

Following on from the NUS Conference 2016 (19th – 21st April 2016) NUS will be updating their policies over the coming weeks. Over 100 new motions were proposed and many were passed, through voting on the conference floor. Although the updated policies have not yet been confirmed, some key motions were declared as ‘passed’ via NUS social media.

Key features from the ‘passed’ motions include:

Motion 201 “Divorce Our Courses from Market Forces”

This motion was passed with all listed amendments and urges NUS to fight against the ‘marketisation’ of HE. There is a focus on fees, government reforms (the Green Paper on H.E. and the Teaching Excellence Framework) and the use of surveys such as the NSS to measure education providers. There is also concern over the removal of university information from the Freedom of Information Act. Actions suggested include a boycott of the spring 2017 NSS. The content of this motion was echoed in a number of other motions such as 211 “Quality Doesn’t Grow on Fees”.

Motion 205 “Liberate My Degree”

This motion comes from the NUS Black students campaign and is intended to address the BME attainment gap and under-representation with academia and the curricula. Conference resolved:

1. *NUS to prioritise supporting the NUS Black Students’ Campaign and HE Zone to develop strategic approaches to tackling attainment gaps and institutional racism through challenging the sector’s top-down and statistic obsessed approach and instead through student engagement in transforming education and collaboration with Black academics.*
2. *To resource and plan a continued roll out of the new NUS Liberate My Degree campaign, in consultation with Students’ Unions to develop strategic local approaches to campaigns and training.*
3. *NUS to facilitate and resource collaboration between zone committee and *all* liberation committees’ volunteer members who wish to drive the campaign and link with local members to support them in their campaigning efforts.*
4. *NUS to continually develop resources on changing aspects of teaching and learning, and decolonising education, and upload them onto the existing online campaign hub and disseminate to members.*
5. *NUS to develop reporting back mechanisms from unions so that an up-to-date bank of case studies is maintained for members’ use but also for influencing the sector.*
6. *NUS to develop a long-term mechanism for measuring the impact of initiatives implemented at institutional level so that best practice can be shared.*
7. *To build solidarity and support Black students’ campaigns for anti-racism and a more inclusive curriculum on their campuses e.g. ‘Why Is My Curriculum White?’ and ‘Rhodes Must Fall’.*

Motion 310 “Making NUS Communications Work for All”

This is a simple request for NUS communications to be reviewed and reported back to National Conference 2017. Current systems are seen as difficult to access and based on inadequate networks. Requests are also made for improvements to the website(s). Hopefully this motion will support our officers and staff in accessing and understanding NUS policy and campaigns and seeking support from NUS where appropriate.

Motion 401 “NUS for the NHS”

This motion was proposed under the ‘Welfare Zone’ and is directly influenced by Government actions regarding NHS bursaries for student nurses and the strike action relating to the Junior

Doctors. As a University with a high intake of nurses and other NHS professions these issues impact a large number of our students. We do not yet know how the removal of the bursary will affect recruitment and retention of students, who will now need to cover the costs of studying alongside travel to placement. The nature of these courses affects students' ability to earn whilst studying making the financial implications even more extreme.

The motion was passed (including amendments) Conference resolved:

- 1. To work with health trade unions and SUs who represent NHS and medical students to co-ordinate a national NHS Student Summit, bringing together all relevant campaigns and stakeholders to discuss the issues and propose a co-ordinated plan of action.*
- 2. To lobby the government, trade unions and registered bodies such as NMC for better quality funding and support for health students.*
- 3. To produce material and a tool kit for Students' Union's to support and represent their students sufficiently in order to create positive change in the sector.*
- 4. To provide networking events to create a more collaborative approach for Health students and help to give them a voice.*
- 5. To support SUs campaigning to reverse NHS Bursary cuts and publicise how important bursaries are currently to nursing students.*
- 6. For Students' Unions who's Universities have direct entry Health courses to lobby their university to help pay for students travel expenses whilst attending placement.*
- 7. To support the junior doctors' strikes and the NHS bursary struggle.*
- 8. To devote financial and other resources to helping students nurses and health professionals in this fight.*
- 9. To support and campaign for an end to cuts, marketisation and privatisation in the NHS, and for a comprehensive, well-funded, publicly owned, run and provided health service meeting clinical need. We support the NHS Bill and will lobby MPs to back it.*

Motion 403 "Grants Not Debts"

This motion highlights the Conservative Government cuts to the maintenance grants. The motion was passed and conference resolved:

