



NUS-UKSI CONFERENCE 2019

28-29 March 2019

Everglades Hotel

Resolutions



Constitutional Amendments

'Support Changing Trans Officer to Trans and Non-Binary Officer'

"Conference Resolves: To Support changing the name of the Trans Officer position to the Transgender and Non-Binary Officer.

To submit a motion to NUS-USI National Conference to ask them to change the name of the position."

Amendment:

Amend 10.2 vi) from 'Trans Students' Conference' to 'Trans and Non-Binary Students' Conference'

Amend 11.1 x) from 'Trans Students' Officer' to 'The Trans and Non-Binary Students' Officer'

Amend 11.17 from 'Trans Officer' to 'Trans and Non-Binary Students' Officer' throughout.

Steering should update the constitution to reflect this change throughout.

NEC 2nd Place Gender balance

19.6 'There are two positions reserved for NUS-USI on the NUS National Executive Committee. Since the President retains the first position, candidates for election to the 2nd position must be from a different self-defined gender to the President.'

Amend this to

'There are two positions reserved for NUS-USI on the NUS National Executive Committee. The President retains the first position. At least one of the representatives must identify as a woman unless both candidates are non-binary.'

Trustees

Amend any use of the word 'Trustee' to 'Advisor' or 'Advisory' as applicable.

Steering should update the constitution to reflect this change throughout.

Campaigns and Citizenship Officer

Remove 11.1 vii) 'The Campaigns & Citizenship Officer'

Steering should update the constitution to reflect this change throughout.

Engagement group

Remove 14. 'Engagement Group' through to 14.7

No-Platform for TERFs, Fascists, Transphobes, Racists and Other Hate Speech.

Conference Notes:

1. NUS-USI is a private body and has the right to refuse a platform for discussion to groups who may threaten student security and safety.
2. No-Platform policies can help keep student interest and wellbeing protected.
3. TERF (Trans Exclusionary-Radical Feminists) often employ similar rhetoric to fascist organisations and attempt to delegitimise or attack the identities of trans identifying people.
4. Transphobes, Racists and others who employ hate speech against a person or group of people represent a hateful and dangerous voice that can harm student security and wellbeing.
5. NUS-USI Trans Conference voted to bring this motion to NUS-USI National Conference.

Conference Further Believes:

1. We should support a no-platform policy denying a right to speak to groups who endanger student interest.
2. Fascists, Transphobes, TERFs, Racists and other groups engaging in hate speech represent a threat to student wellbeing and should not be afforded a platform to speak in NUS-USI.
3. No-platforming speakers is not the same as protesting against them.
4. One can offer free speech while engaging in no-platform against certain speakers.
5. No-platforming is a form of self-defence against hate groups, we should oppose those who invoke the right of freedom of speech to remove or damage the rights of others.

Conference Resolves:

1. To implement a no-platform covering TERFs, Transphobes, Fascists, Racists and others who employ hate speech that can endanger student well-being.
2. To use this no platform policy only when democratically decided a specific group is harmful to the wellbeing and safety of students in NUSUSI.
3. To not offer a platform for discussion to those who engender dangerous and hateful rhetoric and ideas against any group of marginalised peoples.
4. To dissuade support from providing a platform for speech for those who actively seek to remove the rights or attack other groups of people via hate speech.

Campaigning for Gender-Neutral Bathrooms

Conference Notes:

1. Accessible bathrooms are often the only "Gender Neutral" option available, meaning intersex people and trans people, especially non-binary people often find a need to make use of accessible bathrooms rather than gendered bathrooms.
2. Often there are not suitable options for single person bathrooms and non-accessible bathrooms are multi-use.
3. NUS-USI Trans Conference voted to bring this motion to NUS-USI National Conference.

Conference Further Believes:

1. There is a risk to disabled people who need access to accessible bathrooms due to their features or due to requirements of urgency.
2. Over-use of accessible bathrooms as the only alternative can lead to major issues.
3. Gender Neutral bathrooms, both single use and multi-use are more accessible to all students and pose less of a risk to vulnerable student populations.
4. Labelling bathrooms with the facilities they provide, rather than an image of a person in a skirt, jeans or a wheelchair is more useful to users.

Conference Resolves:

1. To lobby for gender neutral bathrooms to be introduced at all academic institutions in our remit.
2. That NUS-USI continue to provide gender neutral bathrooms at all events and lobby for similar provisions to be available at any institutions.
3. To work with institutions already implementing gender-neutral options to ensure accessible and safe bathrooms for all students.
4. To work with institutions who would like to provide more accessible options to help make the process simple and straightforward as possible.

Recognition of Transgender People in Sports

Conference Notes:

1. There are many recorded issues of transgender people being excluded or discriminated against in sports.
2. NUS-USI Trans Conference voted to bring this motion to NUS-USI National Conference.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Transgender people are entitled to join sports teams as their correct gender rather than assigned or perceived gender or 'legal sex'.
2. It is discriminatory and archaic to imply transgender people need to have special or different provisions when it comes to sports.
3. To provide a more diverse and accepting sporting environment we should make sure athletes are not discriminated against based on assigned gender at birth.

