

## NUS Demo 2012: the inside story

Nouse travels to the front line of the London student protests, bringing you all the action and excitement throughout the day

By [Josh Boswell](#), [Neil Johnston](#) and [Anwen Baker](#)  
Thursday 22 November 2012

With coaches scheduled to leave at 5am, students attending the Demo gathered outside the YUSU Student Centre in the early hours of November 21, waiting to be signed in by YUSU President Kallum Taylor.



On the hour, the convoy of five double-decker coaches arrived, ready to take an estimated 300 York students down to the Capital.

“  
Hollar at me [@yorkunisu](#) ... Who's playing out today? Coaches 1, 2, 3 and 5 where you at?! 4's rocking Moves Like Jagger currently. [#Demo2012](#)

— Kallum Taylor ([@yusuprez](#)) [November 21, 2012](#)

”

Once on the coaches, YUSU officers distributed information leaflets and wristbands to students.

Included in the leaflets were four recommended chants for protesters to sing whilst marching, a topic that had been the subject of controversy two days before after NUS Vice President for Union Development Vikki Baars circulated an email suggesting protest chants that referred to David Cameron as a “wanker”, and called for Liberal Democrats and Tories to be burnt on a bonfire.

YUSU condemned the chants the next day, saying, “Those kind of chants undermine every ounce of hard work that YUSU, and other SUs across the country have put into making a positive occasion out of a serious Demo. By all means chant away, and get in the mood, but do it creatively. Swear words and personal digs will just alienate and intimidate onlookers.”

However, the recommended chants on the YUSU leaflet included the phrase “\*\*\*\* off”, in an adapted version of the lyrics to the Carly Rae Jepsen song, Call Me, Maybe.

“

Here’s a pic of ‘Call me maybe’ chant including the phrase ‘\*\*\*\* off’ on a leaflet distributed by a YUSU sabb officer. [twitter.com/yorknouse/stat...](https://twitter.com/yorknouse/stat...)

— Nouse (@yorknouse) [November 21, 2012](#)

”

Following their distribution, Taylor apologised for the chant in the leaflets, during an early morning interview with Nouse on board coach number four.

After slight traffic delays, the coach convoy entered London at approximately 11am, arriving at the march start point in Temple Place around 11.30am, where several groups of London university students had already assembled.

York Samba band were accompanying the York protesters, and attracted attention from many surrounding students as they started to play, accompanying the chants from gathered protesters.

[Video: York Samba band strikes up a beat](#)

“

5 coaches to London full of student activists. @yorkunisu biggest turn out so far. So proud! [#DEMO2012](#)

— Megan Cross (@megancross92) [November 21, 2012](#)

”

The York contingent of the march were one of the largest groups, with students ranging from first years to YUSU sabbatical officers Taylor, Academic Officer Graeme Osborn, and Welfare Officer Bob Hughes

[Video: York's front line in the march](#)

The march began to move shortly before midday, heading towards the Thames Embankment, with various chants and songs including the popular slogan “No ifs, no buts, no education cuts”, as well as “Yorkshire, Yorkshire, white rose, white rose” from the York University contingent.

“  
The ‘McDonalds Can't Hire Us All’ banner was in the Daily Mail. @yorkunisu @yusuprez  
#DEMO2012

— Ellie (@EllieLomas\_NaNa) November 21, 2012

”



By 1pm the march had closed in on the Houses of Parliament, with a significantly increased police presence including riot vans and helicopters.

[Video: March approaches Houses of Parliament](#)

As the main body of the 10,000-strong group neared the Houses, an outbreak of violence occurred in a small scuffle between several hooded protesters, masked with bandannas and wearing red square badges, and two police officers.



A leaflet distributed by this masked group bore the slogan “Educate. Escalate. Destroy”, with the literature inside saying “We must utterly reject any idea that the NUS is an institution with student interests at its heart”. The leaflet advocated “wildcat strikes” and recommended protesters “exercise [their] destructive creativity”.

“  
[yfrog.com/h3hnsqwj](http://yfrog.com/h3hnsqwj) a leaflet handed out by masked protesters [#demo2012](#)

— Nouse Live (@nouselive) [November 21, 2012](#)

”  
The march halted below Big Ben for approximately 20 minutes, with several protesters forming a wall of placards across the entrance to Westminster Bridge, part of the NUS planned route.



