

Welcome to the extended version of the NUS education manifesto. An edited version is available on www.nusonline.co.uk and www.officeronline.co.uk.

Our aim with this manifesto is to provide you with details of our policies and the facts and figures to back them up as well as sign-posting you to further reading. Within this document we cover a wide range of issues from the Tomlinson recommendations to Higher Education admissions. These NUS principles and policies combine to form a uniform vision and set of values that our members stand by and believe in.

As a membership organisation representing the interests and needs of over 5 million learners across both the Further and Higher Education sectors, our policy is as diverse and dynamic as the people we represent. Our members direct NUS policy through democratic conferences and a committed team of elected officers, accountable to those members, carry out our campaigning work.

NUS is often branded as simply the fee fighters. This manifesto aims to challenge that perception and demonstrate clearly that our members are concerned with a wide range of issues. As a national movement we proactively push for policy changes that benefit the education sector as a whole as well as reacting to government policies and initiatives.

We invite you to read about NUS policy goals in the following areas: Funding and Financial Support, Access, Admissions and Aspirations, Representation, Welfare and Equality and Diversity.

We hope that you take the opportunity to read, digest and debate our proposals. We look forward to working with parliamentarians, trade unions and other stakeholders to achieve our policy goals on behalf of our membership.

If you wish to offer your support to all or any of the policy goals in the manifesto, to receive further reading referred to or simply wish to discuss it with us further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

In unity

Kat Fletcher, National President

Hannah Essex, Vice-President Education

CONTENTS

➤ **Funding and Financial Support**

1. Education as a Public Service
2. Further Education: 16 to 19 year olds
3. Further Education: Adult Learning
4. Further Education: Discretionary Support
5. Further Education: Closing the Funding Gap
6. Higher Education: Full-time Undergraduates
7. Higher Education: Part-time Undergraduates
8. Training and Support for Key Workers
9. Postgraduate Students
10. International Students
11. State Benefits and Tax Credits
12. Higher Education: The Funding Gap

➤ **Access, Admissions and Aspirations**

1. Office of Fair Access (OFFA)
2. Admissions to Higher Education
3. Post-Qualification Application (PQA)
4. AimHigher and Wider Access
5. 14-19 Tomlinson Review

➤ **Representation**

1. Strong and Active Students' Unions
2. Citizenship
3. Quality Assurance

➤ **Welfare**

1. Safe, Secure, Affordable Housing
2. Licensing of Halls
3. Tenancy Deposit Scheme
4. Students and Healthcare
5. Childcare
6. Students in the Workplace

➤ **Equality and Diversity**

1. Anonymous Marking
2. Black Students
3. Race Relations Amendment Act
4. Faith Provision
5. Mental Ill-Health
6. Women in Education and at Work
7. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Students

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

NUS supports the principle of free education as a route to tackling inequality, poverty and overcoming disadvantage. NUS recognises that this principle cannot be addressed without significant increases in funding to the education and training sector.

NUS long-term policy goal is to create genuine access to lifelong learning, which is not prevented by costs to the learner. Practically, this means:

- ✓ **the abolition of tuition fees and any form of student contribution;**
- ✓ **universal maintenance grants to meet the real costs of living for students in further and higher education (FE and HE);**
- ✓ **student loans maintaining the current interest rate, but with a raised repayment threshold to address student hardship and study costs for students undertaking part-time level 3 and higher education qualifications;**
- ✓ **student support funded through progressive taxation of personal and business income.**

NUS believes that society, the economy, businesses and individual learners benefit from a well educated, trained and appropriately skilled population. We therefore welcome the Government's 50 per cent HE undergraduate access target for 18–30 year olds and the lifelong learning agenda, which, if correctly implemented, will empower learners to gain and give back tenfold, the skills that they receive. NUS is encouraged by government targets for participation in education, training and employment across the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Both government and businesses have a huge responsibility to facilitate lifelong learning through providing relevant education and training opportunities, time off for studying and adequate student funding to undertake these opportunities. More needs to be done to ensure that as well as simply reaching targets, a quality education experience is available to all, and not tempered by costs to the individual.

NUS believes that the funding systems for FE and HE disadvantages all students but has a particularly negative impact on specific groups of students, such as adult learners, part-time undergraduates and international students.

I. Education as a public service

NUS supports the principle of education as a public service and believes that free education is a route to tackling inequality, poverty and differential access to education opportunities. NUS believes education as a funded public service will result in benefits for the economy, the employer and the learner. NUS' long term policy goal is to create genuine access to lifelong learning, which is not prevented by costs to the learner. NUS recognises that this principle cannot be addressed without significant increases in funding to the education and training sector.

NUS believes students should not pay for their education through tuition fees, either paid up front or after graduation. NUS does not agree to the principle of a specific graduate tax, either finite or infinite.

The abolition of means testing

NUS believes that means-testing is regressive, because it stigmatises poverty, does not acknowledge students' independence at 18, excludes students who are estranged from their families and negates the role of education as a public service, which should be funded through public taxation.

Student contributions to education funding

NUS members believe that students contribute to funding FE and HE both during study and after graduating through personal and business taxation. NUS believes these tax contributions should be redistributed back into education. NUS hopes the following will therefore be addressed:

- since 1979, corporation tax has been cut by 23 per cent and top-rate income tax by 43 per cent. Returning to increased levels of taxation would help to pay for a properly funded FE and HE system.
- students are increasingly paying for the FE and HE funding gap throughⁱ:
 - i. increasing tuition fees;
 - ii. increasing accommodation costs;
 - iii. hidden course costs;
 - iv. paid work or borrowing;
 - v. withdrawal of social security benefits as low-income citizens.

Employers' contributions to education funding

NUS believes employers benefit from FE and HE teaching in a number of ways. HE creates a pool of appropriately skilled graduates. Employers benefit through FE and HE providing a mutual testing ground for recruitment and training techniques through work experience. Students undertaking casual local work also bolsters the local economy in providing a continuous source of cheap labour. NUS would therefore like the following methods of employer contributions to education funding to be considered:

- ensure that a percentage of taxation generated through employers goes back into FE and HE teaching and research. Increasing and reinvesting corporation tax is particularly crucial for ensuring a fairly funded access orientated student support system;
- skills development projects. For example, informing local education providers of skills needs through involvement in the local lifelong learning strategy. DfES has estimated that the private sector market for learning is approximately £20 billion per year.ⁱⁱ The Council for Industry in Higher Education (CIHE) estimates that the HE sector only secures about £250 million of this.ⁱⁱⁱ NUS is also keen to stress that business involvement in teaching and research should not compromise academic freedom^{iv};
- provide an input into building students' skills capacities within HE courses from foundation degrees to honours degrees;
- NUS supports the CIHE's recommendation that employers should pay the full cost of teaching, research and development services supplied through HE institutions.

NUS policy goals for education as a public service are:

- ✓ **no additional student or graduate contributions through tuition fees;**
- ✓ **no debt burden as an 'investment' for future earning potential;**
- ✓ **an increased percentage of salary paid in taxation by those in the higher tax brackets;**

- ✓ **an increased corporation tax;**
- ✓ **revenues from the above to be ploughed back into FE and HE to fund an access-based public service.**

2. Further Education: 16 to 19 year olds

Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs)

NUS welcomes the roll out of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) in England in recognition of the crucial role of statutory grant-based support to facilitate participation and retention in education.^v NUS is pleased by plans to extend EMAs in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- EMAs are available to 16 year olds and over and under 20s in pilot areas. In new areas, it is only available to those moving from Year 11 to Year 12 during the 2004/05 academic year. This means that 17 to 19 year olds in areas that were not involved in the pilot miss out until the scheme has fully rolled out;
- the level of EMA should be raised to that of Modern Apprenticeships (i.e. £40), and closer to that level of JSA, to prevent distortions in choices based on funding;
- NUS very much welcomes the Government move to open up eligibility for Learner Support Funds to Asylum Seekers aged 16 to 19. An extension of EMA eligibility would also be welcomed.
- authorised absences for EMA payments do not automatically include participation within democratic activities, such as NUS Conference, or student development activities, such as training organised through a students' union. Although LEAs have local discretion in these matters, without central guidance from DfES, students may be prevented from participating in active citizenship for fear of having their EMA payment withdrawn.

Care to Learn grant^{vi}

NUS welcomes the Care to Learn grant^{vii} in England in recognition of the need for a universal grant to cover childcare costs for learners. NUS particularly welcomes that the scheme is not means-tested, covers childcare related costs, such as travel, and is funded generously. However, NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- informal childcare is not recognised under this scheme;
- the age limit is 19.

NUS policy goals for 16 to 19 year olds are:

- ✓ **young persons that are married or in de-facto long-term relationships are considered independent for assessing student support;**
- ✓ **a 'development allowance' for education, training or unemployment of around £40 per week, with additional payments in recognition of course costs, childcare (including informal care), disabilities and travel;**
- ✓ **the Government to support young people participating in volunteering activities, young people actively seeking work, and young people not in education, employment or training;**
- ✓ **EMAs to be available to 17 to 19 year olds in areas that were not involved in the pilots, to be available to Asylum Seekers and to recognise active citizenship as a valid reason for authorised absences.**

3. Further Education: Adult Learning

DfES Adult Skills Strategy: Priorities and Fee Support

NUS welcomes the new entitlement to free learning^{viii} for people studying for their first full-time level two qualification. However NUS is concerned that funding proposals in the DfES Adult Skills Strategy will

dramatically change the adult student profile in FE to the exclusion of adults who wish to retrain, to study at level three and also households on middle incomes. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- fee waivers and grant support for a first level three qualification is discretionary. Each Local LSC and Sector Skills Councils will have the discretion to set fees in the light of local sector needs. As a consequence, fees will vary considerably within regions and between courses.
- there is no statutory provision within the Skills Strategy for fee waivers or grant support for anyone wanting to retrain at level two or three.