Conference Resolves:

1. To lobby institutions to allow transgender people to play sports as their gender dictates if there is inherent segregation around sports.
2. To support transgender students right to self-identify and trust them to communicate the teams they feel more comfortable on.
3. To accept and support an individual's right to self-identify with regards to which sporting team they should be on and to establish that assigned gender at birth should not dictate which sporting teams you are limited to.

Postgraduate Funding

Conference notes:

1. The Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan in Northern Ireland which only entitles students to £5,500 towards the cost of postgraduate taught course.
2. Tuition Fees for standard Masters courses in Northern Ireland are set to rise to £5,900, with many other Masters programmes costing much more but tuition fee loans will not automatically rise in line with this.
3. Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK to cap tuition fee loans for Postgraduate students at £5,500, meaning that students are offered no maintenance support.
4. That many postgraduate students in Northern Ireland opt for part-time study in order to be able to work alongside their degree.
5. The insufficiency of the current funding system for part-time students where the loan must be split equally across years regardless of whether there are differential fees within the course, resulting in some students being left with a shortfall in their second or third year, which has led to some students being forced to withdraw from the programme.
6. Due to the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive in 2017, there is currently no Minister in place to approve an increase in the tuition fee loan available to Postgraduate students or to commission any change to the current Postgraduate Funding system.

Conference believes:

1. The current funding arrangements for postgraduate students in Northern Ireland are wholly inadequate, providing no maintenance support whatsoever and not covering the entire cost of standard Master's programmes, or any programmes with higher fees.
2. A review of postgraduate funding in Northern Ireland must be commissioned, in order to improve the support offered to students there and improve the coherency of funding arrangements for part-time students.

Conference Resolves:

1. The NUS-USI President to work with members to lobby for a review of postgraduate funding in Northern Ireland with a view to increasing available support whilst continuing to strive towards lobbying for publicly funded education, accessible to all.
2. The NUS-USI President to lobby the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, or their representatives to delegate power for postgraduate funding reform to the Permanent Secretary in the event of no restoration of the Executive.

Colleges/Universities of Sanctuary

Conference Notes:

1. The introduction of Asylum Seeker scholarships within Ulster University and Queens University Belfast over the past two years.
2. The work being carried out by Belfast Met to provide ESOL training to recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers.
3. Queen's University, Belfast Met and Ulster University have all expressed an interest in becoming Colleges/Universities of Sanctuary.

Conference Believes:

1. Asylum seekers and refugees have as equal a right as anyone to access further and higher education and should be supported in any way possible to obtain that entitlement.
2. Further and Higher Education acts as a vehicle for social mobility and should reach out to the refugee and asylum seeker community in order to let them avail of these opportunities.

Conference Mandates:

1. NUS-USI to support the intentions of three of its' members to become institutions of sanctuary, and work with the Belfast Cities of Sanctuary group to support this process.
2. NUS-USI to support other members who wish to explore obtaining sanctuary status.
3. NUS-USI to establish relations with Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS) to support the interests of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Further and Higher Education

Houses of Multiple Occupancy

Conference notes:

1. The new Houses in Multiple Occupancy regulations, due to come into force in April 2019, which will transfer responsibility for HMO regulation from the Housing Executive to local councils.
2. In spite of existing regulations, students across Northern Ireland, particularly in the Belfast area continue to be subjected to sub-standard housing.
3. The 'Housing Rights' policy, passed by NUS-USI Conference in 2018 which called for NUS-USI to 'lobby local authorities and local government to adequately deal with sub-standard student accommodation and to drive up standards in the sector.'
4. The addition of expensive purpose-built student accommodation to the market in recent years with prices starting at around £110 per week – forcing students who cannot afford this into the private HMO sector.
5. The forthcoming local council elections, due to take place in May 2019.

Conference believes:

1. Students are being taken advantage of by landlords and offered inadequate support by enforcing bodies.
2. The change in regulations affords elected councillors more sway in the enforcement of HMO regulation.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI to lobby elected members of local council to use their newly devolved powers of enforcement to crack down on substandard housing, and unregistered HMOs and to drive up standards in the sector.
2. NUS-USI to establish formal means of engagement with HMO teams in local council areas, in collaboration with relevant members.
3. NUS-USI to work with members in the run-up to the 2019 local council elections to put student housing on the agenda of local election candidates.

NUS-USI 16+

Conference notes:

1. NUS-USI represents around 200,000 students across Northern Ireland.
2. These are within the Further Education, apprentice and Higher Education sectors.
3. NUS-USI currently represents students studying A Levels and apprentices post-16 who are studying in FE colleges. NUS-USI however does not represent students based within schools and sixth form colleges throughout NI.

Conference believes:

1. NUS-USI should consider expanding operations to support students sixth form students throughout Northern Ireland.
2. We recognise the difficulties we may face in doing so but believe that everyone post-16 should be represented in their educational challenges no matter their institution.
3. Including schools in our remit would create a greater link and greater involvement of students' unions in the everyday life of students and strengthen our movement.

Conference resolves:

1. NUS-USI create a taskforce to explore the possibility of expanding operations to include institutions such as sixth forms that offer educational experiences post 16 that we currently do not work with.

