-settlement-membership-commission-report</p> <p>At National Conference 2015 (when I got elected for the first time, and had a suspicious rip in my trousers), Students' Unions passed policy for NUS to do some research, analysis and to bring back some key principles for democratic reform.</p> <p>At National Conference 2016 principles for a new democracy were agreed. I promised to make sure worked-up proposals came back to National Conference in one year's time. In the interim between then and now, 23 Students' Unions have held NUS affiliation referendums, all citing NUS' democratic structures as one of their key concerns.</p> <p>Despite nearly drowning in stagnant factional politics I'm confident we have some constructive forward-looking proposals for consideration. The group overseeing proposals hasn't taken up everything I would have wanted but hopefully the proposals show I have kept my promise to students and students' unions around the country that NUS is listening and ready to change.</p> <p>My goals were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FE students' unions and Apprentices will have a more powerful voice through NUS.• NUS will better represent the devolved nations.• NUS will adopt policy through more inclusive processes, accessible to all our membership.• Recent concerns raised by members, particularly during affiliation referendums, will be answered. <p>These are meaningful outcomes which can make a real difference to how NUS works. For example with FE students properly represented we might not have</p>

	<p>spent £100,000 on a national demonstration which glossed over the damaging changes to the Further Education sector and only attracted 5,000 students, with no positive impact on their lives.</p> <p>Likewise I am determined we can fix our policy development process so we will not see repeats of how the NSS Boycott campaign progressed this year. It saddened me to see huge numbers of students' unions (mainly from modern universities, with high proportions of BME and Working Class students) having to demand by national ballot the Vice President Higher Education give thought to the damaging effects the campaign action might have on their existence.</p> <p>All of the proposals are based on consultation with thousands of students' unions, experts in democracy, agreed by the Task & Finish Group and NUSUK Board and most importantly having been led by thousands of elected student representatives across 4 nations, 5 liberation groups, sections and the entirety of tertiary education.</p> <p>I'm proud that the process has been based on considered and objective analysis. I am proud our consultation among members and students has been inclusive, far-reaching and challenging.</p> <p>The choice is now in the hands of Students' Unions at National Conference. Whether to reform, or stagnant. We promised change from within, now we must deliver.</p>
<p>#LoveSUs 2.0 A positive reputation for students' unions</p>	<p>I have made it my mission to make sure SUs are known across society as bastions of progressive goodness. To show how the so-called 'fluffy stuff' we do like societies and volunteering is actually the engine of our movement; how students' unions play a powerful role in education and society.</p> <p>So for the second year we ran a national #LoveSUs day of action. Hundreds of unions took part on campus and online, engaging 1500 accounts and reaching 3.5 million on Twitter alone. People shared often personal, moving stories of how SUs are changing lives and society for the better. Unions launched research, impact reports and ran outreach events in the local community. I hope this becomes a regular fixture in the calendar which brings our movement together and strengthens our public support.</p> <p>We have further built our partnerships with national student organisations like National Student Fundraisers Association, National Student Television Association, Student Radio and Student Publications Associations, as well as engaging organisations working around our sector like BUCS and I Love Tour in our work. I have made sure students' unions have been leading voices in the drive for increased youth social action through sector bodies like Step Up to Serve, NCS and Vinspired.</p> <p>The National Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free Campaign is making real progress. We held a summit looking at all available evidence, building on last year's Impact of Student Opportunities work, and what works in terms of constructive tactics with universities.</p> <p>Particularly from the point of view of the smaller unions in our membership I am excited to be establishing the NUS Learning Academy, launching later this year. We ran a very successful pilot for 10 Students' Unions in 2016, and will be launching it full scale in 2017. From the outset this will be a sophisticated,</p>

