



# FE ZONE AND HE ZONE CONFERENCE REPORT

<b>For the attention of:</b>	Executive Committee	<b>Taking place on:</b>	09/12/15
<b>Name:</b>	Grace Anderson	<b>Action:</b>	To note

**Summary:** *This paper provides an overview on the conference attended by the Executive Committee member*

## Conference purpose(s)

I went to the National Union of Students' Further Education and Higher Education Zone Conference recently. This is a conference where full time officers, reps and students are given an opportunity to explore key issues relating to education which students are facing. It's a great way to understand what is happening nationally in education, to begin forming our beliefs together and take ownership of solutions. Each zone conference (there's five different zones) reviews the work of the NUS Zone Vice President (at this conference, **Sorana Vieru**) and the NUS President (**Megan Dunn**).

## Feedback on the session(s) attended

I attended three sessions on what's currently happening nationally in Higher Education. These were about: Teaching Quality and the Teaching Excellence Framework, Marketising Higher Education, and Liberating the Curriculum.

### Teaching Quality and the Teaching Excellence Framework

This session was looking at how we measure what good teaching quality is, and lead to start looking at how representative our current feedback/data gathering systems are. We looked at the National Student Survey, module evaluation forms, employability statistics, and student lead teaching awards (like our Made a Difference awards!). We also talked about the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was introduced with the new term of the Conservative government by Jo Johnston. This is an initiative to examine good learning and teaching, and is aimed at giving students a "value for money" university experience. The SU believes that the TEF is taking a step away from creating a constructive learning environment and is instead moving towards shaping students into "consumers", and making the university environment work more like a corporation.

### Marketising Higher Education

This was a chance to learn more about what marketisation is in relation to Higher Education in the UK. Marketisation of universities is making students respond as consumers to a business rather than students to their education, which can make the mechanisms for development, such as students giving constructive feedback and being part of a two way relationship in their learning, become more of a request about what students are getting for their money. We have already seen this beginning through universities having to compete against each other for more students, and charge huge fees to make sure they get the money they need. In the end, instead of marketing a degree, they end up marketing the student experience. This is happening in universities all over the UK.

### Liberating the Curriculum

23% of Black Students described their learning environment as clique, 17% as isolating and 7% as racist. Year upon year, disabled people consistently report being less satisfied with their education than non-disabled students. Almost one in four women don't feel comfortable speaking up in a classroom.

These are statistics that have been here for a long time, yet many places aren't dealing with the core problems that create these issues. A couple of these problems are not having enough diversity in what we learn and making "reasonable adjustments" for students instead of creating a fundamentally accessible module. This session was aimed at finding out what other SU's were doing to help liberate the curriculum, and what we could learn from this.

Matters for the attention of the Executive Committee to note from this conference

Each zones conference elects eight people to be part of one of five Zones Committees, which work with the President or Vice President on NUS' responses/campaigns on national education issues. They also elect members to be a part of the National Executive Committee, which is NUS' version of us! NEC has frequent meetings to vote on emergency policy and the stance of the NUS on national issues.

The new members of each zones committee can be found here: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/shape-our-work/who-we-are/committee-members-directory/zones>

The new members of the NEC can be found here: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/shape-our-work/who-we-are/committee-members-directory/national-executive-council>

The policies submitted for discussion at the next NEC can be found here: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/nec-meeting-motions-and-amendments-2-december-2015>