

NUS National Conference – Day 1

[William Hornett](#) summaries the key amendments from Day 1 of the NUS National Conference

Monday 14 April 2014

The first day of this year's NUS national conference was certainly an exciting affair. Once the welcomes and introductions were over, it was straight into easily one of the most controversial amendments to any particular motion.



A student in a protest against cuts in 2010
Photo Credit: Lewishamdreamer

Amendment 101a to Motion 101 proposed to Conference that the NUS take a radical stance against the cuts and austerity measures implemented by this government. It was felt that the NUS has a duty to its membership to actively oppose these cuts to the education sector on the grounds that it is an ideological attack on the welfare and conditions of students, and that the original motion did not strongly push the opposition of these reforms.

The amendment was voted down by a narrow margin. It was taken by the chair and the Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) to be a delete all motion, amendment, meaning, if passed, it would wholly replace the text of the actual motion itself which was much more cautious in its opposition to the cuts. Beth Curtis said "This reading largely dissuaded people voting for the amendment. This motion was the NEC's pet project and the delete all reading meant that people were much less likely to vote for it despite the obvious popularity of the ideas present in the amendment." As well as this, she noted that the failure of the motion was a swift "Shutting down of more radical voices in the NUS by the NEC and DPC."

There was also heated debate over amendment 101f which proposed that the NUS organise a national demonstration in the first term of the next academic year. The issue was contentious for a number of reasons; the fact that the 2012 demo was heavily criticised for being far too weak and badly organised and also that it was followed by amendment 101g which proposed to demonstrate with the TUC ahead of the 2015 general election. George Offer spoke for much of conference when he said "I'm not in favour of a demo for the sake of a demo" as much of Conference felt we should put our efforts into supporting the TUC more so than having an NUS demo. However, again, this debate seemed like a bit of a false choice. The two demonstrations are of course not mutually exclusive and if Conference passed both amendments the TUC could have helped the NUS in their demo just as much as the NUS could help the TUC in their demo and the mutual relationship Toni Pearce is so keen to point out has been created would have been solidified. However, Conference seemed to ignore this and decided to vote down 101f but pass 101g. So, whilst the NUS will be standing with the TUC in the coming year in active protest, it has decided that it does not need to do so for the body it actually represents; students.

There was also a very interesting debate on amendment 203b; the proposal that the police should not be allowed on campus unless they are invited by the University management and the Student Unions. This amendment follows a year of tensions between student protests and police brutality, especially in the Tres Cosas and ULU protests in London and the protests in Birmingham, where students have been

illegally arrested and detained and not had support from their Student Unions or the NUS. Of courses students should have the right to feel safe when they protest, but there was a worry amongst the delegates that this motion would restrict the police from doing their job when they receive an emergency call, or have to respond to campus issues in some other way. Many delegates felt that this motion would stop the police from even responding to burglaries and thefts. However, the wording of the amendment is very specific and refers only to the presence of police on campus in terms of their relationship to protest and students' right to safety. George Offer also raised the point that "It differs in different unis because campus means different things in different places." What "Campus" means in UCL is very different to what "campus" means in York and the amendment should obviously be sensitive of that fact. Despite the heated debate, this motion passed with some parts removed, and the safety of protesting students was largely protected in NUS policy.

As well as these, other motions passed were a new deal to support education funding, a motion to support for campus workers' strike action and to campaign against the commercialisation of education as well as a motion to oppose all fees associated with re-sitting exams.



4 comments

Champagne

14 Apr '14 at 11:45 pm

something something exercise in pompous left-wing posturing labour careerist futility

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deleslate

15 Apr '14 at 4:33 pm

Nope, Labour are horrifically right-wing. You could douse them in red paint and hammer and sickles and they'd still be a pathetic excuse for a worker's party. There's no defence of anti-austerity policy — not even on a Keynesian, socially democratic platform.

Luckily conference this year had more first-time delegates than prior, meaning people actually voted on principles and policy rather than who was on the Labour-led NEC club, so we finally got Free Education through.

[▲ Report](#)

Something, something Labour

15 Apr '14 at 10:20 pm

The NUS NEC, who opposed the motions actually calling for any form of left opposition to cuts to education, is dominated by Labour 'Students'.

You can attack the left wing of the NUS in a number of ways, but accusing them of being careerist and Labour Students is widely inaccurate.

[▲ Report](#)

Rah

16 Apr '14 at 1:15 pm

This is very poorly written. Case in point: "to be a delete all motion, amendment, meaning, if passed, it would". This is just nonsensical. Fewer commas, shorter paragraphs.

If you want to convince people that the NUS is anti-students then make it readable so that they'll bother

finishing the article.

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