

## Motions

<b>Author</b>	Motions submitted by individual NEC members
<b>Date Produced:</b>	06/12/2017
<b>Meeting date:</b>	06/12/2017
<b>Meeting of:</b>	National Executive Council
<b>Action:</b>	For debate by members of NEC
<b>Summary:</b>	Motions that have been submitted by members of the National Executive Council. Motions have been listed in the order they were submitted.
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	<i>n/a</i>
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## Motion 1: Support SUs in the fight against marketisation

<b>Proposed by:</b>	Ana Oppenheim
<b>Seconded by:</b>	Hansika Jethnani, Noorulann Shahid, Rachel O'Brien, Jess Bradley, Aliya Yule, Amelia Horgan, Sarah Gillborn
<b>Committees:</b>	NEC

### NEC Believes:

1. Over the past year, the government introduced a series of reforms to higher education.
2. At their heart is the Teaching Excellence Framework which ranks universities Bronze, Silver and Gold according to a set of metrics including the National Student Survey (NSS) and graduate earnings.
3. The HE reforms and TEF are already causing job cuts in multiple universities, for example in Manchester where over 100 redundancies have been announced<sup>1</sup>, explicitly citing changes to HE policy as a reason. Previous moves towards marketisation since 2010 have also contributed towards recent job cuts.
4. In 2016, NUS National Conference passed a policy to boycott the NSS until the TEF is scrapped and the HE reforms are withdrawn. NUS still has a democratic mandate to lead on the boycott and the wider campaign against marketisation.
5. In at least 12 institutions, NSS response rates dropped below 50% as a result of the boycott, making the results unusable. In many others, response rates have also fallen significantly.
6. The boycott was widely reported in the media and mentioned in parliamentary debates around the Higher Education and Research Act.
7. In 2017, Theresa May announced that tuition fees for the following academic year would not go up. However, there has been no guarantee that the freeze will continue for future years or that TEF and fees will be delinked.
8. The NSS itself has been discredited as a measure of teaching quality, including by the Royal Statistical Society. Its results have also been proven to reflect racial bias.<sup>23</sup>
9. In August, over 70 student activists, SU officers and NUS committee members signed an open letter committing to running NSS boycott campaigns on their campuses and calling on NUS to lead the campaign nationally.<sup>4</sup>
10. TEF not only does not adequately measure teaching quality, it is a threat to higher education as we know it and needs to be resisted by any means available to us.
11. TEF means universities are chasing metrics and not meaningfully improving standards for students or staff.
12. Successful NSS boycott campaigns at multiple universities forced TEF and wider higher education policy onto the national agenda.
13. The NSS boycott contributed towards the government temporarily severing the link between TEF and tuition fees.
14. The government's efforts to limit the effects of the boycott, by halving the weight of NSS as a metric and using data from previous years in institutions where response rates fall below 50%, are meant to discourage students from boycotting the survey. This shows that the leverage is effective and the student movement cannot afford to give up.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8775/Over-900-jobs-at-risk-at-University-of-Manchester-as-university-announces-major-cuts>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rss.org.uk/Images/PDF/influencing-change/2016/RSS-response-to-BIS-Technical-Consultation-on-Teaching-Excellence-Framework-year-2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/biased-students-give-bme-academics-lower-nss-scores-says-study>

<sup>4</sup> <http://anticuts.com/2017/08/22/nss-boycott-open-letter-to-nus-leadership/>

15. The government and university managers need NSS results not only to implement the TEF, but to manage the already-existing marketisation of the university system. By refusing to fill it out, we can therefore disrupt their business and gain leverage that helps students push them to concede to our campaign.
16. NSS turnout or results should never be tied to SU funding. Such blackmail from some universities is a despicable attack on union autonomy. It is a duty of NUS to defend any SU that receives threats of funding cuts because of participating in the national campaign.

**NEC Resolves:**

1. To release a statement and contact every HE union in NUS reaffirming NUS' support for the NSS boycott.
2. To provide resources for SUs, including flyers promoting the NSS boycott and a toolkit on running an effective boycott campaign.
3. To campaign for union funding not to be tied to NSS and to work with and support every SU that faces threats of funding cuts in relation to the NSS. Political blackmail through block grant cuts is a concern to all SUs, so we must respond with solidarity: we will support and help build action up to and including mobilising demonstrations on affected campuses if appropriate.