Adult Learning Grant

NUS welcomes the introduction in England of the Adult Learning Grant (ALG)^{ix} in recognition of the important role that grant-based funding plays in facilitating access to FE. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- take up is very low, particularly amongst those aged 22 to 30.^x This is not surprising given that the ALG is paid as an alternative to claiming Jobseekers Allowance for adults not in employment but at a considerably lower rate than JSA;^{xi}
- it is only paid for full-time study (therefore to the exclusion of JSA) and it does not address the retraining agenda for those who already hold a level two and/or three qualification.

NUS policy goals for adult learning are:

- ✓ **extra money to be secured to guarantee universal free level two and three entitlements for those undertaking qualifications at these levels for the first time, to avoid non-priority learners being penalised by rising course prices;**
- ✓ **persons who are re-training or updating their skills for the first time to be offered free level two and three courses;**
- ✓ **Adult Learning Grants (ALG) set at a level equivalent to that of Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) or to be paid in addition to JSA to cover course costs. ALG recipients to receive passported benefits in the same way as means-tested benefit recipients. The ALG cut off age at 30 to be removed. Additional statutory funding added to recognise course-related costs, childcare (including informal care), disabilities and travel;**
- ✓ **review of Career Development Loans to ensure they are not repayable during unemployment. Repayment should become income contingent. Loans restricted to adult learners studying at level three and above.**
- ✓ **centrally held, accessible information to be available to prospective students on fee charges across regions for similar courses.**

4. Further Education: Discretionary Support

Learner Support Funds and Schools Access Funds

NUS believes that the majority of student support should be statutory, to ensure learners know what they are entitled to and can budget effectively for the duration of their studies. However, NUS recognises the value of discretionary funds through the Learner Support Funds and Schools Access Funds in England and their equivalent funding stream in the rest of the UK, for example in responding to informal childcare needs, responding to the needs of young asylum seekers.^{xii} NUS particularly welcomed the Rees Review recommendations for Welsh Financial Contingency Funds to include international students.^{xiii}

However, there are limitations on current funds that restrict schools and colleges from fully addressing the needs of their student populations. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- restricted Government funding means the overall pot available for discretionary support is under threat;
- no eligibility for funds for asylum seekers aged 19 and over and international students (except in Wales);
- no eligibility for 14 to 16 year olds in schools and colleges;

- several colleges have been imposing their own restrictions on LSF for informal childcare, despite national guidelines enabling payments to be made where formal childcare is not available.

NUS policy goals for discretionary support are:

- ✓ **discretionary funds to be generously funded;**
- ✓ **discretionary funds to be available to 19+ asylum seekers and international students;**
- ✓ **guidance for staff and students' union officers on offering discretionary funding to 14 to 16 year olds;**
- ✓ **stronger government steer to enable payments for informal childcare to be made where formal childcare is either not available or not appropriate.**

5. Further Education: Closing the Funding Gap

NUS is concerned about the lack of 'joined up thinking' - between these policies and the funding made available to meet targets and surging service demand in the sector to 2008 in both the November 2004 Grant Letter and the LSC's response.

The Grant Letter details the LSC's budget from 2004/05. The LSC's budget rises from £8.6 billion in 2004/05 to £10.1 billion in 2007/08, but the increase is front-loaded: there is a £630 million increase in 2005/06 (8.1 per cent) but an increase of only £265 million (2.8 per cent) in 2006/07.

In the Grant Letter, without providing information on student numbers, the DfES claims that the money is sufficient to allow for growth in student numbers and to "sustain the average unit of funding in real terms". But according to the LSC's recently published learner numbers statistics for England, 2003/04^{xiv} there have been increases in student numbers in the following DfES *priority* areas:

- 16-18 participation has increased by 2 per cent to over 700,000
- in national employer training programs
- in full level 2 entitlement programs by 7 per cent
- in 'Skills for Life' by 27 per cent
- in Work Based Learning by 5 per cent

These are highly likely to leave colleges with a real terms cut in funding in 2006/07.

For 16-18 participation in FE that cut is liable to be even deeper. Current enrolment figures are at a twenty-year high point, fuelled by EMAs being available to more young people. As the EMA is finally rolled out across the nation in 2005/06, that demand is liable to rise further and be sustained at a higher figure.

The Grant Letter shows that the LSC will not have enough money to implement the priorities outlined in the AoC's 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review submission which were, in turn, the Government's own promises. In particular, there do not appear to be funds to:

- expand work-related learning for 14-16 year olds, unless this is funded from the schools budget. At the moment, it is not and the shortfall is made up from college reserves;
- expand vocational education and training for adults;
- deliver real-terms pay increases, meet rising pension costs or adequately fund staff training in FE when colleges are losing lecturers to the schools sector due to the pay gap between the sectors;
- narrow the 16-19 funding gap between schools and colleges;

Funding disparities between schools and colleges are matched by ambiguities and near-contradictions in policy concerning the school and FE sectors. LSC statistics^{xv} show that over 700,000 16-18s study in colleges

compared to 400,000 in schools. Yet over the period to 2008 the DfES has promised schools a 10 per cent increase in per pupil funding.

The LSC has only been given a marginal increase in its capital budget. This means that the college sector will need to borrow money to modernise its buildings, estates and equipment at a time when the total schools capital fund is rising to £7 billion.

This leads NUS to the conclusion that there is a difference in priorities between Government ministries, with schools occupying the preferred policy implementation position despite the wide range of difficult, complex targets the FE sector has proved itself capable of meeting. Neither does the current funding and policy position meet or match the kind of developing, collaborative infrastructure between schools and colleges that will be necessary if the full transformative promise of the Tomlinson proposals is to be realised.

NUS shares these perceptions with both NATFHE and with the AoC, and will be joining with them in the AoC's 'Fair Funding for FE' campaign in 2005.

NUS policy goals on FE and the funding gap are:

- ✓ **a fully integrated learning and skills sector;**
- ✓ **a joined up 14-19 and adult sector;**
- ✓ **extra revenue resources within Sills for Life programmes for FE institutions to provide for 16-19 demand and for work-based learning;**
- ✓ **equal pay and conditions for college lecturers and school teachers;**
- ✓ **the realisation of Tomlinson Reforms;**

6. Higher Education: Full-time undergraduates

NUS supports free education and a funding system that addresses barriers to access and retention in HE due to student poverty and hardship, debt aversion amongst under-represented groups and course choices based on cost, rather than appropriateness. NUS is concerned that the current student support systems in England and Wales present barriers in all these areas.

Addressing student hardship

NUS welcomes the introduction of the HE grant and the government's proposals to review the level of student loan offered in the light of the findings of the next DfES Student Income and Expenditure Survey (SIES). NUS firmly believes that the current level of government support is insufficient to meet the costs of study and we estimate that funding for student support on average falls short of meeting living and study costs in London and outside London.^{xvi} NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- the inadequate level of government support for students as highlighted by the National Audit Office, which stated that average student expenditure for the 98/99 academic year was £5464 – exceeding the maximum student support by £1845;^{xvii}
- the cost of living has been rising nearly **three times faster** than the provision of student support for students inside London, and nearly **four times faster** outside London^{xviii}. Increases in accommodation costs leave students outside London with £34.85 per week on average to live on from government funding after paying for their rent.^{xix} This is less than an individual would receive through Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support per week^{xx}. Full-time undergraduate working is increasing.^{xxixxxii} Research also shows that students from less well-off backgrounds are more likely to work, and to work longer hours than students from better off families^{xxiii}. Significant paid work can have serious consequences on academic achievement, mental and physical health.^{xxiv}

Addressing debt aversion

NUS is concerned that fear of debt is a prominent factor determining access to higher education, particularly amongst those from poorer backgrounds. NUS' Funding the Future research and the Universities UK (UUK)

Student Debt Project show that the groups the government is trying to attract into HE are likely to be the most debt averse and the most concerned about the costs of HE (i.e. low-income groups, lone parents, students from certain minority ethnic groups)^{xxv}. NUS welcomes the government's reintroduction of the HE grant from September 2004 but would like to see the following addressed:

- increased levels of HE grants - £1,000 per year will not impact on debt levels, currently averaging £12,000^{xxvi}, or tackle debt aversion. Even with the HE grant increasing to £2700 in September 2006, the parallel increase in tuition fees is likely to wipe out any access incentive the grant may have provided.

Student Loans

NUS welcomes the Government's proposal to increase the current income threshold for repaying student loans. However, the new £15,000 repayment threshold is still too low – far below even average graduate earnings (currently £17,722). NUS welcomes the government proposals to maintain the current interest rate on student loans. Although the Education and Skills Select Committee has explored in depth what is seen as a £800m per year subsidy on student loans, NUS does not support raising interest rates on loans. NUS hopes that the following will be considered:

- a student earning £15,000 has not financially benefited from their HE and NUS casework has shown that this low income level for repayments even forces some benefit claimants to contribute part of their social security funding to the Student Loans Company, as no income is disregarded for loan repayments;
- the poorest graduates or those who take career breaks pay the most in interest and would subsidise the system;
- higher interest rates would add to graduate debt and create a bigger barrier to accessing HE for debt averse groups;
- higher interest rates would prohibit take up by certain groups, such as Muslim students.

Addressing course choices based on cost

NUS is concerned that differentiated fees will restrict an individual's freedom to choose the institution and degree they want to do. Prospective students will be forced to make choices, not just based on course quality and suitability to their aptitudes, but on what they can afford. Prospective students will have to pay even closer attention to living costs which is likely to affect where they can live and the likelihood is that the trend for more students to stay at home to study will increase.

