

AARON PORTER for National President

- FIGHTING CUTS TO EDUCATION •
- LEADERSHIP IN THE FUNDING CAMPAIGN •
- MAKING NUS RELEVANT TO STUDENTS •
- EDUCATION NOT UNEMPLOYMENT •

I am standing for National President with a track record of leadership, results and experience on the very issues that will top our agenda.

The next 12 months will be the most significant our education system will have ever endured. Colleges and Universities face record cuts, SU block grants are under threat, and students are facing soaring levels of debt with bleak job prospects.

This manifesto is an ambitious vision for a proactive NUS which sets the agenda, and one with students at its absolute core. Transforming our capacity, making the lives of students better and taking NUS to a new level of delivery.



PLEASE SEND THROUGH YOUR FEEDBACK ON MY IDEAS AND PLANS:

The next few pages outline the biggest issues over the next 12 months, my plans and concrete solutions about how we should best address them. But I want to get as much feedback on my ideas as possible from students, course reps, sabbatical officers, NUS delegates, union volunteers...

Please forward this onto your delegates; I encourage feedback on any aspect, or the plan as a whole!

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Facebook: Have Your Say: Aaron Porter for NUS President - Students at the Heart of NUS
(with discussion on threads encouraged)

Twitter: www.twitter.com/AaronPorter

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

FIGHTING CUTS TO EDUCATION

The testing economic conditions mean that the next Government will be forced to scrutinise every line of spending, and there has been intense speculation that the budgets for further and higher education could be slashed – by as much as 20%.

Any cuts to the overall budget could have a devastating impact on the quality of education delivered, and the overall experience for students. I believe we need to start acting immediately with a proactive case to the public and politicians, for the education budget as a whole to be protected.

I will...

- Support students and students' unions who are **opposing cuts** within institutions that will have detrimental impact on the experience and quality of students' education.
- Work with Colleges, Universities, Funding Councils and other allies to make the public case for the **education budget to be protected**; I will concentrate on the benefits of social mobility and the economic impact of education, which is best delivered with a well-funded education system.
- Found a coalition with Trade Unions in the education sector to identify **collective action** in response to cuts, should they become a reality.
- Continue to prioritise the campaign to ensure that the **Education Maintenance Allowance and Adult Learning Grant survives** past the next Government.
- **Deploy NEC members** to support FE & HE Unions fighting cuts at a local level, co-ordinated by the VP's FE, HE and Union Development.
- Hold a **Cuts Summit** as soon as I take office to engage with all students and other allies that want to work on the best strategy to protect the experience of students in FE and HE during a time of cuts.

EXPERIENCE INCLUDES:

2008-10

- Vice-President (Higher Education), NUS

2007-08

- Academic Affairs Officer, University of Leicester Students' Union
- Board Member, NUS Services Ltd
- Chair & Founder, Unions94
- Student Loans Company Consultative Group

2006-07

- Vice-President (Finance & Services), University of Leicester Students' Union
- NUS Environment & Ethics Committee
- NUS Finance Committee (co-opted)

As a student 2003-06

- Course Rep, Dept. of English, Uni of Leicester
- Editor, 'The Ripple' Student Newspaper



Alongside my role at NUS and before at the University of Leicester, I have been invited onto numerous national committees related to education and access including; the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, HE Academy, Quality Assurance Agency and UCAS.

I have also taken the lead with regards to lobbying government and MPs of all parties.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

FUNDING OUR FUTURE

We all know that there are Vice-Chancellors actively pushing for the cap on undergraduate fees to be lifted, and for a real market to emerge. The consequences of this would be disastrous for students and future access into HE.

The Browne review will be the most significant analysis of higher education in over a decade. NUS needs to ensure that fair access is the top priority, because we want a fairer funding system which replaces the regressive model currently in place, and a more generous and targeted system of student support which is focussed on actual need. Significant reform is required to achieve these aspirations and I will take personal responsibility to ensure the review takes this into account.

I will...