	<p>comprehensive resource offering development programmes for student leaders (chairs, captains, organisers, activists), senior managers and staff with management responsibilities. I am proud that there is finally significant resource going into training and development on non-sabb student leaders, as promised.</p> <p>Now in its 16th year students' unions and NUS again supported Student Volunteering Week – shining a light on students as one of the most dedicated and altruistic groups of people in our society.</p> <p>We have been researching and developing a new employer brand for the student movement. Which is a fancy way of saying we're making working in students' unions sound SEXY (I will almost certainly not be the best vessel for this message). This is more than just template job advertisements, this will be the start of what will be a real step change in the ways we attract and retain the best people for our organisations.</p> <p>Finally it has been my privilege and pleasure to engage with our national media on many issues affecting students and students' unions. Here is a sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If you want to know what students really want, you should listen to Students' Unions, not private school headteachers." http://www.thedailytouch.com/richard-brooks/what-you-think-you-know-about-freshers-week-is-wrong/ • "University societies attract like-minded people. What better place to meet friends" https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/aug/17/university-societies-do-you-wanna-be-in-my-gang • "NUS must improve, but the need for a unified student movement is as strong as ever" http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2016/05/16/the-nus-must-improve-but-the-need-for-a-unified-student-movement/ • "Student life: luxuries for some, poverty for many" http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/01/10/student-life-luxuries-poverty-many/ • "There was a house party and you just weren't invited" http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/nus-no-platform-policy-prompts-controversial-debate-on-bbc-victoria-derbyshire-programme_uk_571dc5dee4b018a884dcfe2c
<p>Unions for students who need them</p>	<p>When I was elected in April 2015 I started working with our VP FE, Shakira to manage the most radical redistribution of power in the student movement towards FE students' unions – the majority of our members, the majority of UK students and, until recently, second-class citizens in our movement.</p> <p>This started with asking big, challenging questions about how NUS is really supporting these members. Since the start - a summit of internal staff, external partners, members and student representatives - we can now point to all the ways FE will benefit from the long term NUS100 plans. In addition to the democracy review and membership contribution proposals, we have been busy making major changes to the way union development and membership engagement activities are useful and accessible to FE unions. We have created – for the first time – a Further Education Union Development Team. As a key example we are building a Learner Voice Development Framework to bridge our existing SU quality standards with the needs of practitioners in colleges and, in particular, Ofsted guidance. Reacting to Area Reviews has given us a great opportunity to get under the skin of the sector and really make the case for student voice at the heart of institutions. I understand we are also on track to have record-breaking FE turnout at this year's National Conference, which would show we are making progress.</p>

	<p>The next example of this powerful movement for FE can be seen in the continuing progress of the National Society of Apprentices, working with apprentices across the UK. This year they have been focusing on making sure apprentices are being heard at all levels of decision making. From campaigning for a better deal on council tax, to working with training providers to improve every day conditions to making sure that apprentices voices are heard in the highest levels of the Institute of Apprenticeships. I made clear this was a priority for myself and the movement, and have moved resource to NSoA accordingly. A resolution has been included in the democracy review for the NSoA to have formal relationship with NUS, allowing apprentices learning outside of affiliated colleges to engage in our democracy. This lays crucial foundations for the development of a National Society of Medical, Nursing and Placement students in NUS.</p> <p>This year Union Development Zone looked at the question of young people's engagement with political structures, and how education through students' unions can be a powerful solution.</p> <p>I am pleased to report the Student Engagement Partnership have been exploring students' representation in alternative providers, and also looking in detail at the challenge of engagement with commuter students. Politically, I had led with the simple mandate of "if they are learners, we will represent them", cutting through the farcical previous position (still held by some in the movement) that where there are incredibly vulnerable and disenfranchised learners, we should ignore them, because we don't like their institution.</p> <p>More broadly NUS has been upgrading our support to staff communities of practice to make sure the talented people working in our movement can support each other, build professional networks and develop their skills.</p>
<p>Membership benefit 2.0</p> <p><i>A lone voice trying to articulate calmly the benefits of collectivism, while the rest of the liberal world order crumbles around.</i></p>	<p>My vision has always been for NUS to be an effective, efficient and transparent campaigning membership organisation. In areas under my portfolio I am proud of great progress towards this, but in others this leadership has provided huge resistance to change.</p> <p>To review just some of our successes I launched the Membership Guide at Students' Unions 2016 to NUS products and services in the summer to a great membership response. This is the first time all parts of being a member of NUS is in one place. It remains available to download via the Guidebook app on smartphones and tablets.</p> <p>We established and settled in a revamped Membership Engagement team, responsible for keeping members in the loop about the array of NUS activities, signposting to appropriate support and improving organisational intelligence about students' unions across the movement. This has had significant impact on membership satisfaction and understanding of NUS.</p> <p>We have looked again at NUS Connect – restructuring it after extensive membership consultation, particularly with smaller and FE unions. We have also launched MyGuide – a growing compendium of data and intelligence about students, students' unions and our movement's campaign priorities. We have improved the membership benefits statements we issue to members showing financial gains from being a member of NUS.</p> <p>Following on from 2015's report – 'A New Settlement' – we have proposed a new</p>

membership contribution model which is a flat % of block grant with a maximum 'ceiling' and a minimum 'floor'. This is a huge leap towards a more equitable model, but for me remains a starting point. In two years as block grants rise (as they are likely to) I have ensured NUS is committed to review this model. I expect and hope this will bring everyone's contributions down and make the case for a maximum contribution a thing of the past.

As part of this it will be clearer that SU membership contributions fund voice and influence activity, while development and enterprise work is covered by mutual wealth generation. This basically happens now, but you have to have a PhD to work it out. Changes will make us **more transparent**.