Differentiated tuition fees

NUS believes rather than encouraging diversity amongst the student population, differential fees will inhibit access. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- it is more likely that market forces, rather than quality of provision, will drive fee prices. Therefore, it is likely that price will become a proxy for quality for prospective students and for employers. This will create a challenge for the role of student information and distort the drive for transparency;
- there is no government drive for consistency in the administration of, payment of and information provision for both standard and non-standard institutional bursaries from September 06. This means that prospective students will have to look at individual institutions' offers, which is likely to be time consuming and complex, before deciding on a suitable course for them.

NUS policy goals for HE full-time undergraduates are:

- ✓ no student contribution to tuition fees;
- ✓ universal grants for living costs – up to £5,348 per year (£103 per week) outside London and £6,174 per year (£119 per week) inside London;
- ✓ non means-tested student loans for study costs, given at the current level;
- ✓ the student loan interest rate to be maintained at current inflation rates;
- ✓ repayment threshold for loans raised to £25,000, to reflect above-average earnings;

- ✓ **students' unions & institutions' student services to be better-funded to meet the needs for student information, advice, money management and debt counselling services;**
- ✓ **an easily accessible central point of information for students on HE fees and bursaries and on government funding sources relevant for students across different departments.**

7. Higher Education: Part-time undergraduates

Part-time undergraduate statutory fee grant

NUS welcomes the government's new support package for part-time undergraduates in England and Wales of a statutory fee grant of £575, a means-tested grant of £250 and discretionary support for childcare for low-income. NUS also welcomes the introduction of banded funding, in recognition of different part-time course intensities from Sept 2005. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- the fee grant is capped, whereas part-time undergraduate fees are not capped. If institutions charge above the statutory fee grant, students will have to fund the fees from their own resources. For low-income students, this may provide a barrier to access and retention;
- the package is only available to those part-time students without previous HE study. As with ALGs in FE, this does not address the retraining agenda;
- the £250 course costs grant has been set without an evidence base on what may be needed by part-time students in terms of living and study costs and without taking into account the diversity of this group and the need to facilitate flexible learning. NUS welcomes the current research that has been undertaken into part-time students' needs^{xvii}, but would urge that the grant is reviewed in the light of this evidence;
- childcare support is discretionary. There is no guarantee of funding for the duration of their course.

NUS policy goals for HE part-time undergraduates are:

- ✓ **the Government to offer a grant to meet the full cost of tuition fees or to offer graduate repayment schemes, in line with those of full-time undergraduates;**
- ✓ **the Government to monitor institutional fee charging;**
- ✓ **the Government to review the level of the course costs grant in the light of research evidence;**
- ✓ **the Government to offer statutory childcare support;**
- ✓ **an easily accessible central point of information for students on HE fees and bursary arrangements and on government funding sources relevant for students across different departments. This should be regularly updated.**

8. Training and Support for Key Workers

Financial support and debt relief

NUS welcomes fee waivers and grant-based incentive funding for key workers, such as initial teacher training (ITT) at PGCE level, social work students and healthcare students. Loan repayment schemes for ITT students are also welcomed. NUS would like to see such a scheme extended to all graduates entering public and voluntary sector occupations. Training in these key vocational areas requires work placements involving travel and sometimes unsociable hours, which reduces the ability for these students to undertake paid work to boost their income. The average salaries in these job areas are also often lower than many industry-based professions, which makes graduate debt a further deterrent to participation.

NUS has further concerns regarding funding for these students:

Healthcare students:

- the withdrawal of funding for international students wishing to study has narrowed access to Allied Health Professions;

- students have difficulties accessing the NHS Confederation discretionary hardship funds within institutions;
- informal childcare needs are common amongst this group, due to unsociable hours on clinical placements. These costs are not being met, due to the focus on formal childcare within statutory childcare funding;

ITT students:

- lack of equity in funding between Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) undergraduate students and PGCE students in relation to fee support and incentive grants;
- the recent announcement by the Government that PGCE students can be charged increased variable fees of up to £3000 from September 2006 is likely to deter participation amongst students who have already accumulated significant debts through undergraduate study.

NUS policy goals for training and support for key workers are:

- ✓ recognition of work placements as 'remunerative work' for Working Tax Credit;
- ✓ the introduction of loan repayment schemes for all graduates entering and remaining in public and voluntary sector occupations;
- ✓ no fees charged to these students;

For healthcare students, NUS supports the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) in its call for:

- ✓ increased and non means-tested bursaries for all healthcare students at a level that reflects the true cost of being a student;
- ✓ increased allowances for mature students and for students with dependants;
- ✓ parity between degree and diploma students, both in type and level of funding and in the length of the academic year;
- ✓ access to student loans for all healthcare students;
- ✓ implementation of the recommendations made in the Charter for Nursing and Midwifery Education created by UNISON, RCN, the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and NUS.

Additionally for healthcare students, NUS calls for:

- ✓ international students to be eligible for diploma and degree level Allied Health Profession (AHP) courses;
- ✓ institutions to be helped to ensure discretionary NHS Confederation Hardship funding is made easily available to healthcare students;
- ✓ the recognition of NHS-funded students work placements as 'remunerative work' for the purpose of claiming Working Tax Credits.

For ITT students, NUS calls for:

- ✓ parity of funding for PGCE and B.Ed students to at least the level of current PGCE funding;
- ✓ PGCE courses to be ineligible for variable fee charging.

9. Postgraduate Students

Financial support for further studying

NUS welcomes the government's extra funding for postgraduate Research Council scholarships and the government's continued recognition of the importance of statutory provision for postgraduate ITT students. This is crucial in helping to create future generations of key workers and innovative business and research communities. However, outside of these welcomed government initiatives, there are currently few means of government support for postgraduate courses. NUS has the following concerns:

- the repayment arrangements for Career Development Loans (CDL), the current government-sponsored loans scheme, are not appealing, as, unlike income-contingent student loans, they provide no flexibility for changes in income after graduation;
- there is little government funding available to students outside of Research Council funding or CDLs. This is particularly concerning, as postgraduate fees are uncapped.

NUS policy goals on postgraduate students are:

- ✓ the DfES to work with institutions, NUS and the National Postgraduate Committee (NPC) to provide guidance on regulating tuition fees and tuition fee increases for postgraduate students;
- ✓ statutory student support to be extended to postgraduate students undertaking taught and research programmes, with a view to providing more grant-based funding long term;
- ✓ career development loans to be reviewed and not to be repayable during unemployment. Repayment should become income contingent.

10. International Students

Tuition fees

An important part of HE institutional income is generated from tuition fees charged to international students on a market-led basis.

- there is no national agreement to monitor market-led tuition fees, to ensure that rates are not increasing to levels that make some courses or institutions inaccessible. This is a particular concern from September 2006, with the threat of international student fees rising proportionally to those increased fees charged to home undergraduates.

Safety net funding

There is no discretionary government funding available for international students to act as a safety net against hardship and emergencies. NUS welcomed the Rees Report's recommendations on student funding to the Welsh Assembly for such a safety net to be established.^{xxviii}

Banking and healthcare

NUS and UKCOSA^{xxix} research has shown that international students have problems accessing healthcare and student banking facilities in comparison with home students. These vital services are important to students' welfare and in helping their financial management whilst studying.

Visa renewal charges

NUS is concerned about the Home Office's recent policies to increase visa renewal charges to international students who need to extend their stay in the UK to complete their studies. This policy directly conflicts with the DFES' drive to increase international student participation.

- NUS and UKCOSA^{xxx} research has shown that visa renewal charges add to the already significant costs for international students in the UK.

NUS policy goals for international students are:

- ✓ obtaining data on international student fee rates over the past five years within UK institutions by Government and the monitoring of fee rates in future years;
- ✓ a move towards regulated increases to international student tuition fees, with annual rises no higher than the rate of inflation;
- ✓ clearer information for international students on costs of living and study, to enable them to make informed choices about best value for money;
- ✓ the Government to introduce a discretionary support fund for international students, along the lines of proposals in the Welsh student funding review (Rees Report);
- ✓ student access to healthcare and student banking facilities on a par with home students;
- ✓ student exemption from visa renewal charges.

11. State Benefits & Tax Credits

NUS would like to see a cohesive funding provision for unemployment, education and training. The Treasury has recently undertaken a welcomed review of the funding available to 16 to 19 year olds in unemployment, education and training to achieve parity and fairness across Government funding systems.^{xxxii} However, the same 'joined up' Government thinking has not yet been undertaken for adults participating in these activities.

NUS is disappointed that the government has not used either the Treasury review, the Adult Skills Strategy or the Future of Higher Education White Paper as an opportunity to look at how social security provision could more effectively interact with student support to provide safety net funding for all low income students and intercalating students. The neglect of this area by the government is a classic case of government departments not talking to each other about how their policies could co-support government targets.

NUS has previously discussed these issues at some length^{xxxiii}, so will highlight some key policy points to consider below:

Students as low-income citizens

Once accommodation is paid for, many students have less government funding to live off than a jobseeker could claim through JSA^{xxxiii}: the amount the government allows for low income citizens to live on for a week. Most full-time students are excluded from means tested benefits not due to their income, but due to their status as a full-time students.

- through a gradual government withdrawal since 1989, students have been denied access to the safety net funding of Housing Benefit and Income Support/JSA.^{xxxiv}

16 hour rule & actively seeking work

Part-time students wishing to study whilst claiming JSA currently risk falling foul of the need to be 'available for' and 'actively seeking' work – i.e. studying is not seen as a legitimate route to developing employability on the road to job-seeking. If students want to study more than 16 hours per week, they also risk losing their JSA for being 'full-time' students and not being 'available for' or 'actively seeking' work.

- these current restrictions pose a barrier to accessing funding (e.g. the Adult Learning Grant in FE) that could facilitate learning and employability.