- 1. Take up the #GrantsNotDebt campaign to first reverse the cuts to maintenance grants, and then to increase them to a decently live-able level, with additional supplements reflecting the needs of student carers and disabled students, and extend them to all students in FE and HE.*
- 2. Demand this is funded through progressive taxation such as an increase in corporation tax and taxes on the richest, not by raising taxes on the poorest or cutting public services.*

Motion 404 "Anti-semitism on campus"

This motion was reported widely in the press. Many reports and comments focused on the discussions on the conference floor over the amendments, which were seen by some as reflective of anti-Semitic views. However the motion passed and the conference resolved:

- 1. To re-affirm its commitment to tackling anti-Semitism, particularly anti-Semitism on campus.*
- 2. To widen the probe into institutional racism in the National Union of Students to include institutional anti-Semitism.*
- 3. To lobby Student Unions to have clearer policies on responding to anti-Semitic incidents and situations in which Jewish students feel threatened.*
- 4. To mandate the NUS to provide resources to help Student Unions to formulate these clearer policies.*

The motion amendment to officially commemorate Holocaust Memorial day, and train officers about the holocaust also passed.

Motion 405 “Prioritise Students’ Mental Health – Now!”

This motion will replace the existing NUS mental health policy which is due to lapse. It calls for NUS to support Universities and SUs to provide appropriate, accessible and funded support for students with mental health issues. It encourages joined up service provision and asks for a report from NUS in 2017 regarding progress made in a number of areas.

Motion 406 “Preventing Prevent”

The Government’s Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a statutory requirement on public bodies and ‘specified authorities’ – including universities, but not SUs –to implement the PREVENT agenda. ARU has asked all staff including SU staff to complete online PREVENT training. This motion presents a series of beliefs that Prevent is open to abuse and can put activists, minorities and vulnerable groups at risk. It calls for education and support for students, societies and staff on issues around the Prevent agenda. There are also requests for action such as Trade Union supported boycotts and information requests about universities are working within this agenda. The motion passed.

Motion 410 “Graduation, The Final Hidden Cost”

This simple proposal noted the hidden costs of graduation, which usually includes expensive gown hire and tickets. Conference agreed that NUS should:

1. *conduct research into the average cost of graduation in the UK and*
2. *Work to reduce this cost.*

Motion 502 “Divest Invest”

This motion relates to university investments and course sponsorships. It supports the idea that institutions should be divesting their socially and environmentally damaging investments such as those in fossil fuels and investing instead in companies which are seen to be making a positive commitment to tackling climate change. It also calls for NUS to review its own investments. The motion proposes that NUS provide support for SUs through tool kits and research.

This links to several other environmentally focussed motions including motion 507 “Climate Change”.

Motion 504 “Refugees Welcome in Universities and Colleges”

This motion was passed in the ‘Society and Citizenship’ zone and relates to those seeking discretionary Leave to Remain (DLR) in the UK who are charged for higher education as international students. The conference resolved:

1. *To continue working with Student Action for Refugees on the Equal Access campaign, and make it a priority.*
2. *To campaign for free access to education for refugees and asylum seekers, funded by progressive taxation.*
3. *To encourage and provide resources for Students’ Unions to lobby their institutions for scholarships for refugees and asylum seekers, covering fees and a living allowance.*

Amendments added further resolutions:

1. *Support students’ unions to become local refugee welcome hubs with advice and support about the local community and who to speak to as part of local community open days supported by NUS.*
- & 1. *Ensure this important issue is highlighted to students’ unions and encourage them to lobby their institution.*
2. *Investigate other factors such as stigma that asylum seekers face on campus.*

Other motions such as Motion 509 also relate to solidarity with refugees.

Motion 507 “Climate Change”

This motion takes the climate change agenda beyond the promotion of lifestyle changes with proposals to lobby for public ownership and democratic control of energy and transport. The intention is to prioritise this area of work and build links with trade unions related to solar energy and sustainable power. This links to several other environmentally focussed motions including motion 502 “Divest Invest”.

Motion 605 “A Full-Time Paid NUS Trans Officer and an Autonomous NUS Trans Liberation Officer”

This motion was passed. Conference resolved to support the decision made by the NUS Trans Students’ Conference to create an autonomous NUS Trans Students Campaign (separate and from the NUS LGBT+ campaign). This will be governed by a full time and paid NUS Trans Officer and an additional Trans Campaign NEC place. The rules and articles will be amended accordingly.