It won't have escaped members' notice that I have spent a huge amount of time and energy **campaigning to keep students' unions in NUS membership**. It was fun at first but after a dozen disaffiliation referendums I did start to lose enthusiasm. At the time of writing we have won 20 out of 23 which is great news and shows there's still an appetite for basking in the collective glory which is NUS. But only a fool would take these results at face value, this is a huge wake-up call. Our members are demanding change in return for their commitment and we must recognise this.

My priority for NUS Services Limited has been to **support students' unions** to really do business. We are now not just giving members a shiny car but also offering driving lessons.

The **NUS extra card** has been enhanced with the addition of the ISIC bolt-on as standard, making the card applicable worldwide. We are still bringing in £9m per year for the student movement while helping students, and the forecasts are positive. We are changing our model of advertising to drive sales and are always adding more partners to the discount – more than 15 in the last year.

UnionCloud is now on release 26, helping 55 subscribing unions reach over 500,000 students. We have overcome much of the challenge with digital capability in the sector through an intensive programme of training and development – making sure SUs not only had access to the platform, but were able to make the most of all the functionality. The ambition now is to be able to offer a lite package to every students' union as part of NUS affiliation – essential if we are to be able to put data, evidence and digital at the heart of our movement. I feel particularly strongly that if we can't offer a relevant package that is cost effective to FE students' unions, the future of the movement will not be a bright one.

One of the most exciting innovations of the movement is our partnership with Yo-Yo, being able to offer discounts, loyalty, track data and bring together all parts of our commercial enterprises. We're currently running a trial with a group of students' unions, which includes significant margin support which we centrally have negotiated.

I have lead a reshaping of our **purchasing team** to provide trading support. We are now in students' unions giving consultancy and training in retail and licensed trade. This is about making sure the student movement is on top form - maximising our unique opportunity to provide great quality for students at low prices.

Epona, our ethical clothing company, has received significant investment to develop a great product range but has faced profitability issues. My NUS Services

	<p>board has confidence in the company to deliver a challenging 12 month turnaround. I hope our movement can show the world that ethical business practices are not just possible, but make for a very successful enterprise.</p> <p>NUS Media continues to do great deals with major brands, building on our great position as a gateway to the student market. In addition our Insight team continue to conduct high quality research for our campaigning and influencing work as well as brand partners. Through the NUS Media Local programme we are successfully supporting students' unions to sustain and grow in-house media bookings. We have grown income for every union so far and are now looking to expand to new regions.</p>
--	---

Section 2 | Zone Policy

Work carried out	Details and mandate from National Conference
<p>Equality, diversity and allyship <i>Supporting students' unions to be powerhouses for freedom from oppression in society</i></p>	<p>Following on from SU2016 'Championing diversity and building inclusive students' unions', which I led on as an officer, we have seen a number of significant pieces of work by or with the UD Team;</p> <p>Liberation train the trainer, where we have added extra resource in last 18 months. Our Women in Leadership and Black Leaders Conference. I was privileged to be a part of Race Matter Summit and helping take the recommendations forward. We've improved our Equality and Diversity Resources Hub and continued our I will Lead the Way Program.</p> <p>Our Lead and Change programme for Officers had increased Liberation content this year and our Learning Academy will be offering support to Student Leaders in this area.</p>
<p>Constructive engagement <i>More ethical supply chains, making a difference where we can, supporting better practices in students' unions</i></p>	<p>In 2016 we launched the Student staff employment guide. A One-Stop-Shop (hate that phrase) for Students' Unions on good employment practices, with case studies, legal advice and support on diversifying your staff team.</p> <p>We have continued to build on the staff engagement surveys, which we can use to benchmark students' unions against each other and third sector. In 2016 we launched our volunteer engagement survey to do the same job for our volunteers in Students' Unions.</p>
<p><i>Officer Development Programme</i></p>	<p>I've supported our work on officer values survey, which will be able to give us a far clearer picture of changes that happen to elected officers during their time in office.</p> <p>I've been co-ordinating with Teach First on post-#sabblife career development and opportunities for elected officers. Most proudly, I've been working with the FE UD team on offering training and development to student leaders from Learning difficulties and disabilities backgrounds.</p>



<i>Quality Students' Unions</i>	<p>In 2016 we launched Trustees Week, for the first time open to student and Sabb trustees as well as lay trustees. We went to Glasgow, Manchester and London in a whirlwind 72 hours which included Donald Trump becoming President and me being secretly filmed by an undercover reporter. Bad times. (But the conferences were excellent)</p> <p>The Strategic Support Unit continues to deliver world beating and SU saving diagnostics and repairs for struggling Students' Unions. We secured continued funding for the Student Engagement Partnership to continue its important work on ensuring learner-led quality and assurance.</p> <p>We're looking at working with Students' Unions in the delivery and upscaling of QSUs, whilst changing the criteria to ensure Equality and Diversity is embedded in our practices.</p>