Decolonising Education

Conference notes:

1. Student-led 'Decolonise education' campaigns have emerged across the UK since 2015's '*Why is My Curriculum White?*' And '*Rhodes Must Fall*' campaigns, and connect to a rich history of student radicalism.
2. Deep inequalities persist in education for students of colour, including-but-not-limited-to the attainment gap – these are exacerbated by the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance and Maintenance Grants.
3. The BAME Attainment Gap is a national crisis, with BAME students 20% less likely to achieve a first or upper second-class degree compared to their white counterparts, despite having been admitted into university with the same A-level grades.
4. According to NUS liberate the curriculum research 34% of BAME students feel unable to bring their perspectives as students of colour, to their lectures/seminars.
5. There is a lack of sufficient research, especially in Northern Ireland, into the issues resulting in the BAME Attainment Gap and how it affects BAME students of intersectional identities and liberation groups (i.e. Women, LGBTQ, Disabled).
6. University staff employed are not representative of the students that they teach or the national population regarding race and this is also a prevalent issue amongst university senior management.
7. BAME students are being severely disadvantaged because they are more likely to leave university unable to secure jobs and twice as unlikely to make use of their degree.
8. A truly liberated and antiracist education system must include racial justice for students, staff and workers within an institution.
9. University administration are vested in the racist and xenophobic climate of wider society, and embrace the marketisation of higher education to reduce their responsibilities towards workers.
10. Decolonising education means democratise – transformative change will not happen through seat-at-the-table politics, but by leveraging student-worker-community power against institutions, to wrest control over them from the hands of overpaid management and corporate interests.
11. A 'movement-based' approach, organising both in and outside the confines of SUs, and rooted in local communities, should be taken to build a democratic, dynamic movement of truly decolonising our curriculum and institution.

Conference Further Believes:

1. Decolonise campaigns must, at core, confront the processes of marketisation, corporatisation and securitisation of education that have shut down universities as spaces to organise for radical change – not narrowly consider matters of curriculum and/or faculty diversity.
2. 'Decolonising education' must necessarily be connected to:
 - The demand for free education
 - The imposition of UKVI monitoring on institutions
 - The exclusion and gentrification of working class communities adjacent to many universities
 - The managerialism in the university, and shutting down of internal democracy
 - Links between institutions and the arms trade/militarisation abroad
3. We should seek where possible to connect with education movements for radical change in the global south.
4. Many local campaigns across the UK, led primarily by sabbatical officers and guided by NUS UK, have been co-opted by universities and re-routed into diversity initiatives, or incrementalist reformism. The aim of these campaigns should be transformative, not merely replacing one set of bourgeois intellectuals with another of a different hue.
5. Issues of 'race' inequality cannot be divorced from the other pressures affecting institutions and education on a national scale.

6. Addressing 'race' inequality goes hand-in-hand with campaigns for free education and the democratising our education - not band-wagoning on regressive government reforms because we're promised crumbs.

Conference resolves:

1. To mandate the NUS-USI President & NUS-USI BAEM Officer to work on investigating issues surrounding the attainment gap in NI.
2. To mandate the NUS-USI president to work with relative officers in USI on the ethos of this policy.
3. To reaffirm NUS-USI's stance on calling for free education, and that the reintroduction of maintenance grants and democratising education is central to ensuring education is accessible for all.
4. To mandate NUS-USI to work with the NUS Black Students' Campaign's Decolonise Network, in working on campaigning for equality in education.
5. To mandate the NUS-USI to work with UCU on a student-staff approach to addressing the attainment gap.

Supporting the campaign to bring back the post-study work visa

Conference Notes:

1. There are 442,375 international students in the UK, including 312,660 non-EU international students- about 3000 of these international students are enrolled in institutions across Northern Ireland.
2. The post-study work visa scheme was introduced for international students to
3. International students pay staggering amounts of money in tuition fees, visa costs, and NHS bills – they are being treated like cash cows.
4. The international student community in Northern Ireland contribute about £170 million to the economy fiscally- let alone the cultural diversity, global outlook, and internationally relevant skills they bring to our campuses.
5. The current hostile environment policy makes international students feel unwelcome in the UK, and 19% of non-EU students would not recommend the UK as a place to study for a friend or relative (this is as high as 34%, 36% and 38% for students from India, Nigeria, and Pakistan respectively).
6. The number of non-EU international students finding employment after graduation has fallen by seven and a half times since the UK government scrapped post-study work visas in 2012.
7. During International Student Day 2018, a PostStudyWorkVisaNow campaign was launched in Scotland at the University of Edinburgh with various politicians and students.

Conference further believes:

1. International students are now being forced to go home unjustly despite having built their lives in their city of study, and despite making the UK culturally, socially, intellectually and financially stronger. It is a disgrace that international graduates are being deported or otherwise forced to leave.
2. International students are fed up with the long wait and empty promises that have constituted the conversation about re-establishing the post-study work visa in the UK –the sad reality being that it has become a buzzword or unfulfilled manifesto pledge.
3. The PostStudyWorkVisaNow is an independent campaign that focuses on collective direct action from international student voices from SU's across the UK, to our national unions - presenting our elected representatives in Westminster that there is a demand for the post-study work visa; and that international students deserve the ability to be able to secure a future or career in the UK.