Intercalating Students

NUS is disappointed that the government has not addressed the funding gaps for students who suspend their studies. To facilitate ongoing and flexible learning, it is important that the system of financial support can cope with students who have unexpected breaks in study due to illness, caring duties, pregnancy or other reasons. We have welcomed previous moves towards providing funding for students who are ill or have caring duties through Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and the Housing Benefit system^{xxxv}. Unfortunately, this provision does not cover the whole period of suspended studies, nor does it provide funding for students who intercalate for other reasons.

Complexity of funding

Vulnerable students have to access funding across a number of government departments^{xxxvi}. These departments do not necessarily treat income in the same way. Nor do they have mutual forms, mutual financial years or mutual payment dates. This makes for a very complex system for students to access in order to maximise their government income. NUS has worked with Child Poverty Action Group to produce a handbook for Student Advisers covering all these systems and how they interact and produces information sheets for students, in order to help students to maximise their income. Many students' unions and institutional student services departments produce their own information to help student plan their finances before, in the transition with and during their education. This is a first step.

- more government support is needed to ensure that information and training is available to students and their advisers.

NUS policy goals for students, state benefits and tax credits are:

- ✓ a government stakeholder review of all government funding systems accessed by students, to review how these interact from a student perspective. Review to include administration, entitlement, payment cycles, information and training;
- ✓ government-funded information and training for students and their advisers on how government systems of support interact for students;
- ✓ eligibility for all students, as low income citizens, for Housing Benefit (HB) for the duration of their studies and JSA in vacation periods, as a safety net against hardship and poverty;
- ✓ entitlement to Income Support or JSA for students who intercalate (according to whether they are available for work), HB and Council Tax Benefit, as recommended by the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC), to act as a safety net against hardship and dropping out;
- ✓ the central collection of data on the number of intercalating students, reasons for intercalating, applications for discretionary funding (to LEAs and to HEIs) and success rates for such applications;
- ✓ the recognition of study and volunteering as legitimate job-seeking activities for JSA;
- ✓ review of the 16-hour rule to make part-time study easier to access in FE.

12. Higher Education: The Funding Gap

Departmental closures

NUS is concerned by the increasing number of HE institutions faced with departmental closures. NUS is also concerned by the difficulties faced by HE institutions that rely heavily on research grants to run their departments. NUS believes in open free and accessible education for all and does not agree with the decision to close departments rated by profitability. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- departmental funding relies too heavily on research funding resulting in the loss of excellence in teaching due to the closer of 'unprofitable' departments;
- research ratings and research grants need to be reviewed in accordance with the availability of choice to students;
- the scarcity of certain subjects will result in a skill and knowledge gap in the future.

Teacher and Lecturers pay and conditions

NUS believes that the staff in that educate and support students should be adequately rewarded for this work. Neither staff nor students should have to carry the financial burden of the under-funding of HE.

NUS policy goals for Higher Education Funding Gap are:

- ✓ funding of HE departments to take greater account of quality of teaching and the benefit to the community and to the region's knowledge base, moving away from reliance on research funding
- ✓ teachers and lecturers must be adequately valued and rewarded for the work they do in supporting, educating and developing students in FE and HE.

ACCESS, ADMISSIONS AND ASPIRATIONS

1. Office For Fair Access (OFFA)

NUS believes in an accessible, web-based central information resource for all prospective HE students. NUS calls for clear, transparent and up-to-date information about course fees, content and institutional bursaries. NUS believes that student access to this information is essential in facilitating choice based on personal circumstances. NUS hopes OFFA will address the following:

- the inclusion of Widening Participation strategies by institutions alongside their OFFA agreements;
- student involvement in OFFA's communication, monitoring and evaluation functions;
- the inclusion of student advisors in HEIs and FEIs in OFFA's communication strategy;
- the use of national and internal performance indicators both pre and post course to aid milestone formulation;
- the dissemination of information to all stakeholders;
- the retention and support of students in under-represented groups by institutions;
- feed back to stakeholders and student audience on new initiatives, achievements, good practice (to include access, outreach and welfare initiatives) and developments within OFFA itself;
- review the role and effectiveness of OFFA in the areas of student support in HE.

NUS policy goals for OFFA are:

- ✓ a fair, transparent and informative access and admission body;
- ✓ up-to-date, accurate and clear information on HEIs in accordance with personal circumstances;
- ✓ wider participation in all HEIs;
- ✓ fair access to HE and on-going support for students from under-represented groups;
- ✓ the active consultation of student advisors in FEIs and HEIs and their students' unions by OFFA;
- ✓ transparent national and internal performance indicators;
- ✓ a central point of information for students on HE fees and bursaries arrangements.

2. Admissions to Higher Education

Admissions complaints

NUS believes in a fair and transparent admissions process. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) and OFFA do not currently have pre-entry admissions complaints' procedures within their remit. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- prospective HE students have no current means of putting a grievance to an independent national body concerning the recruitment, selection and admissions procedures of an individual institution;
- students who have been accepted, and subsequently refused entry for reasons beyond their control such as a course closure, have no current external recourse to complain;
- students receive no feedback on unsuccessful applications.

NUS policy goals for admissions to HE are:

- ✓ a fair and transparent admissions process;
- ✓ an admissions complaints' procedure in place in HEIs and FEIs;
- ✓ feedback on unsuccessful applications to facilitate future success.

3. Post Qualification Application

NUS has long supported the principle of Post-Qualification Application (PQA) to Higher Education. 50 per cent of predicated grades are inaccurate leaving many students in turmoil when it comes to results day, searching around for a place through clearing.

NUS is pleased to be involved in the DfES Consultation Group which is examining the possibility of moving to PQA.

We believe that a one phase PQA system is the most desirable. However as DfES appears to be moving towards a two-phase model based on the Secondary Heads Association (SHA) proposals we hope the following concerns will be addressed:

- the risk that institutions may make informal offers to some students under a two-phase system;
- the system must meet the diverse needs of all students, including their qualifications and HE entry method;
- students must have adequate time to complete their studies, make careful decisions, to apply to the institutions of their choice and also make funding applications and to find accommodation in good time for the start of term;
- proposed changes to the system must take into account current pressures on students and should avoid placing additional burdens on students at already difficult times (e.g. during exams);
- students must have access to expert support and reliable, up-to-date information throughout the decision making process.

NUS policy goals for PQA are:

- ✓ **DfES working towards a one-phase model of PQA while accepting that a two-phase model may come first;**
- ✓ **a PQA system that caters for all prospective students' needs allowing adequate time for students to make careful choices and preparations for HE;**
- ✓ **mechanisms to be put in place to avoid an informal system developing and ensure that all students are on a level playing field when making their applications.**

4. Aimhigher and Wider Participation

Aimhigher and Lifelong Learning Networks

NUS believes that funding for Aimhigher should continue to be centrally funded. NUS believes Aimhigher, which aims to deliver a coherent national outreach programme by supporting a range of activities including collaborative working between schools, colleges and HEIs ensures that the widening partnership agenda is promoted through a well-recognised brand.

NUS believes that the Aimhigher initiative has been of vital importance in embedding the widening participation agenda nationally. NUS welcomes Aimhigher as a positive development and hopes to see the project continue into the future. NUS also supports Lifelong Learning Network joint approach between HEFCE, the Learning and Skills Council and the DfES to encourage progression into and through HE. NUS however hopes the following will be addressed:

- there is currently no distinction between the aims of Aimhigher and Lifelong Learning Networks;
- there is uncertainty over the future of Aimhigher.

NUS policy goals on Aimhigher and wider participation are:

- ✓ **the continuation of the Aimhigher initiative;**
- ✓ **wider Participation in HE;**
- ✓ **a coherent national outreach programme.**

5. 14 -19 Tomlinson Reforms

NUS believes in the need for 14-19 reform to engage all young people in an inclusive, integrated curriculum. NUS welcomes Tomlinson's proposals to facilitate a flexible approach to FE and HE whereby learners can combine vocational and academic learning. NUS believes in the equality of academic and vocational education in the eye of the employer and HEIs.

Vocational GCSEs

NUS welcomes the development by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) of 16 vocational GCSEs, which will expand to 23 in the near future. NUS believes they compliment the developments of Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Degrees. NUS is pleased by the recognition of vocational GCSEs by employers. However NUS would like to see the following addressed:

- the need for clear, high quality industry and HE endorsed vocational qualifications that can be understood by employers and HEIs;
- vocational education remains under-valued by learners and employers alike;
- England has one of the worst post-16 staying-on rates amongst OECD countries.

Mandatory literacy, numeracy and IT

NUS welcomes Tomlinson's proposals to introduce mandatory literacy, numeracy and IT education learning at each of the four proposed Diploma levels. NUS believes this provides learners with core analytical knowledge, skills and understanding to progress in the future whether they chose an academic or vocational route.

Breadth and depth of learning

NUS welcomes Tomlinson's proposals to combine other academic subjects into vocational diplomas after level 2 to widen the breadth and depth of student education. NUS believes this will benefit learners, employers and HEIs.

Increased Flexibility Programme

NUS welcomes the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) for 14-16 year olds that allows young school age learners to access vocational part-time learning opportunities in FE colleges. National Foundation for Educational Research evaluation reports demonstrate IFP has been popular and successful. Over 200, 000 young learners are now on the IFP in colleges, meeting DfES targets for the IFP by gaining more qualifications than their Year 10 SATs would have predicted. NUS would like to see the following addressed:

- a 14-19 curriculum across all providers in the English learning and skills system

Work placements

NUS is concerned that the Tomlinson Reforms will require an even greater volume of high quality, well-managed work placements than is currently the case. NUS responded to the government's Skills Strategy consultation, where we highlighted concerns for the availability and management of work placements.