## Amendment to Motion 1

<b>Proposed by:</b>	Amatey Doku
<b>Seconded by:</b>	Darren Clarke, Fee Wood, Izzy Lenga
<b>Committees:</b>	NEC
<b>Action:</b>	Delete and Replace Resolves 1

**NEC Resolves:**

1. To release a statement directed at every HE union and every FE Union with HE students reaffirming NUS' support for those unions who have democratically decided to boycott the NSS and provide clear campaigning options, against the marketization of Higher Education, for those unions who have decided against it.

## Motion 2: Support our staff – stop attacks on pensions

<b>Proposed by:</b>	Ana Oppenheim
<b>Seconded by:</b>	Hansika Jethnani, Rachel O'Brien, Jess Bradley, Aliya Yule, Amelia Horgan, Sarah Gillborn, Krum Tashev
<b>Committees:</b>	NEC

### NEC Believes:

1. There are multiple pension schemes for staff across FE and HE. All have faced round after round of attacks designed to reduce the payments that staff can expect in retirement, compared to what they put in. The attacks on different schemes are used to play against one another – one scheme is undermined, then members of another are told that they must accept attacks in theirs as it is unfairly better than the first – this continues in circles so that nobody wins except the employers. So to defend any part of the education system we have to defend all of them.
2. Currently under attack is the USS pension – for academic staff mainly in pre-92 universities. The employers' consortium, UUK, has announced that they want to end defined benefits. This means removing all guarantees on how much payouts will be after retirement, leaving retired staff entirely at the mercy of the pension fund's stock market gambles.<sup>5</sup>
3. The pension scheme's own analysis shows that the employers could muster the funds to avoid this and keep guarantees on pension payouts<sup>1</sup>. Employers have cut the proportion of their budgets spent on staff by 5% in the past 10 years – it is their choice to cut investment in education workers, not a necessity.<sup>6</sup>
4. Valuations that claim the USS fund is on shaky ground, and used to spread panic and justify cuts to pension payouts, have been widely criticised as based on poor methodology – using the wrong measures to predict future performance<sup>7</sup> and using what the Leeds UCU President called a "zombie apocalypse" assumption – imagining that every single pre-92 university was going to shut simultaneously tomorrow, leaving the scheme to pay all former staff's future pensions with no new income.<sup>8</sup>
5. A ballot for major industrial action will be voted on by UCU members in the period 27 Nov to 19 Jan<sup>1</sup>.
6. NUS Conference has previously voted that our default position should be to back industrial action by education workers, because we understand that working conditions and teaching quality are so closely tied, and because we understand that the alliance of solidarity between students and education workers is vital to our own campaigns.
7. These attacks are avoidable and unjust. No worker should be subjected to financial precarity; all deserve the security of a decent retirement.
8. Removing guarantees on payouts is about shifting financial risk away from the collective onto the individual, and away from the employers to the workers. This makes it easier to package up groups of workers, lift them out, and outsource them, and makes it more attractive for private companies to snap up such offers since associated pension liabilities have been reduced. In short, this will make further aggressive privatisation easier.
9. When staff are mistreated, demoralised, and overstretched trying to make ends meet, education suffers. Moreover, talented staff could be forced to consider leaving for jobs where they are treated better.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/9074/UCU-warns-of-chaos-on-campus-if-pension-row-not-resolved>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ucu.org.uk/strikeforuss>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ucu.org.uk/uss\\_futurefundingletter](https://www.ucu.org.uk/uss_futurefundingletter)

<sup>8</sup> <http://studentsunionucl.org/defendpensions>

10. These attacks will be most damaging to workers at the beginning of their careers, including our members such as PhD students looking to begin research careers. And we all have a long-term interest in halting and reversing the erosion of pensions across the labour market.
11. The stronger our support for our staff, and the sooner we commit it, the stronger their campaign will be and the sooner we can force the employers to give in – and so the sooner any industrial action can end with a positive resolution, benefitting both students and workers.