Conference resolves:

1. To support and campaign to bring back the Post-Study work visa for international students in the UK.

2. To mandate NUS-USI to work with NUS UK, support a secure future for international students in NI, and lobby representatives in Westminster.
3. Endorse the PostStudyWorkVisaNow campaign and join an alliance of international students from across the UK actively campaigning for this cause. The campaign demands:
 - i) That the government to reintroduce a post-study work visa that allows graduates to work in the UK for at least two years after graduation.
 - ii) A lower, regional salary threshold.
 - iii) No restrictions; a post-study work visa should be offered to anyone who graduates from an FE or HE programme that lasts for 11 + months in the UK.
 - iv) A healthy ecosystem- the government must support FE and HE institutions in offering opportunities to enhance employability, build capacity and engage with the job market while in education.
 - v) FE & HE institutions to include employability and local as well as overseas job opportunities in their internationalization strategy.
 - vi) That international students be removed from net migration targets.

Anti-Racism & Anti-Facism

Conference notes:

1. There has been a widespread resurgence and emboldening of fascism globally, presenting an existential threat to communities of colour, migrants, minoritised faiths, and LGBT+ people.
2. Ruling governments have pandered to fascist populism through xenophobic/racist scapegoating.
3. Westminster and Stormont governments cannot be relied upon to 'deal' with the threat of fascism, as the policies of austerity and privatisation create the conditions in which fascism grows.
4. Anti-fascism must be driven by grassroots organisations, which can both respond to the threat of far-right mobilisations and proactively build mutual aid and solidarity in communities, to outmaneuver fascist populism.
5. Throughout 2018, a number of far-right groups rallied in Belfast on multiple occasions around various issues; from calling for the Islamophobic, racist- Tommy Robinson's release, to pedalling Islamophobic, anti-migrant, fascist & racist rhetoric.
6. Many far-right fascist groups- including Generation Sparta, a group linked to European neo-nazi Generation Identity- have been organising actively in NI, an example being the anti-islam leaflets that were distributed in Ravenhill Rd.
7. In October 2018, a group of people dressed in KKK costumes gathered outside an Islamic centre in Newtownards; just a year before a pig's head was left outside the very same Islamic centre.
8. The border between the North & South of Ireland, has always been a 'hard' border for people of colour- these are the harsh realities of Stop-and-Search laws used to target and police the movement of people of colour through the border.
9. Asylum Seekers- who are by an overwhelming majority, people of colour- under the direct provision centers in ROI, have to often make long difficult journeys for various official documentation appointments as well as to access healthcare. Many of these centres are situated in areas where public transport options involve crossing the border into NI illegally en route- hence making accessing legal help/services & healthcare close to impossible.
10. An outrage about 'Free Speech' in universities has been manufactured by the government/press.
11. This often relies on crude, false connotations between diverse direct-action tactics/campaigns with 'No Platforming'/'Safe Spaces'.
12. Jo Johnson announced that the Office for Students would take a more aggressive role in securing 'freedom of speech' in universities. It's unclear exactly what this new 'duty' would add to existing law in practice, but in context it's likely that student direct action will be targeted - including anti-racist protesting.

Conference further believes:

1. 'Anti-racist' state laws, such as bans of far-right groups are inevitably utilised to target progressive organising that the state disapproves of – example being the Public Order Act.
2. No Platforming is an important tactic developed by antifascists to counter fascist organising. It has been widely adopted in SU's across the country, as well as being a core of NUS UK's organising.
3. The success of No Platforming, as a tactic, hinges on robust grassroots organising, not just as a 'policy'.
4. No Platforming should never seek to emulate state control or draw legitimacy from their laws – we should support bottom-up and democratic antifascism, not top-down policing.
5. Furthermore, No Platform should apply only to fascism/far-right organising, in specific response to the methodology of fascism.
6. Free Speech is one of a number of rights to hold power to account, and is inseparable from the right to organise and the right to protest. Therefore, it must be defended and exercised 'from below'.
7. There is indeed an attack on Free Speech in universities – it comes from the state & institutions cracking down on student political organising.
8. Direct action has a proud tradition that we must defend. Universities should not be made to police students' action, nor should SUs ever be complicit in doing so.

Conference resolves:

1. To mandate NUS-USI to work with trade unions and our national unions- NUS & USI- to provide anti-fascist training days open to students and communities covering: self-defence training, direct action training, know-your-rights legal training.
2. To affirm NUS-USI's support for No Platforming, as a bottom-up tactic.
3. To stand in solidarity with our siblings in direct provision in the Republic of Ireland and to call for its abolition.
4. Robustly oppose any new repressive state laws that stifle our right to organise, protest and/or oppose the far-right and campaign against any future laws or policies that stifle or criminalise direct and disruptive action.
5. To actively use No Platforming in the political organising of NUS-USI, to actively oppose any and all fascist and racist organising.

Integrated Education for a shared future.

Conference Notes:

1. Education in Northern Ireland is divided and typically segregated along religious lines.
2. There are around 70'000 empty desks in the school's system across the North.
3. Divided education systems create a lack of consistency in the quality and content in the education received, particularly in areas such as religious education and sex education.
4. NUS-USI supports and protects all of its member unions, including St.Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges' unions.