- Organise a **National Demonstration** before any vote in Parliament.
- Demand a new level of activism from the **Funding Our Future** campaign, which is public facing and builds up as broad a coalition with students, trade unions, supportive institutions and sympathetic Vice-Chancellors, local communities and the general public to oppose any possible lifting of the cap and fight for a fairer alternative.
- Publish a **public list of voting intentions** including every single MP in the new Parliament.
- With the VP FE, prioritise **engagement with FE students and Unions** as a critical part of the campaign.
- Support Unions in FE and HE to deliver **local campaign activity**, working with the Vice President (FE) & Vice-President (HE).
- Form a **national coalition of trade unions** and other organisations to steer the future of the campaign, in a similar vein to the CALL campaign.
- Call for **part-time students** to be treated equally with full time students in any proposal.
- Campaign for an enhanced system of student **support for postgraduate students**.
- Demand new **access monitoring for postgraduate students** which will scrutinise the background of students entering postgraduate education.
- Call for a review and greater **regulation of international students' fees**.
- Provide support for the **best deal for students in Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland** as the funding debate in each nation relates to one another.
- Establish a steering group to inform the developing funding campaign which will include Liberation Officers and Vice-Presidents, to ensure this is truly the priority for the **whole movement**, and all perspectives are considered.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

PRIORITISING FURTHER EDUCATION

For years NUS has been keen to talk about the 7 million members we have, but our work has been heavily skewed toward those in HE. We need to mainstream FE in our work to ensure that it is properly embedded across all of our programmes of work, and campaigning activity. Working with the Vice-President Further Education, I want to outline the most ambitious work plan for FE that we have seen in our history, and will back this up with resources where appropriate. Most importantly I will be a champion for a new a style, which changes our culture and mindset toward FE.

I will...

- With the Vice-President (FE), ensure that FE is both regarded, treated and given the same emphasis as HE within NUS. **Changing our culture** is crucial to delivering NUS' objectives for FE.
- Develop **better links with FE sector bodies** such as the AoC and the 157 Group to make the case directly for **better supported FE SUs**.
- Establish an effective network for all full time sabbatical officers in FE, both electronically & face to face.
- Develop a strategy to **expand the number of sabbatical officers in FE**, looking specifically at the more developed FE Colleges and FE SUs.
- Look to develop an agreement with the 157 Group which publically states the benefits of SUs in FE, commits to **adequate funding of SUs** and also to having sabbatical officers alongside permanent staff support.
- Start a review of all NUS **training provision** for officers and students in FE, which is currently not given the same level of priority as HE training.
- Utilise the 5 FE members of the National Executive Committee to help deliver **FE priority campaigning** activity across the UK.
- Ensure that FE Unions are given **greater priority** for union allocations and visits from National Vice-Presidents and the rest of the National Executive Council.
- Research and develop a proper strategy to identify how NUS can properly **support students** in sixth form colleges.
- Develop an FE model for the **Students' Union Evaluation Initiative** (SUEI).



HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

CUTTING EDGE COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS AND SUs

Our current level of engagement with students isn't acceptable. Put simply, we don't engage with enough or a diverse enough cross-section of students. To safeguard our long term legitimacy, I will radically overhaul our means and methods for communication with all types of students in FE and HE, and with Students' Unions.

I will...

- Work with institutions and SUs to prioritise **building our database of email contacts**. We should set a clear target and timeline towards a database of **1 million students**. This will not only improve our communication with students, but crucially our campaigning effectiveness.
- Target specific groups of students to engage more closely with our activity; **course reps** (in FE & HE), **single issue campaigners** engaged with the work in our Society & Citizenship Zone (such as climate change, global justice and international issues), and students already engaged in their own union (such as **union councillors** and **volunteers**).
- Create a **Student Media list** which gives Student Newspapers, TV, Radio and websites direct access to the National President and NUS Campaigns, recognising student media as an important portal into NUS work.
- Create NUS' **first National Student Referendum** on a topical issue, which will give every member in FE & HE the chance to vote on an issue to set NUS' agenda.
- Write a **monthly article** from the National President which can be published by **student media**.
- Engage with SUs to encourage visible links to the **NUS website from SU websites**.
- Give SUs greater access to improve the quality & quantity of information they have on our own website.
- Demand **cutting edge use of social media** (like Facebook and Twitter) to engage more closely with students. I will set a clear strategy and timeline for at least 100,000 students to be part our social networks.
- Ensure NUS press releases are circulated to students' unions to make sure you are kept informed with our work, and the latest announcements.
- Create **monthly podcasts** and **online question & answer sessions** to make myself more available to students and students' unions, in addition to **open forums in person** across the UK.
- Ensure **better training for NUS delegates** throughout the year, including improved information from NUS.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES, VOLUNTEERING & UNIVERSITY SPORT

I recognise the important role which activities, volunteering and sport play within our SUs and the broader student experience, which has often been ignored by NUS. This is a legitimate way in which SUs engage with their members, and should also be reflected within NUS activity.