NUS welcomes the recently established Sector Skills Councils which work in conjunction with local LSCs and Government Regional Offices. However, NUS believes that a voluntary approach with industry through the Skills Strategy may not work and a tax system should be considered. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- Sector Skills Councils will be tasked by the DfES and DTI to ensure that employers who receive considerable subsidies from the taxpayer for training costs, will take up this challenge;
- England does have one of the worst international expenditure and participation rates for company investment in training.

Learner transcripts

NUS welcomes the Tomlinson proposal for a detailed learner transcript that will be used by both HE admissions tutors and employers alongside formal exam results. NUS believes students will be recognised for their extra curricular activities as detailed in their transcript and not simply by the school they attended. NUS

believes this is a fairer system and will benefit both students and HEIs. Many secondary schools already either persuade or require their students to complete ASDAN portfolios that gather up all the non-formal learning that a student has undertaken. HE admissions registrars and employers already require 'extra curricular' details. NUS believes students need a range of personal development opportunities, as shown by the demand for the STADIA and NSLP programmes run by NUS.

NUS is disappointed in the Government's response to the transcript proposal to keep the labels 'GCSE' and 'A Levels' for an unspecified period. NUS believes this is overly cautious and regressive. NUS believes GCSEs and A Levels should be part of the new structure, certainly their content, but only for so long as it takes for the four Diploma levels to replace them. NUS believes students, HE registrars and employers all want a diploma structure that guarantees high standards in core subjects and main learning for all learners.

Examination and assessment

NUS welcomes Tomlinson's proposals to strengthen the existing examination and assessment system and then work this into the 14-19 framework. NUS believes in the continuity of examination and assessment. NUS welcomes the educational value brought by the assessed 'personal project' and the extended A+ and A++ grades at A level to the 14-19 framework.

NUS believes that flexibility for learners with the 'stage not age' approach to the four levels of the Diploma is a welcome and much needed development. The credit accumulation at each stage enables all learners to achieve at the pace appropriate for them. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- at 16, 49 per cent of young people fail to gain 5 A*-C grade GCSEs, the minimum entry requirement for progression into FE. The 4 level diploma will introduce a 'stage not age' approach;
- England has a low level of cross-national qualifications within the UK workforce.

Implementation

NUS recommends that all teachers receive professional development in 'para-academic' skills to better support and enable young learners to choose the correct Diploma for them. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- Tomlinson does not adequately cost implementation of his proposals
- there is no funding plan to support the essential collaboration needed between schools and colleges;
- the implementation control and regulation of 14-19 requires an infrastructure outline for schools and colleges;
- schools and colleges operate under radically different legal regimes due to the ages of their learners. Legally, under 16s must learn in an educational environment that guarantees their 'freedom from harm'. Over 16 year olds must have the 'freedom to' develop as learners and as individuals;
- good quality careers advice and guidance;
- the need for a government response to the Final Tomlinson Report.

NUS policy goals for Tomlinson Reforms are:

- ✓ **equality for students with vocational and academic qualifications by employers and HEIs;**
- ✓ **a clear framework of vocational qualifications;**
- ✓ **mandatory literacy, numeracy and IT education learning at the four proposed Diploma levels;**
- ✓ **a 14-19 curriculum across all providers in the English learning and skills system;**
- ✓ **training and work experience placements provided by employers who receive subsidies from the taxpayer for training costs, managed by Sector Skills Councils;**
- ✓ **the implementation of a learner transcripts;**
- ✓ **a move from the 'GCSE' and 'A Levels' labels to the four Diploma levels;**
- ✓ **a 'stage not age' approach to the four levels of Diploma;**
- ✓ **a continued examination and assessment process enhanced by personal projects and extended grades;**
- ✓ **good quality careers advice and guidance to 14-19 year olds;**

- ✓ **transparent and accountable budget plans to support Tomlinson's proposals;**
- ✓ **an adequate and sufficient infrastructure of quality control and improvement to monitor the new system;**
- ✓ **a collaborative infrastructure for 14-19 education between schools, colleges, education and training providers and HEIs;**
- ✓ **adoption of all reforms over the full 10-year implementation cycle, as recommended in the final report.**

Representation is the core function of any students' union. Students have the right to an equal input in all issues concerning them at all levels of decision making. At the institutional level, students must have the right to take part in the decision making process as equal partners. At the national level, students must have the right to participate in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of decisions concerning students.

NUS believes that this ties in to the citizenship agenda developing in FE and that progress made in HE around the student input into the institutional audit must develop and expand in both FE and HE.

I. Strong and Active Students' Unions

The 1994 Education Act enshrines in law the right for students' unions to exist and in 1999 NUS won mandatory student representation on the governing bodies of Further Education colleges. NUS sees both of these developments as welcome but long-overdue recognition of students' right to representation within their institution. An equal and democratic relationship between students, students' unions and institutions has great importance in the creation of a democratic ethos in colleges.

NUS believes in the following principles:

- student representatives must be democratically elected;
- students have the right to an equal input in all issues concerning them at all levels of decision making;
- at institutional level, students must have the right to take part in decision making as equal partners;
- at national level students must have the right to participate in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of decisions concerning students.

SUs are fundamental tools for individual students to participate in institutions' decision-making processes. They are also vital in promoting students' non-academic development during their time in education. All SUs, both in FE and HE, should be provided with sufficient financial resources to enable them to undertake their campaigning and representative functions effectively.

While there are many thriving students' unions around the UK with strong staff support, institutional block grants and independent commercial services, too many SUs, particularly in FE are SUs in name alone and where there are student reps they do not have access to the most basic facilities. The elected representatives as a minimum have the right to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources to effectively carry out their duties.

As a minimum, student representative bodies must have:

- **their own lockable office space;**
- **an independent phone line;**
- **computer facilities including internet connection;**
- **administrative support;**
- **student representatives democratically elected by their peers;**
- **a grant provided by the institution to cover all running costs including salaries, training and activities budget;**

Every student has the right to be involved in Students' Union activities and they must be afforded the time to do this without academic or financial penalty. By taking an active role in these activities, students have the opportunity to gain experience and skills that are unique. However, it is rare that the contributions made by students in their institution or local community are recognized or accredited.

NUS policy goals on strong and active students' unions are:

- ✓ every FEI and HEI has an adequately funded and resourced student representative body with democratically elected representatives;
- ✓ the student voice is heard and listened to at institutional and national levels on issues concerning students;
- ✓ the provision of resources and support to students unions by institutions to effectively fulfil their campaigning and representation roles;
- ✓ Wednesday afternoons free for non-formal learning;
- ✓ students accredited for participation in students' union activities.

2. Citizenship Agenda

The legislative framework (1994 Education Act), ministerial thrust (Citizenship Agenda), experience in other sectors (schools legislation on learner consultation), best practice (LSDA projects) and enforcement vehicle (DfES Governance Review) are all there - they simply need to be made to work to benefit students and their colleges.

NUS believes that despite development projects and best practice publications, FE colleges are failing to implement the Citizenship Agenda inside their own institutions.

NUS welcomes the ideals, behaviour and practices inside the Citizenship Agenda and calls for them to be institutionalised into FE Colleges. NUS believes the Citizenship Agenda does benefit students' learning, recruitment and retention in FE and the client in public services. However NUS believes students will only benefit if FE colleges have embraced the Citizenship Agenda at senior management level.

NUS believes there is a clear relationship between college governance and citizenship and changes to governance need to be addressed

NUS believes colleges should comprehensively support elections and provide office space and administrative support. However research results clearly show that commitment to the value of student representation by FE college senior management is the crucial factor to colleges having successful, effective students' unions as opposed to funding.

NUS Campaign: Developing our Unions

NUS is currently gathering evidence to support our policy in six colleges in each of the eight NUS Regions, Wales and Northern Ireland about the state of development of their students' unions matched against college mission, curriculum, student demography, etc. Indications suggest excellent practice in support and development of 'whole college citizenship' through students' unions, however there is great inconsistency. There are widely varying forms of representation and support in FE colleges of similar type.

NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- a college be rewarded with public funds once a Citizenship Agenda is in place and has been inspected. This is not currently the case;
- colleges are currently inspected on their teaching and learning, management and governance, but not their attitude to student representation and activities;
- there is currently a ministerial split in responsibilities across the concepts of college governance and citizenship. A more joined-up approach is needed.

Development in schools

NUS welcomes the progress in schools, working with partners to ensure bodies like Schools Councils are developed, a practice embedded in the Education Act 2004. It is noted that in schools and universities arrangements are in place, but there is considerably less activity in colleges.

Representative activities and EMAs

NUS notes that many students are denied the opportunity to take part in activities, often under the threat of losing their EMA. We therefore call for a nationally agreed protocol, between NUS, AoC and the DfES on balancing the right of students to take part in representative activities, with the responsibility to attend scheduled classes and other learning activities.

NUS policy goals for the Citizenship Agenda are:

- ✓ the requirement of FE colleges to create, and be supported in, ‘whole college policies’ to support active Post-16 Citizenship;
- ✓ FE colleges create and fund a student representative body in each college (core-funded locally and development-funded nationally in partnership with NUS and the DfES Post 16 Citizenship Unit). Colleges are monitored within the legislative framework of the 1994 Education Act on the sufficiency and adequacy of the support given to these bodies;
- ✓ learner councils amalgamated with existing students’ union structures;
- ✓ colleges consult with learners to initiate activity and student representative bodies;
- ✓ the inspection of colleges based on their teaching and learning, management and governance, and their attitude to student representation and activities;
- ✓ funding and support for FEIs and HEIs for the development of materials and staff via a specific funding stream for learner citizenship participation;
- ✓ the election of up to three student governors by their peers in democratic elections to reflect the diversity of the student population;
- ✓ a student governor led sub committee of the corporation, serviced by the clerk in every FE college to communicate with and to the Board, senior management and student stakeholders;
- ✓ FE college Boards manage the skills mix, manage diversity and engage with stakeholders effectively. Boards monitored by performance indicators; additions to the Good Governance Health Check, monitored by OfSTED;
- ✓ colleges fund costs associated with training for FE student governors provided by the AoC/NUS which rewards OCN certification (Level three);
- ✓ effective mentoring arrangements for student governors to support student representation in the learning and skills sector; A ‘whole college’ mainstream approach to raise achievement and participation levels among Black and minority ethnic groups;
- ✓ the promotion of cultural diversity in all FE colleges to build stronger partnerships and involvement of all students in FE college life.