Conference further notes:

1. That divided education isolates communities and does not contribute to progress towards a shared future in Northern Ireland.
2. That educating all children together at a **primary and secondary level** is an essential part of the reconciliation process and of building a society that celebrates respect, understanding and friendships across traditional divides.
3. Divisions cannot be expected to be healed if children are taught separately and don't meet someone of a different belief or background to themselves until they reach university.
4. That NUS-USI should work with the unions of St.Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges and consult them in all matters that may impact their funding and union structures in regards to integrated education at a primary and secondary school level.

Conference Resolves:

1. That NUS-USI should lobby and work for fully integrated education at **primary and secondary level** within Northern Ireland whilst respecting people's right to choose where they send their children.
2. NUS-USI should work alongside stakeholders with similar interests and outlooks such as the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) to achieve this.
3. That NUS-USI should always uphold and protect its member unions, St.Mary's and Stranmillis University colleges while carrying out any work related to integrated education in NI.

The continuation of the NUS-USI REC

Conference Notes:

1. NUS reforms have the potential to abolish all elected volunteers across NUS UK.
2. That the NUS-USI Regional Executive Committee consists of elected part-time unpaid volunteers alongside an elected full-time paid President's position.
3. That the work of the NUS-USI Regional Executive Committee is fundamental to the ability of NUS-USI to engage with members and students, particularly through the work of the liberation and further education campaigns.

Conference further notes:

1. NUS-USI is politically autonomous from NUS UK, with its own constitution, policy file, steering committee and elections procedures.
2. The NUS-USI Regional Executive Committee can continue to function at no additional expense to NUS-USI or NUS UK.
3. The NUS-USI Liberation and Further Education conferences can continue to take place at no additional expense to NUS-USI or NUS UK provided that members continue to support these events in their union spaces and the continued existence of the NUS-USI office space.

Conference Resolves:

1. That NUS-USI should protect the continued existence of its Regional Executive Committee in all NUS UK reforms.
2. NUS-USI will continue to elect volunteer positions as chosen by our members.
3. NUS-USI will continue to proudly represent further education students and apprentices, women students, LGBT+ students, disabled students, BAEM students, trans and non-binary students and international students.

Off Campus Discipline

Conference notes that:

1. Students are regularly punished by the institutions for incidents that take place off campus.
2. Punishment can range from advice and warning, alcohol awareness programme, fines, suspension and at the worst expulsion.
3. Students have been punished under these regulations for many reasons including, taking part in peaceful protests.
- 4.

Conference believes that:

1. Institutions have no jurisdiction over the regulation of students' activities outside of university/college.
2. That the application of the off-campus discipline regulations is inconsistent, as it tends to only focus on students surrounding the institution, therefore it is not applied equally to all students.
3. By punishing students for taking part in legitimate, peaceful protest that the institution is setting a dangerous precedent on the ability of student activists to fight for change.

Conference therefore instructs NUS-USI executive:

1. To support efforts to oppose off campus discipline through the Courts.

Policy Lapse

Internationalisation and international students

Conference notes:

An increasing drive in the Higher Education sector to attract a much greater number of international students, while recognising the hugely positive affect that international students have on the student body within each institution and on the movement as a whole.

Conference notes with concern:

That this drive among HE institutions is founded, not with multi-culturalism or shared learning in mind, but rather on an agenda of profiteering. International students are now seen as 'cash cows' in a sector that has steadily been de-funded by government, and in an effort to drive revenue, HE institutions are actively exploiting an international 'market'.

Conference asserts:

That international student fees are exploitative, and do not always reflect the quality of education and support that students receive when they arrive on our shores. Further, not only are international fees extortionate, that a lack of regulation of these fees is of particular concern and should be tolerated by the student movement.

Conference mandates, that NUS-USI:

1. Actively lobby the Department of Employment & Learning, and all relevant bodies, for a regulated international fee system, coupled with a cap on international fees to prevent deliberate exploitation.
2. In all lobbying on student fees, that the international student perspective is included, to highlight disparities and unfairness.
3. In its fight against tuition fees and for a publically funded HE sector, that the issue of international fees remains a key point of contention.
4. Actively raise awareness of issues of international students in its campaigning; highlighting the need for all students to stand in solidarity with international students.

International students and immigration law

Conference notes with concern:

The policies and actions of the Home Office under the stewardship of Theresa May in regards to international students.

That the UK Government is actively considering the inclusion of international students in net migration figures. Further, that in a recent tribunal, Mr Justice McCloskey ruled against the Home Office's forced mass deportation of students, based on very little evidence and with no right to appeal from within the UK.

Conference asserts:

That the inclusion of international students in net migration will actively deny those students the chance to settle-in and contribute to our society after they have completed their studies. The contribution that these students make is immeasurable, and they should have the right to stay indefinitely upon completion of their studies.

Conference mandates:

1. NUS-USI to work with, and actively support, NUS efforts to fight against the inclusion of international students in net migration figures.
2. That NUS-USI raise these issues at every available opportunity, and lobby DEL to make representations to the UK Government to that affect.