However, with NUS ushers urging marchers to carry on moving over the bridge, the protesters eventually resumed progress.



Once over the bridge, the march continued on towards Elephant and Castle, the chants and songs getting louder, and stopping only briefly while several protesters joined a man in costume folk dancing.

[Video: protesters dance by Westminster bridge](#)

At around 2pm the weather took a turn for the worse, with heavier rain and the march slowing to a crawl, leading to a more subdued atmosphere. At this point, the main body of the march was along Lambeth Road, with a much lighter police presence of an officer flanking the protest column on each side approximately every 50 metres.

“

Students defying the weather at #demo2012: “We’re soaking, we’re wet, we don’t want student debt” [twitter.com/nusuk/status/2...](https://twitter.com/nusuk/status/2...)

— NUS UK (@nusuk) November 21, 2012

”

Kennington Park, the final destination on the NUS planned route, was filled with protestors by 3pm, where many gathered around a small stage that had been erected.

“

NUS stage #demo2012 [yfrog.com/nw70690771j](http://yfrog.com/nw70690771j)

— Nouse Live (@nouselive) November 21, 2012

”

A series of speakers then addressed the crowd, including NUS Vice President for Further Education Toni Pearce, author Owen Jones, and NUS Chair Liam Burns.

However, amidst applause and cheers, Burns was met with boos and jeers from some members of the crowd, including masked protesters wearing red badges and shouting through megaphones the chant, “NUS shame on you, where the fuck you brought us to?” Some projectiles including eggs were thrown at Burns during his speech.

[Video: Liam Burns heckled at NUS Demo 2012](#)

While Burns was speaking, a group of around 20 protesters surged forward and pushed down the metal barriers in front of the stage.



After scuffles with members of the security staff, several protesters wearing red badges ran up and mounted the platform, while Burns swiftly exited. They proceeded to chant anti-NUS slogans and told the crowd to go back and occupy Westminster.



“

We hope you liked us on stage at [#demo2012](#) - we love you comrades. The fight is only just beginning [#nofees](#) [#nostudentdebt](#)

— THE IMAGINARY PARTY (@Imaginary\_Party) [November 21, 2012](#)

”

“

Thought the ultra left showed themselves to be pretty pathetic today by heckling speakers showing solidarity at the rally of [#demo2012](#)

— Roger McKenzie (@unisonroger) [November 21, 2012](#)

”

By 3.30pm, the crowd in Kennington park had mostly dissipated, and York students returned to the five coaches waiting on the street outside the park.

“

So tired after [#Demo2012](#). Good day out though. [@yorkunisu](#) and York Samba Band really pulled it off.

— Patrick Deneny (@PatrickDeneny) [November 21, 2012](#)

”

“

[@thenutstv](#) We are now (finally)! Pizza all round! [#demotv](#) [#demo2012](#)

— York Student TV (@ystv) [November 21, 2012](#)

”

Upon their return around 10pm, attendees to the protest were treated to pizza at the Lounge, courtesy of Taylor.



Most Read **Discussed**

1. [What is the difference between tax evasion and tax avoidance?](#)
2. [Penalty for submitting work up to an hour late halved](#)
3. [Study reveals spending habits of students](#)
4. [Academic censorship at Reading University](#)
5. [Massive power cut hits homes and train station](#)
6. [YUSU to hold referendum on policy of supporting second EU referendum](#)

## Write for Nouse News

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

## More in News

[Penalty for submitting work up to an hour late halved](#)

[Massive power cut hits homes and train station](#)

[YUSU to hold referendum on policy of supporting second EU referendum](#)

[A Viking Theatre for York](#)

[Annual Student Housing survey to close soon](#)

[Volunteering Week](#)

[About Nouse](#)  
[Who's Nouse](#)  
[Website Credits](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[Advertising](#)  
[Archives](#)  
[Student Discounts](#)  
[Print Editions](#)  
[Mini-Sites](#)  
[Nouse on Twitter](#)  
[Nouse on Facebook](#)  
[Nouse on Google+](#)