I will...

- Work with the VP (Union Development) to create a **Student Activities network** to meet throughout the year.
- Actively consider how NUS can develop and improve its interaction and build a more formal relationship with **Volunteering England** and **British University College Sport** (BUCS).
- Develop plans for national accreditation for volunteering and extra-curricular activity undertaken.
- Maximise the opportunities from the **Olympics** through collaborative work with Podium.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN NUS

For many students, NUS is still considered a closed shop. Although substantial progress has been made in the last 2 years, there is still more we can do to make our activity more transparent. I will actively pursue a strategy which will make NUS more accountable and accessible.



I will...

- Set Up termly **open forums** for the National President to face questions from an open audience of students in every region and Nation of the UK; ensuring that more students get direct access to NUS, not just those who engage with the traditional structures.
- **Publish the voting record for every member of the NEC** as standard, so you can scrutinise us more closely.
- Examine the feasibility of **audio streaming for NUS democratic events** (including National Conference, Zone Conferences and NEC meetings) so that we can be accessible to a greater number of students, not just those attending in person.
- Review reforms of **NUS elections** to consider bringing in further caps on spending, as well as **hustings** in the Nations organised by NUS.
- Open the opportunity for **National Conference to be chaired by actual students** and not just the NEC.
- Publish National Conference, Zone Conferences, NEC meeting minutes on the website in a more timely fashion.
- Support the use of the **National Ballot** where appropriate to encourage greater interaction between SUs and NUS.
- Organise for a National Ballot in early 2010/11 and encourage SUs to hold local ballots with members to feed into an overall NUS National Ballot.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

DELIVERING FOR STUDENTS' UNIONS

We haven't delivered enough for SUs, particularly those in the FE sector. Our contribution, transparency and usefulness has been woefully inadequate. Until we can adequately demonstrate our benefit to constituent members, we will never reach our potential.

I will...

- Create a clear **Annual Benefits Statement for every single affiliate**. This will demonstrate what NUS has delivered over a 12 month period from national representation, campaigns won, summary of research, projects delivered, press coverage secured and financial benefits.
- **Freeze affiliation fees**. As National President and Chair of the NUS Board, I will never support any real-terms increase in affiliation fees.
- Ask the Board to reduce our overall dependency on Affiliation Fees as a long term strategy.
- Push the Board to consider **new ways to bring in money** to NUS; for us to deliver the same level of activity, we need to raise more money as it is.
- Create a **proper Non-Affiliate Strategy**. Using the Annual Benefits Statement as a starting point, I will personally and proactively make the case to non-affiliates such as Southampton, Sunderland and Dundee.
- Establish an effective network to prioritise engagement with **small and specialist unions**.
- Continue to give support to Unions from **Mission Groups** or **Specialist Subject Networks**.
- Support the collaboration agenda, which is vital to delivering more for SUs. This will include NUS stepping up its support to develop, train and network staff in SUs.
- Create a **Union Healthcheck** with 10 critical criteria which Unions can assess annually to support newly elected officers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own Union.
- Criteria would include: Election turnout, campaigns objectives delivered, student emails contactable and funding per FTE.
- Introduce **topical polling** on student issues set up by NUS to help us proactively set the agenda, rather than just reacting.
- Monitor **NEC visits** to ensure they are spread out between HE and FE more evenly.
- Support **regional campaign networks** between Unions across FE and HE.
- Set up NUS' first ever **training programme for SU staff** (working with AMSU).
- Continue to support SUs in the process of charity registration.
- Set up a **Crisis Unions Unit**, to provide targeted help.
- Develop **NUS student organisers on campus** who will take out NUS Campaigns out to students directly.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

PROJECT: PARTICIPATION

- Campaign for an end to traditional applications into HE before A level results and push for a Post-Qualification Application (PWA) system which will radically **improve access and widening participation** into higher education.
- Support a **dedicated Careers Advisor in every school**, as recommended by the Schools White Paper and the Milburn Report.
- A single online portal for **Information, Advice & Guidance**.
- Inclusion of part-time courses to be included in the data collection through the UCAS system.
- Further growth of the UKPASS system to make **postgraduate application more transparent and accessible**.
- Government intervention to strengthen the powers and **effectiveness of OFFA**, otherwise I will call for an alternative.
- Public naming and shaming for institutions that don't fully allocate their **bursary and access provision**.
- Support for **increased use of contextual data** to inform University admission.
- Work with the Vice-President (HE) to ensure that NUS maximises the review of Teaching Quality Information to ensure **improved provision of information to prospective and current students**, which focuses on UG and PG, part-time and full-time.