Legalisation of marijuana

Conference recognises that:

1. Criminalisation of drug users has been an abject policy failure in combating illicit drug trade. The so-called 'War on Drugs' has failed to combat criminal activity, while ruining the lives of users.
2. Legalisation of marijuana use in some States of the USA and in other nations has seen a noticeable drop in drug-related crime and in usage.
3. A regulated system, with the necessary age and distribution restrictions, has significant economic and social benefits that far outweigh the devastating consequences of criminalising students and members of society.

Conference further notes:

That the effect of criminalising those who use drugs creates a taboo culture, and a fear of seeking necessary supports, including among our students.

Conference mandates NUS-USI:

1. To support efforts of students and other organisations to legalise the sale and use of marijuana.
2. To raise awareness of the negative effects of criminalising students who use drugs, and the pressing need for reform.

Higher education funding

Conference notes:

1. The Northern Ireland Executive's Department for Employment & Learning carried out what was arguably its biggest ever public consultation in relation to the future of Higher Education funding earlier this year, The 'Big Conversation'.

Conference further notes:

1. The student movement became a credible and legitimate voice within the 'Big Conversation', developing a robust economic argument alongside an ideological narrative to argue for publically funded higher education in Northern Ireland, opposing tuition fees and debt.

Conference recognises:

1. The outcome of the consultation saw an options papers published by the Department which detailed a number of potential routes to resolving the current funding crisis within our Higher Education system in Northern Ireland.¹
2. This paper included an option to abolish tuition fees entirely, and to meet the funding gap in Higher Education through increased public investment.

Conference believes:

1. The inclusion of tuition fee-free education as a viable option within the Department's paper would not have happened if it hadn't been for the strategic, collaborative effort of the student movement over the course of the consultation process.
2. That 'free education' does not only relate to the abolishment of tuition fee-free education, but also the need to ensure that students are funded holistically to support them financially whilst they are studying.

Conference resolves:

1. There is clear merit to developing factually-based arguments centred on social justice and fairness and grounded in economic literacy.
2. Given the sometimes complex nature of politics in Northern Ireland, continued constructive engagement with political parties has the potential to shape political decision-making in our favour.

Conference therefore mandates:

¹ Securing a Sustainable Solution for Higher Education in Northern Ireland: An Options Paper: <https://www.delni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/del/HE%20options%20paper.pdf#page=38>

1. The NUS-USI President to continue to make the case for the abolishment of tuition fees.
2. The NUS-USI President to continue to engage in constructive political engagement as a priority, especially given the formation of the Department of the Economy which will assume responsibility for Higher and Further Education following the 2016 Assembly election.

Course costs

Conference notes:

1. The findings of NUS-USI's Pound in Your Pocket research, published in May 2014.²

Conference further notes:

1. One of the most worrying sections of the research highlighted that across both higher and further education, an average of around two-thirds of students had paid for materials, activities or other costs associated with completing their programme of study
2. Within these costs, on average, just over a third of all reported costs were not known in advance.
3. Some of the most 'hidden' costs were also some of the more expensive costs.

Conference believes:

1. It is neither right nor fair that students should be expected to pay for resources and materials that are often required for them to be successful in their course, which they were not made aware of in advance of enrolment.
2. Students are already under significant pressure in relation to meeting the costs of their basic living expenses.
3. Having to pay for additional course related materials can have a significant and negative impact on students' wellbeing.

Conference resolves:

1. The NUS-USI President should investigate what guidance, if any, is issued to Universities and Colleges in relation to transparency of additional course related costs.
2. The NUS-USI President should lead an inclusive campaign, incorporating Higher and Further education students, as well as apprentices, to highlight the impact of hidden course costs.
3. NUS-USI should lobby the relevant Northern Ireland Executive Department and members of the relevant Northern Ireland Assembly committee(s) to work to introduce guidance to Institutions making clear that the costs of all additional, mandatory course-related resources and materials must be detailed in course prospectuses and all other relevant information available to potential students.

Postgraduate students

Conference notes:

Postgraduate students are currently under represented, and play a significant role in the up skilling of the Northern Ireland workforce and for some occupations in the private and public sectors; these qualifications are a key pre-entry requisite.

Conference further notes:

The funding routes to access postgraduate provision are complex and student support systems are weak.

Conference believes:

Part-time, flexible and accessible postgraduate provision which meets the needs of students as well as employers is critical to future expansion and should be incentivised by research and funding council funding regimes. Robust equality impact assessments should be applied to postgraduate funding regimes to ensure that they promote fairness and opportunities across all the potential postgraduate student population.

Conference resolves:

² NUS-USI Pound in Your Pocket summary report: <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NUS-USI-Pound-in-Your-Pocket-summary-report.pdf>

To encourage further detailed research to be commissioned to assess the mechanisms and the merits of alternative funding and student support models with the aim of developing a system that increases access to and expands postgraduate provision.

Student parents

Conference notes:

Student Parents face unprecedented difficulties in both FE and HE institutions, with the levels of support varying dramatically from institution to institution. The proposed changes to tuition fees, the threat of EMA funding being terminated and complicated support funds put these students under extra pressures.

Conference believes:

Institutions need to offer accessible and uncomplicated support structures for student parents. Many students' parents feel their needs and requirements are not being met, and would welcome more collaboration with DEL and HE/FE Institutions to ascertain how to provide adequate assistance. A lack of funding and support is a massive barrier to participation in education for student parents.