3. Quality Assurance (QA)

Student input into QA in Higher Education

NUS believes that Student Written Submissions (SWS) and the student voice in the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA) Institutional Audit has provided an excellent opportunity to further develop the representative role of student unions in particular, and student representatives in general within HEIs.

NUS believes embedding the HE student voice within the QAA’s overall strategy is progressive and has encouraged a deeper understanding of student representatives’ core role amongst stakeholders. NUS welcomes the positive relationship with the QAA and hopes to continue this relationship in the future.

NUS believes that Collaborative Provision Audit (CPA) will provide a new opportunity for the voice of HE students in collaborative arrangements to be heard. NUS welcomes CPA as an opportunity for HEI student representatives to further develop links with partner institutions. NUS sees the communication and support given to the interaction between the awarding body and the collaborative partner as key in this development.

However, this development has raised questions about collaborative arrangements and how student representation operates within the collaborative structures. It is often difficult to identify ‘whose students are they?’. This causes confusion when trying to establish the role and responsibilities of the Students’ Union of the awarding HEI towards the collaborative partner students.

- NUS and local Students’ Unions can use CPA as an opportunity to develop representation structures within collaborative partners and to establish formal communication and interaction between student representatives in the awarding HEI and those in the collaborative partner. However, this will require support, guidance and co-operation from both institutions, as well as from the QAA and other relevant external organisations.

Student input into QA in Further Education

NUS believes FE students have the right to voice the concerns of the learner within LSCs Adult Learning Committee, the Young People’s Learning Committee and on local level Learning & Skill Councils. NUS believes therefore in embedding the FE student voice within quality assurance processes in FE.

NUS acknowledges student governors play a key role in the strategic leadership of their college corporations, ‘voicing the concerns of learners’ in and through the corporation board to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their colleges. However NUS believes student input into QA in FE extremely poor.

NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- FE student learners do not currently have to be represented on the boards of local LSCs, on key Adult and Young People’s Learning sub-Committees of the LSC and the national LSC itself.

NUS policy goals on quality assurance are:

- ✓ **the active involvement of the FE and HE student voice in quality assurance processes in FEIs and HEIs;**
- ✓ **the strengthening of the student representative voice in the collaborative provision of HE;**
- ✓ **FE and HE learner representation on the national LSC, its sub-committees and on all local LSCs;**
- ✓ **FE and HE learner participation in the Skills Strategy, potentially within the Skills Alliance;**
- ✓ **regular national meetings between national NUS Executive Committee members concerned with FE and the Chief Inspectors at OfSTED and the Adult Learning Inspectorate.**

NUS believes it is not only a student's course and institution that impact on their ability to participate in study and to get the most out of the education experience. All aspects of students' lives, from rights in the workplace, to the quality of their accommodation, to their ability to access decent quality, affordable childcare, affect a student's ability to participate in their course and maintain a decent standard of living.

For too long students have been treated as second class citizens, with shoddy and unsafe accommodation and long hours of low-paid work seen as being some kind of rite of passage. NUS believes that students should no longer expect less than other members of society, and campaigns hard for changes in the law, in university and college policies and in how students are perceived to demand a decent standard of living for all students in all aspects of their lives.

1. Safe, Secure, Affordable Housing

NUS believes that all citizens deserve the right to a decent home. This means that accommodation needs to be safe, secure and affordable. For too long landlords have got away with providing low quality accommodation because student poverty and shoddy accommodation are seen as some kind of student rite of passage. Recent research indicates that 27 per cent of students share their homes with vermin and 75 per cent of student homes have damp or mould.^{xxxvii}

Legal protection

NUS believes government has an important role to play in providing adequate legal protections to students and to all citizens to guarantee their right to a decent standard of living and in empowering the most vulnerable in taking up their rights. Sub standard accommodation not only puts students' health at risk but also damages their ability to study and learn. NUS research has indicated that the majority of students in the private rented sector live in houses of four people over two stories^{xxxviii}. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- any shared property that consists of less than three storeys and with four or less people is excluded from statutory Housing of Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing of management standards in the Housing Act. This leaves the majority of students who live in the private rented sector without the legislative protection they need.

Cost

NUS believes that students' unions have the right to be consulted with by their university and by private companies about rent increases for Halls. NUS believes the increase in privately built and managed halls of residence has forced up the amount of student income spent on rent. This has to stop. NUS *Accommodation Costs Survey* has shown that the rent in private halls averages at £69.31 a week, which is higher than the national average of £66.46. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- academic institutions and private companies add on big rent increases either to plug the funding gap in higher education or to fill the pockets of shareholders;
- halls of residence are sold off to make quick money for institutions, leaving students in expensive private halls with little or no democratic structures and no experience of pastoral care ;
- an increase in en-suite accommodation has reduced the range of accommodation for diverse student budgets and there is a lack of family-friendly accommodation available through universities and private companies.

The Housing Act 2004 and Health and Safety

The Housing Act 2004 will introduce a new system for assessing physical housing conditions for England and Wales from 2006 onwards: the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). NUS is concerned the

new risk assessment in the HHSRS is based on age and vulnerability. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- it is likely that accommodation occupied by 18 to 24 year olds will not be considered a priority by local authorities (as opposed to households with young children and elderly persons);
- students are not currently recognised by Local Authorities as a vulnerable group. The Home Office has highlighted that students are more likely to live in insecure housing that is a target for crime;^{xxxix}
- some students in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales also suffer from sub-standard accommodation and NUS would like to see their needs addressed through relevant national legislation.

Health and Safety

NUS believes students must protect themselves from burglary and be aware of the risks. NUS believes landlords of students should install the appropriate security measures. Students are a target of choice, as properties often contain multiple coveted items, such as laptops and Hi-Fis. One in three students become the victim of a crime each year at university^{xl}. It costs on average £900 for a student to replace stolen items or repair items damaged by burglary. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- British Gas/NUS research has illustrated that higher rents in the private rented sector for students have not led to higher standards of safety or quality. More than half admitted they had not been shown the Landlords Gas Safety Certificate which shows that gas appliances have been checked in the past 12 months and has to be made available by law. One in five (19 per cent) said their house was infested with rats, mice or slugs Over half reported damp in at least one room.

NUS policy goals on safe, secure and affordable housing are:

- ✓ **safe, secure and affordable housing for all students;**
- ✓ **a range of accommodation to be provided through universities to meet students' diverse needs and budgets;**
- ✓ **the recognition of students as a vulnerable group under risk assessments for the Housing Health and Safety Rating System;**
- ✓ **extension of Housing of Multiple Occupation (HMO) definition to include shared properties with four or more people over two or more stories, to cover the majority of students in shared housing;**
- ✓ **extension of HMO mandatory licensing to include all university halls of residence or an obligation for all institutions to sign up to the UNIPOL/ANUK/NUS Code of Standards for Larger Developments;**
- ✓ **the requirements of Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords to install appropriate safety and security measures;**
- ✓ **comparable legislation in place for safe, secure, affordable housing across all nations in the UK.**

2. Licensing of Halls

NUS believes that university owned halls have been excluded from mandatory Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing scheme through the Housing Act. This licensing aims to guarantee that HMO landlords are fit and proper managers. This leaves out a vast number of students. In 2003/2004 for example, university-owned accommodation offered over 222,687^{xli} bed spaces to students. In the light of this omission, NUS welcomes the Act's provision for university halls to adhere to a Code of Standards.

NUS policy goals on licensing halls are:

- ✓ **guaranteed management standards in public or private halls of residence through compulsory legislation;**
- ✓ **university halls to be included within mandatory HMO licensing, to ensure that standards are consistent across the sector;**

- ✓ **all types of halls across the UK, university and privately owned, to join the Unipol/ANUK/NUS Code of Standards for Larger Student Developments.**

3. Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS)

NUS believes the Housing Act regulations need to be drafted in a beneficial way to students and students to be informed of their new rights under the TDS.

NUS welcomes the introduction of a TDS through the Housing Act 2004 and is encouraged that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister listened to the concerns of Shelter, Citizens Advice, and NUS on this issue. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- it is unclear what shape and form the TDS will be;
- one in five tenants suffer from deposits being unfairly withheld and students are often hardest hit as they are transient, poor, seen as easy targets;
- students need a quick turn around on decisions and payments, due to the short term nature of tenancies;
- due to the proliferation of shared tenancies, consideration must be given to shared and individual responsibilities in relation to the tenancy;
- the need for minimum costs in the administration of the scheme and in recourse to complaints and appeals procedures must be considered, due to the low income of students.

NUS policy goals on Tenancy Deposit Schemes are:

- ✓ **details for the scheme to be drawn up incorporating the best interests of students and students to be informed of their new rights;**
- ✓ **a TDS including dispute resolution to ensure tenants get their money back quickly and without having to go to court.**

4. Students and Healthcare

Cost

NUS believes in a public, state-funded NHS that is free at the point of need. We believe that charges for prescriptions, eye tests and dental care are a barrier to accessing healthcare when students already have to juggle costs for tuition fees, rent, books, food, travel etc. NUS are pleased that Wales has exempted under 25s from prescription costs, but is campaigning for all students regardless of age and place of residence in the UK to be exempted. NUS has also worked with the Department of Health's Pricing Prescription Authority in England to raise awareness amongst students about their entitlements through a student-specific leaflet and poster campaign.^{xliii} NUS hopes to see this campaign rolled out across all nations in the UK. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- NUS research has shown that currently, most students are unaware of their entitlements and some of them are losing out on exemptions from healthcare costs^{xliii}.

