

SRC Policies

18/19

This document contains a Student Policy that has been passed by the Student Representative Council in the 18/19 academic year.

In line with *Schedule 3: Student Representative Council*;

- this Policy may be referred to the Trustee Board at any time, who may override any decision or Policy made by the Student Representative Council.
- these Policy shall automatically lapse at the first Student Representative Council meeting in the 19/20 academic year.
- after steps have been carried out to implement this policy, any officer may make the case to Student Representative Council that any aspect of the policy be revoked.
- the process of how policies can be created is set out in the Student Voice handbook.

Boycott the NSS

Passed SRC #2, 20th November 2018

Prosper
Seconder
SRC Notes

REDACTED

REDACTED

1. Over the past couple of years, the U.K. government introduced a series of reforms to higher education. [1]
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. [2]
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, explicitly citing changes to HE policy as a reason. Previous moves towards marketisation since 2010 have also contributed towards recent job cuts. [3]
4. The NSS survey is issued to all final year students at Abertay University.
5. In 2016, NUS National Conference passed a policy to boycott the NSS until the TEF is scrapped and the HE reforms are withdrawn. [4]
6. 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. [5]
7. The boycott was widely reported in the media and mentioned in parliamentary debates around the Higher Education and Research Act. [6]
8. In 2017, Theresa May announced that tuition fees in England 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. [7]
9. Education is not free in Scotland; there are many circumstances in which students have to pay for their education here at Abertay such as; international, rest of UK, postgraduate, returning and some mature students. While home students are subject to loans instead of grants.
10. 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 gender and racial bias. [8] [9]

SRC Believes

1. 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.
2. TEF means universities are chasing metrics and not meaningfully improving standards for students or staff.
3. Successful NSS boycott campaigns at multiple universities forced TEF and wider higher education policy onto the national agenda.
4. The NSS boycott contributed towards the government temporarily severing the link between TEF and tuition fees in England.
5. 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 it up.
6. 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.
7. NSS turnout or results should never be tied to SA/SU funding. We need to stand in solidarity with any SA/SU that receives threats of funding cuts because of participating in the national campaign. Such blackmail from some universities is a despicable attack on union autonomy.
8. To keep up the pressure on the government, the NSS boycott needs to continue, as part of a wider campaign against TEF, the HE reforms and marketisation.

SRC Resolves

1. To promote a boycott of NSS 2019 and in future years until the reforms are withdrawn. This may include:
 1. Refusing to promote the NSS or have any pro-NSS material with the SU logo on;
 2. Working with UCU to discourage NSS promotion by academics and encourage academics to actively provide information about the boycott to students;
 3. Promoting the boycott through posters, leafleting, door-knocking and social media, before the survey is released and throughout the time when it's open;
 4. Taking part in national and local actions and demonstrations linked to the NSS boycott and the campaign against TEF, the Tory HE reforms and marketisation
2. To call on other students' unions and associations to join the boycott — the bigger it grows, the stronger we are.
3. To campaign against any link between NSS and SA/SU block grants and actively support any union which receives threats from its university due to participation in the boycott.