Conference resolves:

1. For NUS-USI to instigate a review into the structures of support currently offered by DEL and the funding models used and the adequacy of these structures.
2. To work on behalf of student parents in liaising with DEL and HE/FE Institutions to improve participation and engagement.

Syria & the refugee crisis

Conference sends:

Its solidarity to the Syrian people, who remain caught up in a protracted and bloody civil war which has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and forced millions from their homes.

Conference condemns:

The reactionary barbarism and terrorism of the so-called Islamic State (IS), of which ordinary Muslims are the primary victims. Conference believes this brutal group has been able to grow due to the instability created by the Iraq war and the poverty created by the pro-capitalist policies of the corrupt regimes in the region. Conference notes the hypocrisy of the Cameron government in condemning IS while remaining allied to the Saudi dictatorship, which promotes the same fundamentalist agenda and beheaded twice as many people in the last year as IS.

Conference believes:

That military intervention can only add to the suffering of the Syrian people and deepen the crisis they face.

Conference condemns:

Moves by the EU and various member states to prevent refugees from entering Europe and exercising their basic right to asylum.

Conference calls:

For all necessary support for refugees.

Regular networking

Conference notes:

NUS-USI elected officers have an influential role in networking across the students' unions in Northern Ireland with information sharing and experience.

Conference believes:

A stronger connection between students' unions and NUS-USI elected officers is essential to build an accurate reflection of the cross-section of current issues faced by students.

Conference mandates:

Each NUS-USI elected officer to meet once per semester with each NI college/university.

Fair Representation

Conference notes:

1. That NUS-USI Conference should be as representative as possible.

Conference believes:

1. That a large proportion of our student population are women yet women are continually under represented at all levels of the student movement including on the NUS-USI Conference floor.
2. If the NUS-USI Conference floor is more reflective of the student population who identify as women we can begin to ensure women's issues are not neglected by the student movement.
3. Ensuring that at least 50% of NUS-USI Conference floor is made up of women students is the key next step to ensuring fair representation of women within the student movement

Conference resolves:

1. That all delegations to NUS-USI Conference must be made up of at least 50% self-defining women, rounded down.
2. That NUS-USI produce guidance and support Member Unions on how best to apply this policy during their election of delegates for Conference.

NUS-USI 2nd NEC position accountability

Conference notes:

2. The National Executive Council is NUS' interim decision-making body between meetings of NUS National Conference.
3. The NUS-USI 2nd NEC Position is elected annually at NUS-USI Conference and represents students from across NI at meetings of the Council.

Conference believes:

1. Our elected officers should be accountable to those who represent them.
2. Elected officer of NUS-USI are asked to produce a report of their work to be presented at Regional Council.

Conference resolves:

1. That the office bearer of the NUS-USI 2nd NEC Position should produce a report detailing their work to NUS-USI Regional Council.

Officer networking

Conference notes:

1. The tri-lateral agreement that gives members of NUS-USI membership to NUS and USI.
2. That Conference is the often the first time in the year that Students' Union Officers across the NUS-USI membership meet and get the opportunity to network
3. That Conference is often attended by a number of officer of NUS and USI

Conference believes:

1. That collectivism is key to the student movement and through unity we are stronger.
2. That this collectivism must be nurtured and enhanced early in the year in order for the entire membership to work together throughout the year.
3. That geographical barriers often make it hard for officers in Northern Ireland to engage with NUS and USI

Conference mandates:

1. The NUS-USI President to organise and facilitate an event at the earliest opportunity for officers from HE & FE Students' Unions to network and build on the collective nature of NUS-USI
2. To extend an invitation to all officers of NUS and USI to this event to maximise on the potential for engagement with all of our national unions.

'Consumer'-oriented language

Conference notes with concern:

That students are commonly referred to as 'customers' or 'consumers' in government policy and institutional publications.

Conference asserts:

That students are not customers, and that such language devalues the inherent value of education, and subtly reflects the unacceptable transition towards a market in education.

Conference mandates:

The President and Regional Executive to work with member unions to erase this way of thinking from existing policy and practice.

Part-time officer training

Conference notes:

That Part Time Officers play a significant role in their Student Unions and are essential to the growth, development and representative nature of the Student Movement.

Conference believes:

That training is essential for Part Time Officers to maximise on their time as officers.

Conference commends:

The work done by NUS-USI to ensure that Part Time Officers in Further Education Students' Unions are adequately trained.

Conference mandates:

NUS-USI to offer training to Part Time Officers in Higher Education Students' Unions and to work with NUS and USI where relevant to deliver this training.

SRE

Conference notes:

1. The standard of age appropriate Sex and Relationship Education in the region is patchy and barely meets the bare minimum necessary at best, if it is even taught at all beyond a few squeamish sentences in a biology class.

2. Primarily, abstinence is taught as the only real option and scare tactics and guilt trips are used to caution teens into not engaging in sexual behaviour.
3. There is also no consideration given beyond heterosexual couples and that sex is primarily for procreation.

Conference believes:

1. Age-appropriate sex and relationship education should form part of the national curriculum at all levels of education. This will allow a consistent building of knowledge and understanding
2. SRE should be a dialogue that continues through life during and beyond education.