Sexual education

NUS believes in better provision of sex education and more investment in sexual healthcare. NUS supports the government target of waiting time of no more than 48 hours. NUS supports compulsory sex education at an early age in schools to ensure all young people know how to look after their sexual health. NUS calls for the following to be addressed:

- the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) amongst young people is worrying. Waiting times for STI tests of 6 weeks are unacceptable. ^{xliiv}

Drug and alcohol awareness

NUS supports the Home Office's *Frank* drug awareness information campaign and have worked with the government to produce student-specific material.^{xlv} We have also produced resources for students and students' unions to use to highlight drink spiking.^{xlvi}

NUS policy goals on student healthcare are:

- ✓ **the exemption of students from healthcare cost across the UK regardless of age;**
- ✓ **the PPA/NUS awareness campaign on students' rights to help with their healthcare costs to be rolled out across all UK nations;**
- ✓ **compulsory sex education at an early age in schools, to ensure all young people know how to look after their sexual health;**
- ✓ **further development of awareness-raising campaigns for students on drug use, safe drinking and drink spiking.**

5. Childcare

NUS believes there is a clear rationale for government intervention within childcare; the payoffs from investing in providing integrated childcare services on campuses are significant, as it enables parents to further their education and potentially increase their employability. NUS will be working with students and students' unions to develop a childcare charter to campaign for more appropriate childcare facilities on or near campus sites.

The Government recognises there are shortages in most local childcare markets. The 2001 Parents' Demand Survey found that some 29 per cent of lone parents and 22 per cent of two-parent families reported not being able to find childcare when they wanted it, equivalent to 24 per cent of households overall^{xlvii}. NUS would like to see the following addressed:

- research commissioned by the Elizabeth Nuffield Education Foundation^{xlviii} has highlighted a reliance on some discretionary funding, for example for part-time undergraduates, postgraduates and adult FE students;
- the need for informal childcare due to unsociable work placements, irregular study patterns, finding a suitable childminder for children with special needs and the unaffordability of formal childcare options;
- the inability of statutory funding to recognise the additional costs in families with more than two children.

NUS policy goals on student childcare are:

- ✓ **available and affordable childcare for students in FE or HE, near or on campus;**
- ✓ **the recognition of the need for informal childcare where formal childcare is either not available or not appropriate;**
- ✓ **the consideration by institutions of NUS' forthcoming childcare charter.**

6. Students in the Workplace

Many students have to work to fund their living costs while studying. NUS believes students should not have to work, as it inhibits their ability to learn and to get involved in extra curricular activities. NUS believes the need to undertake paid work discriminates against the poorest students, who have to work longer hours than those from wealthier backgrounds and puts them under more pressure academically. We believe that when students do work, they should be adequately protected and decently paid.

NUS policy goals on student working are:

- ✓ **active students' membership of trades unions to protect them in the workplace;**
- ✓ **effective legislation to protect part-time and temporary workers;**

- ✓ an increased minimum wage to ensure students do not have to work long hours for poverty pay;
- ✓ equal wage for equal work;
- ✓ no arbitrary age differentials so that the minimum wage applies to all people regardless of their age.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Educational environment free from discrimination

Discrimination has no place in FE and HE or indeed anywhere in our society. However, while this is often accepted in principle, the necessary actions to make it effective are often neglected.

It is a sad fact that students still experience disadvantage in terms of status and opportunity because of their race, sexual orientation, disability and gender. This takes the form of direct, indirect and institutional discrimination.

NUS believes that all students have the right to live and work in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination. To this end, NUS believes students who experience prejudice because they belong to, or are perceived as belonging to, a certain social group have the right to self-representation in autonomous and specific liberation campaigns.

1. Anonymous marking

Anonymous marking protects students and staff from actual or perceived discrimination in student assessment. It is common practise for exams to be marked anonymously but there is still inconsistency in the use of anonymous marking for other forms of assessment even within the same institution.

- research shows that when anonymous marking is not practised, black students receive up to 12 per cent lower marks;
- despite doing better on average at A-level, the percentage of women receiving first class degrees at undergraduate level is still lower than the percentage of men.

A system of anonymous marking, where students work is identified by a number not a name, reduces the chances of both discrimination against students and allegations of biased against lecturers.

NUS policy goals for anonymous marking are:

- ✓ **the anonymity of all assessment with alternatives such as double marking in performance related and visual arts subjects.**

2. Black Students

Black curriculum

The pre-16 education curriculum often ignores the contributions of influential Black figures and experiences throughout history. This continues in FE and HE courses. Little wonder then so many Black students have to grapple with their sense of identity. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- the educational experience lowers the self-esteem of Black students through it's Euro-centric curriculum. This must change to reflect the diversity of Black people in Britain to engage Black students and challenge the prejudice in wider society.

Drop-out rates and exclusion

Drop out rates in education are 3-4 per cent of the student population each year. Alarmingly the figure among Black students is between 15-20 per cent. Research explains the causes as: inaccessible academic and welfare support, unsupportive college environments and low self-esteem.

NUS policy goals for black students are:

- ✓ **the development of a national curriculum that recognises the diversity of our society and in particular the contribution made by black figures to the world's history;**

- ✓ **strategies to tackle the needs of Black and minority ethnic students and decrease the drop-out rate in all institutions.**

3. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Three years have passed since the legal duty to promote good race relations in public institutions became mandatory. There have, however, been a number of reports highlighting the failures HEIs and FEIs in ensuring that they are correctly adhering to the legislation in their monitoring, admissions, recruiting and promotion procedures.

NUS policy goal for the public duty to promote race equality legislation is:

- ✓ **provision by Government of funding for Commission for Racial Equality to assist institutions in identifying their failings and further ensure that they are promoting equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful racial discrimination and promoting good relations between people of different racial groups – as set out by the Act.**

4. Faith Provision

NUS welcomes the proposed anti-religious discrimination legislation. There is currently an inconsistent approach to meeting the needs of students of faith in both the HE and FE sectors - fresher's induction and exams are timetabled on the same days as prayer times, the Sabbath and religious festivals, without alternative arrangements being made available.

NUS policy goals for faith provision:

- ✓ **no student to suffer academically because of his or her religious duties;**
- ✓ **the provision of prayer rooms and access to religious foods in all universities and colleges;**
- ✓ **the active engagement by institutions in coordinating campus interfaith dialogue, in order to reduce tensions on campus and break down stereotypes.**

5. Mental Ill-Health

Mental ill-health does not respect age limits, economic statuses, ethnicity, creed, religion, gender and sexual orientation and can affect anyone. However, there is still a huge social stigma attached to mental health which only results in causing further difficulties to those already experiencing mental ill-health. Mental health is something that we all have and something that should be looked after in the same way as our physical health. People who have mental health issues should not feel that they are unable to disclose these facts about their life because of fear of being labelled and disadvantaged.

For too long there has been a reactive approach to mental ill-health where students have support only once they are ill. Mental well being is something that concerns all students and should be high on the priority of FE and HE.

- **the discrimination & stigma that exists about mental health within FE and HE needs to be tackled;**
- **institutions should have a pro active approach to the mental well being of all their students;**
- **students who have mental health issues should not feel that they are unable to disclose facts about their lives because they will be labelled or unable to participate in their course and studies;**
- **students have a right to study and live in an environment that supports them regardless of the difficulties they may face.**

NUS policy goals on mental ill-health are:

- ✓ **equality and an environment free from discrimination and prejudice for people with mental-ill health in education and throughout society;**
- ✓ **support and information for students that they deserve without fear of prejudice.**

6. Women in education and at work

Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping persists in its impact on education and employment. The gender divide in post-compulsory education is deep, with men dominating subject areas such as Business and Management, Financial Management, Sciences, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Engineering and Technology. This gender divide is also striking in employment, where women are seriously underrepresented in construction, engineering, and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) occupations. Furthermore, the subject areas dominated by men are linked to some of the country's highest paid industries. NUS believes a woman's subject and career choices should not be limited by her gender and outdated notions of 'men's work' and 'women's work'. NUS hopes the following will be addressed:

- gender segregation in education and employment must be tackled if women are to participate in society on an equal standing to men;
- the occupational fields where women are seriously underrepresented tend also to be areas in which there are skill shortages. Thus occupational segregation is having a massive negative impact on the productivity of UK industry.

Equal pay

NUS has for many years worked with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to raise awareness of and campaign against the gender pay gap which currently stands at 18per cent. NUS believes that occupational segregation is a significant barrier to equal pay for men and women. NUS believes the following are key contributors to this problem:

- men predominate in some of the country's highest paid industries;
- there is still no requirement for employers to carry out a mandatory pay audit to ensure that they are treating men and women equally;

NUS policy goals for women in education and at work are:

- ✓ **women must be fully informed about all the options available to them in FE and HE and in their careers;**
- ✓ **women should be encouraged to explore all the options available to them and to be confident enough to opt for non-traditional course/career options should they wish to;**
- ✓ **all employers should under-take a mandatory pay audit in order to expose unequal treatment and reduce the gender pay gap.**

7. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Students

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) people encounter discrimination and inequality throughout daily life. NUS believes that one's sexual orientation and or gender identity should in no way be a barrier to educational access. In campaigning to this end NUS has worked with other likeminded organisations and forged successful campaigns over a number of years.

Equality and safety on campus

In order for students to fulfil their potential, educational establishments must be both safe and inclusive environments for all. Sadly in many cases those who define as either lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans are often made to feel threatened or excluded, either by fellow students, lecturers or possibly through the practices of the particular institution.