### **NEC Resolves:**

1. To mandate the VPHE and President to write immediately and publicly to UCU pledging our support for their campaign, and for any industrial action they are forced to undertake by the employers' greed and stubbornness.
2. To mandate the VPHE and President to write to the USS pension scheme and the UUK employers' consortium urging them to drop these damaging proposals and to instead reverse the last several years of attacks on education workers' pensions.
3. To work with the NUS Postgrad Section and the UCU's Casualised Members' section to support our postgrad members to get active in their trade union (which is now free – membership dues are zero for postgrad workers) and help them defend their future pensions.
4. To brief SUs on the situation, why we need to support our staff, and what SUs can do to help.
5. In the event of industrial action NUS should produce materials including posters and leaflets that SUs can use to help explain to students what is happening and why our staff need support, and we should endeavour to bolster our staff's picket lines and protests with our support.

## Motion 3: A New Approach to Teaching Excellence

<b>Proposed by:</b>	Joe Cox
<b>Seconded by:</b>	Izzy Lenga, Darren Clarke, Ellen Jones, Emily Horsfall, Jess Levy, Robbie Young, Florence Onwumere
<b>Committees:</b>	NEC

### NEC Believes:

1. That the government has implemented a Teaching Excellence Framework in Higher Education which ranks Universities as either gold, silver or bronze
2. That the current government intends to implement the TEF at subject level
3. That a consortium of 24 NUS member organisations have conducted joint research into the student perspective on teaching excellence, taking into account the perspectives of 9,000 students<sup>9</sup>
4. This research proves that whilst students believe that the government should be ensuring teaching quality, any measures should not be linked to fees
5. 50% of students would have re-considered applying to their university if they had known it was bronze and 6% of students would have not applied or reconsidered had their university been rated gold
6. 11% of students from an ethnic minority background would have reconsider or not have applied to their university if it had been rated as gold
7. that this data will be invaluable as a submission into the independent TEF review expected in the next academic year, alongside NUS's scheduled work to set out the positive vision for Teaching Excellence

### NEC Further Believes:

1. There are many negative consequences to the current government policy on teaching excellence
2. Many of these consequences could prove truly catastrophic for the HE and wider Education sectors
3. That NUS should be carrying out research to empower both its officers and its member unions to make strong arguments on a national and local level
4. That while slogans such as 'TEF Off' and national demonstrations will always be an important part of NUS's campaign armoury we also need to ensure that we have cutting edge, high quality evidence to use

### NEC Resolves:

1. To welcome the research and to use it to develop the next stages of the campaign against the Teaching Excellence Framework
2. To renew our campaign against the current direction of policy and the TEF in particular using evidence to underpin our campaign

<sup>9</sup> <http://wonkhe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/tef-pr-research-report.pdf>

3. That NUS should be focused on making sure that the student voice is being prioritised within the TEF
4. To use all available resources and measures of student opinion to try to impact government policy
5. To reaffirm our opposition to a link between TEF and tuition fees

## Motion 4: Supporting Mature Students

<b>Proposed by:</b>	Tom Campbell
<b>Seconded by:</b>	Joe Cox, Emily Horsfall, Darren Clarke, Fiona Wood, Rob Young, Amatey Doku, Lucy Mason
<b>Committees:</b>	NEC

### NEC Believes:

1. Part-time student numbers have fallen by 40% since 2010.<sup>10</sup>
2. Mature students make up nearly 90% of part time students.<sup>11</sup>
3. Mature students are more likely to leave higher education within a year of entering.<sup>11</sup>
4. Mature students are more likely to be disabled, BAME, or from a low socio-economic background in comparison to 18-21 year-old undergraduates.<sup>11</sup>
5. A significant portion of mature students drop out of University due to financial hardship.<sup>11</sup>
6. Mature students are less likely to receive comprehensive advice on student finance and financial support while at University.<sup>11</sup>

### NEC Further Believes:

1. The wider HE community is not doing enough to support and retain mature students in higher education and are often forgotten in preference to undergraduates.
2. That everyone deserves the opportunity to a fair and accessible education, no matter their situation or background.
3. Financial support for students should be based on students' needs rather by the type of course they do or the level they are studying at.

### NEC Resolves:

1. To advocate for targeted mature student support on a national and institutional level.
2. To lobby for more flexible modes of study for students in HE in order to give mature students easier access to courses.
3. To campaign for student financial reform specifically for mature students, based on need rather than mode of study.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-21769963>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.nus.org.uk/pagefiles/12238/2012\\_nus\\_millionplus\\_never\\_too\\_late\\_to\\_learn.pdf](https://www.nus.org.uk/pagefiles/12238/2012_nus_millionplus_never_too_late_to_learn.pdf)