Conference resolves:

1. To lobby government to make improvements to SRE at all levels of education into the national curriculum, as age appropriate.

Breast ironing

Conference commends:

The hard work NUS-USI has previously done on lobbying Stormont for a change in Law on Female Genital Mutilation.

Conference notes:

Breast Ironing, where hot instruments are used to mutilate a girl's chest, is becoming a growing concern in the UK, where it is believed at least 1,000 girls in are at risk. Conservative MP Jake Berry and Home Office Minister Karren Bradley want to bring the debate to Westminster to make the practice illegal.

Conference further notes:

That an emergency forward was bought to USI congress by QUBSU, where it was passed. They now a policy to support the campaign of criminalisation of FGM in all its forms, including supporting the North.

Conference believes:

FGM, no matter in what form it happens, should be illegal and awareness of these practices is vital to help both present and potential victims seek support.

Conference mandates:

The NUS-USI President and Women's Officer to campaign for the criminalisation of Breast Ironing. They are also to promote awareness of FGM, and work alongside USI in this struggle.

Disabled students in NUS-USI

Conference notes:

The work done to date by NUS-USI to raise awareness of disabled students' issues and to engage disabled students in the student movement.

Conference notes with concern:

That the NUS-USI Disabled Students Officer role has been vacant now for some time, and in this academic year there was no Conference for disabled students'.

Conference further notes:

That there is a distinct lack of policy specific to disabled students. No doubt exacerbated by the lack of an Officer or an effective conference to discuss the issues and policies relevant to disabled students.

Conference mandates:

1. That NUS-USI work with Member Organisations (MOs) and with disabled students' to urgently look at the issues faced by the disabled student community in the North.
2. That NUS-USI work with MOs to develop disability awareness campaigns that are easily transferable across all MOs, if they wish to roll them out.
3. That NUS-USI look for innovative ways to engage disabled students, recognising that a physical Conference is not always the most accessible forum for these students.

Disabled students' allowance and needs assessment

Conference condemns:

The attack on the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) by the UK Government, which will result in hardship, illness, and the death of UK domiciled students with disabilities.

Conference notes:

That the cuts to DSA have not been replicated by the Northern Ireland Executive, but Conference recognises the danger that the UK Government may in future try to force a further alignment of the welfare system across the UK.

Conference further notes:

1. That currently DEL is responsible for the administration and oversight of over £200,000 annually in DSA payments to 5 HE institutions.
2. That the current framework for Needs Assessment means that students are often not receiving the necessary adjustments until a considerable length of time after their initial assessment.
3. That any changes to an individual student's needs assessment mid-term causes significant delays and problems, which create huge issues around student health, safety, and retention.

Conference mandates that NUS-USI:

1. Work with Member Organisations and disabled students to take an evidence based approach to the issue of needs assessment reform.
2. That NUS-USI actively lobby and raise awareness with DEL the issues of needs assessment and the effect of delays in implementing reasonable adjustment and supports for disabled students.

Abortion guidelines for patients

Conference notes:

Current legislation is currently being challenged in the Courts, but that recent changes to guidelines are not too dissimilar to the previous ones.

Conference further notes:

That when registering with a GP, even students from GB to not get the same access to services as they would expect.

Conference believes:

That women when registering at a GP in Northern Ireland are not fully aware of their reproductive rights. Since all the available leaflets are focused on GB rather than NI, or with very sparse detail, it is not easy to understand their rights until they happen to have a pregnancy. We believe this adds unnecessary stress and is not helpful.

Conference mandates:

The NUS-USI President and Women's Officer to lobby Stormont and associated organisations for the creation of a simple health information leaflet which outlines current legislation and guidelines that could be given to women when they register at a GP surgery.

Climate Change

Conference notes:

1. Climate change presents a significant danger for the future.
2. All people and organisations should seek to be aware of their individual impact on the environment and to adjust themselves accordingly where that impact is excessively wasteful.

Conference commends:

The work that has been done by NUS-USI and that is currently being done to ensure the organisation is run efficiently and with its impact on the environment in mind.

Conference mandates:

The Regional Executive Committee to conduct a review of the events and work of NUS-USI to determine how we can reduce the impact of the organisation on the environment.

The review should include, but not be limited to

- Assessing the impact of Conference and other events
- Initiatives undertaken by member Students' Unions to address climate change
- Assessment of the impact of how NUS-USI works

Conference further mandates:

The review to include recommendations as to how NUS-USI could better tackle issues around climate change on an on-going basis.

No drilling at Woodburn

Conference opposes:

Plans to drill in Woodburn forest near Carrickfergus, destroying a pristine natural habitat and threatening the pollution of a major water reservoir which serves the greater Belfast area.

Conference condemns:

1. That underhand tactics used by drilling company Infrastrata and its legal threats against peaceful protesters.
2. Heavy-handed tactics used by the police and failure of local politicians and statutory bodies to ensure that necessary planning, safety and environmental measures are rigorously adhered to.

Conference calls:

For an immediate and outright ban on fracking.

Conference notes:

That mass community mobilisation and direct action such as blockades defeated plans to frack near Belcoo, County Fermanagh, and believes that these tactics will be key to preventing drilling at Woodburn.

Conference resolves:

That NUS-USI will give its full support to the community campaign to resist this development.