EDUCATION TRADE UNIONS

- Create an **Education Unions Forum**, chaired by NUS, with representation at General Secretary/National President level to coordinate relationship between the Unions in education.
- **Policy level interactions** between NUS and Trade Unions in the education sector to initiate a working relationship.
- **Increase communication** to NUS members about the work between other education unions in the FE & HE sectors.

NUS EVENTS & TRAINING

- A greater commitment to taking **NUS events around the UK**, to more effectively engage with our UK-wide membership.
- A **Second Year Sabb training** event, for advanced training with a specific focus on campaigning.
- **Accreditation** for training undertaken with NUS.
- Work with the Liberation Officers & Campaigns, to bring greater content from our **liberation work into NUS training**.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Shamefully considered as a way to subsidise UK education, we need to ensure that International Students are given **accurate and appropriate information** about courses and institutions, as well as **value for money** for their study.
- Working with the International Students' Officer and International Students' Committee, I will **scrutinise the fees** charged by all UK institutions.
- Prioritise the **induction period** to ensure international students' are supported in those crucial first months.
- Building on the UKCISA Survey of Student Experience on Tier 4, **lobby the UK Border Agency** to ensure improvements are made for international students.
- **Identify the hidden costs** behind studying in the UK for international students.
- Commitment to promoting **International Student engagement** in NUS and Students' Unions.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF NUS

NATIONS

I value the autonomy of the Nations (NUS Scotland, NUS Wales and NUS-USI), their Executive Committees and Officers; however we need to evaluate the relationship between NUS UK and the Nations to ensure we are delivering the best possible campaigning and policy work, which delivers for SUs/SAs in the Nations.

- Developing my proposed **Annual Benefits Statement**, with specific additions for those in the Nations, so that we can be clear how affiliation fees are making the maximum impact for SUs in the Nations.
- Review the implications of **devolution** and then devise a clear plan as to how to improve policy and campaign support for issues between NUS UK and the Nations.
- Joined up thinking and the shared strategic planning for the **priority campaign** - winning a new funding system and ensure we provide support for the Nations.
- Continue the commitment to taking more **NUS events and training** out to the Nations.
- Establish regular meetings to bring the Nations Presidents together to ensure **greater coordination** and support for our respective campaigns and work.

LIBERATION ACROSS OUR MOVEMENT

NUS UK should continue to support and give priority to the work of the Liberation Campaigns, both valuing and respecting their autonomy as well as their ability to set their own agenda and priorities. I want to reinforce this, by ensuring that NUS UK can play more of a supportive role to the Liberation Campaigns.

- Give support to a **Liberating the Curriculum** group which all Liberation Campaigns can feed into, alongside the VP FE & VP HE, which will set an ambitious plan for the year ahead.
- More **coordination and dialogue** between the Liberation Campaigns and the Priority Campaign, to ensure liberation perspectives inform the direction and work of the campaign, but also to establish areas of clear to consensus such that the Liberation Campaigns can support where they feel appropriate.
- Ensure that **research** and policy work across the organisation such as National Student Survey and Post-graduate Survey analysis are made available to the liberation campaigns to inform their education work.
- Commitment that there should be **cross-organisational support** for the work of the Liberation Campaigns from press and political strategy through to education and quality and events.



SUPPORTING RELIGIOUS STUDENTS

NUS and SUs continue to play a critical role in supporting religious students in our institutions and on our campuses. Every student should have the right to feel comfortable to express their faith, and practice on campus as a basic right. I will provide clear leadership to protect the interests of these students, at a time when fragile international politics can spill over onto our campuses.

- Continue to support the work of the **Inter-Faith project**.
- Work with students' unions to ensure that basic facilities such as **prayer space**, appropriate **food provision** and **flexible timetables** are delivered.
- Denounce any instance of invited speakers that incite hate against any religious groups.
- Protect the **freedom of religious expression** within the boundaries of the law.
- Tackle the misconception that religious extremism is widespread, and ensure that we take an **evidenced-based** approach.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF NUS

AARON PORTER for National President

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