A large number of LGBT students face homophobic hate crime incidents on campus and in the wider community. NUS believe that homophobic hate crime should be addressed specifically by the introduction of new and comprehensive legislation, and that current systems of reporting hate crime need to be more clearly advertised and more readily available.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people often find themselves falling foul of homophobic shop, public house and restaurant owners. In some extreme cases homophobic owners or managers have banned LGBT people from shops or bars. NUS, along with a growing coalition of organisations is actively pushing for the introduction of legislation, which should specifically outlaw discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Rights in Education

For many years the NUS has fought for the removal of Section 28 and for the introduction of comprehensive policies on dealing with homophobic bullying in all education institutions. NUS believes that the damage caused by Section 28 continues to impact on LGBT student's lives and education. This damage must be redressed in order to tackle homophobia in education and wider society. NUS believes that the following must be addressed:

- the discrimination and stigma that has evolved from Section 28 has created one of the largest access barriers to further and higher education for LGBT people;
- LGBT students should have the right to study free from homophobia both from other students and lecturers;
- the repeal of Section 28 must be publicised in all education institutions and comprehensive policies on dealing with homophobic abuse must be enforced;
- sex education and welfare provision does not fully address the needs of LGBT students.

NUS policy goals for LGBT people are:

- ✓ **discrimination in the provision of goods and services must be outlawed;**
- ✓ **specific legislation against incitement to homophobic hatred;**
- ✓ **homophobic hate crime must be specifically addressed in legislation;**
- ✓ **homophobic and other forms of bullying must be addressed in a comprehensive manner throughout the entirety of the education system;**
- ✓ **redress the damage caused by Section 28 in order to tackle homophobia in education and wider society.**

-
- i See manifesto sections of student funding and welfare for more details, together with NUS, 2003, Response to the HE White Paper.
- ii David Pilsbury, 2000, Learning and Training at Work, DfES
- iii CIHE, 2002, The Strategic Review of Higher Education – Input from the CIHE, p20
- iv For example, where businesses are involved in developing curriculum content, although institutions should be sensitive to employers' local needs (as is being encouraged through foundation degrees), nationally consistent minimum standards for course content must be maintained. This will help employers to understand the qualification obtained by the graduate and reassure the student that quality is being upheld.
- v EMAs are a statutory financial award that aims to support young people from low-income households (less than £30,000 per annum) who undertake full-time courses in FE. The aim of EMAs is to increase participation and retention. They are available to 16 and over and under 19 in pilot areas. In new areas, they are only available to those moving from Year 11 to Year 12. EMAs consist of:
a weekly payment of up to £30 (during term time only) if 90 per cent attendance is achieved;
intermittent bonuses of £100, paid at the discretion of the institution.
- The EMA is paid for two years, sometimes three. It is disregarded by Tax Credits and Means Tested Benefits.
- vi The aim of Care to Learn is to help young parents under 19 pay for childcare costs whilst in full or part-time education. The scheme pays for the costs of registered childcare whilst students are at school, college or on placement (includes fees that must be paid during holidays, and cost of transport to and from the childcare provider), up to a maximum of £5125 per child. The childcare provider is paid directly. It does not affect/is not affected by Social Security Benefits. It is not means-tested.
- vii The aim of Care to Learn is to help young parents under 19 pay for childcare costs whilst in full or part-time education. The scheme pays for the costs of registered childcare whilst students are at school, college or on placement (includes fees that must be paid during holidays, and cost of transport to and from the childcare provider), up to a maximum of £5125 per child. The childcare provider is paid directly. It does not affect/is not affected by Tax Credits or Means Tested Benefits. It is not means-tested.
- viii Defined in this context as students being offered their tuition fees payment and an entitlement to an Adult Learning Grant to study full-time.
- ix The ALG is a means tested allowance of up to £30 per week to young adults between 19 and 30 years old resident in England, who are studying full time for a first full level two or (on a discretionary basis) first full level three qualification. The pilot, started in September 2003, targeted young adults initially in 10 Learning and Skills Council areas. Since September 2004, a further nine local Learning and Skills Councils were included.
- x See Department for Education and Skills, 2004 A Qualitative Investigation into the First Year (Pilot) Implementation of the Adult Learning Grant: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=14442&type=5&resultspage=1>
- xi JSA offers over £20 more a week for an adult over 25 plus the safety of full Housing Benefit.
- xii These provisions have been included in LSF / Schools Access Funds guidance (extension to asylum seekers only) in recent years. For guidance, see http://www.support4learning.org.uk/money/funds_access.htm
- xiii Independent Investigation Group on Student Hardship and Funding in Wales (2001) Investing in Learning: Coherence, clarity and equity for student support in Wales, Teresa Rees.
- xiv LSC, 2004, 'First Release National Statistics: Further Education, Work Based Learning for Young People and Adult and Community Learning – Learner numbers, 2003/04';.
- xv LSC, 2004, 'First release', *ibid*.

xvi NUS, 2004, Press Pack – Estimated Costs of Study 2004/05. NUS has produced annual estimates since 1991 based on the most current research data available, or if no new data has been developed, figures are updated by inflation.

xvii National Audit Office, 2002, Widening Participation in Higher Education in England – Report by the Controller & Auditor General, HC 485, Session 2001/02

xviii NUS cost of living figures 1997-2001 and Accommodation Costs Surveys

xix Based on NUS, 2002, Accommodation Costs Survey data on average rents for self-catering single institutional accommodation and shared private accommodation. Student loan rates used are for the 2001/02 academic year, with the remaining loan divided by 52 weeks in accordance with DfES policy.

xx Single people receiving Jobseekers' Allowance or Income Support aged 18-24 receive £44.05 per week and aged 25 and over receive £55.65 per week.

xxi UUK's recent Student Debt Project

xxii Callender, C. et al, 2002, Student Debt Project, UUK

xxiii Callender, C & Kemp, M – 'Changing Student Finances: Income Expenditure and Take-up of student loans among full and part-time higher education students in 1998/99' Research Report RR213, DfEE, London; Connor et al. – 'Social Class and Higher Education: Issues affecting decisions on participation by lower social class groups' Research Report RR267 DfEE, London

xxiv There is a substantial body of evidence that shows that paid work is having a detrimental impact on academic achievement and retention. UUK's Student Debt Survey has shown that the hours worked by students are increasing and that working over 16 hours per week can have a detrimental impact on a student's end of year grades at the 2:1-2:2 cusp. Callender's (2001) review of research found that students are more likely to report adverse effects on studies of paid work, than to report positive aspects, ranging from 27 per cent to 79 per cent of samples. Looking at the effect of paid work on academic performance, Universities UK found that 43 per cent of students produced poor quality assignments occasionally but 8 per cent did so frequently. The NUS Students at Work survey (1999) found that 59 per cent of those who worked thought that work affected their studies; 38 per cent missed lectures as a result of work and 21 per cent failed to submit coursework as a result of part-time work. A study of the impact of students working carried out by the University of Northumbria found that 43 per cent of those surveyed reported that their term time job had an adverse effect on their academic performance.

xxv Claire Callender et al., 2003, Student Debt Project UUK. In this research, 84 per cent of sixth formers and college students believed student debt deterred entry into HE and 88% of those questioned from the lower income groups believed that more people would go to university if grants were available.

xxvi Barclays Student Debt Survey 1999.

xxvii The Open University, 2004, Earning, Learning and Paying: the Results from a National Survey of the Costs and Financing of Part-Time Students in Higher Education, research report 600.

xxviii Independent Investigation Group on Student Hardship and Funding in Wales (2001) Investing in Learning: Coherence, clarity and equity for student support in Wales, Teresa Rees.

xxix NUS, 2003, Students' Access to Healthcare Survey; UKCOSA, 2004, Broadening our horizons: international students in UK universities and colleges. NUS is currently undertaking a survey of international students' experiences of banking. This report will be available from April 2005. NUS plans to conduct a survey in international student tuition fees. This report will be available from June 2005.

xxx NUS, 2004, Leave to Remain Survey; UKCOSA, 2004, *ibid*.

xxxi HM Treasury, March 2004, Supporting Young People to achieve: towards a new deal for Skills. NUS' response can be found at <http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/16-19%20response1.pdf>

xxxii For example, see NUS' Response to DfES Higher Education Issues Document, Annex 3; NUS NASMA, AMoSSHE Discussion Paper to the Interdepartmental Government Directorate, 1999, Interface between Social Security benefits and Student Support.

xxxiii See section on HE student funding - hardship

xxxiv For a detailed examination of these benefit withdrawals, see NUS, 2004, Response to the Future of HE

xxxv NUS response to DfES Higher Education Issues Document, December 2002, annex 3, para c

xxxvi For a lone parent student for example, these include student support through DfES/NHS/GSCC, means-tested benefits through DWP, Tax Credits through Inland Revenue, health service benefits through Department of Health.

xxxvii British Gas / NUS, 2004, Vent or Repent Survey

xxxviii NUS, 2001, Housing and Health Survey

xxxix Home Office, 2004, Good to be Secure

xl http://www.good2bsecure.gov.uk/your_place.html

xli NUS, 2004 Accommodation Costs Survey

xlii See NUS online at <http://www.nusonline.co.uk/campaigns/welfare/health/healthcare/268759.aspx>

xliii NUS, 2003, Students' Access to Healthcare Survey

xliv See the Health Protection Agency website at http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/hiv_and_sti/epidemiology/wtimes.htm#over.

xlv See NUS online at <http://www.nusonline.co.uk/campaigns/welfare/health/drugassistedrape/268773.aspx>

xlvi See NUS online site, *ibid*

xlvi Strategy Unit, 2002, Delivering for children and families

<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/su/childcare/02.htm>

lviii Jones, J., 2002, UK Childcare Support for Student Parents, ENEF