

## **HE6 - Resisting the HE bill and opposing the green paper polices**

Conference notes that the green paper for HE, 'Fulfilling our Potential', makes a number of damaging proposals for the funding and governance of UK higher education, including:

1. introducing a 'Teaching Excellence Framework' based on metrics
2. replacing HEFCE, DfA, OFFA etc, with a new 'Office for Students'
3. reducing regulations (including caps on student numbers and timescales) that 'private providers' have to meet to charge students tuition fees, obtain degree-awarding powers and call themselves a 'university'
4. weakening academic freedom protections inside existing universities
5. the introduction of the TEF will significantly undermine the linkages between teaching, scholarship and research embedded with higher education
6. the TEF is also likely to undermine collegiality and impose formulaic approaches to teaching. The corporate language and ethos of the document is based on a competency model of lecturer development rather than a reflective practitioner model
7. the TEF includes measures to control and regulate student unions.

HESC also notes:

- a. the HE green paper is designed to ease the entry of private providers (including for-profits) into the HE sector
- b. that provisions in the green paper will also make closures of existing HEIs and takeovers easier
- c. reports in the press that David Cameron sees easing privatisation of HE as a 'flagship' policy of this government, describing universities as a 'closed shop'
- d. the key role of the NSS, as a source of data for the TEF, in the government's marketization plans
- e. that NUS conference has voted to prepare for a sabotage of the NSS in order to 'render the TEF unworkable, and discuss the most effective method with UCU before June'.

HESC resolves:

- i. to prioritise resistance to privatisation, the green/white paper and HE bill in our national work
- ii. to call on members to consider the likely impact of privatisation of teaching in their subject area, including the quality of resulting teaching
- iii. to work with the NUS, sister unions, the Council for the Defence of British Universities, the Campaign for the Public University, etc., to build this campaign
- iv. to instruct HEC to promptly express support to NUS for a student-led sabotage of the NSS in which students enter artificially minimum scores
- v. to call a national demonstration and a lobby of parliament against the HE bill

- vi. to take forward a national campaign against these proposals, including:
  - local organising (briefings, speaking tours, meetings, protests and letter-writing)
  - a public meeting in Parliament timed to coincide with the first or second reading of any bill
- vii. to support the NUS call for a national demonstration in defence of higher education and work with NUS and other campus unions for a demonstration in the autumn term
- viii. encourage branches to hold meetings at universities on the HE bill and work with the NUS, HE Convention, CDBU and CPU in their development
- ix. organise a national day of action for the defence of HE.

## **HE7 HE green paper/white paper**

Conference notes the:

- 1. success of February's second Convention for HE
- 2. intention to produce an alternative white paper
- 3. negative impact of the HE green paper and Excellent Education Everywhere (education white paper)
- 4. resolve and commitment of other unions to ballot for action to stand up for education and the backing received from parents, experts and cross party support at local and national governmental level.

Conference resolves to:

- a. circulate copies of the alternative white paper to all HE members
- b. support all branches that decide to ballot for industrial action over a trades dispute that arises from the government's reforms to the sector
- c. support the lobby of parliament organised by the council and the campaign around the alternative white paper
- d. declare in favour of a national demonstration against the government proposals (in conjunction with other TUs if possible, the NUS, the council and the campaign)

## **HE8 (EP) Campaign to protect the public interest in higher education**

Conference notes that the 2015 green paper suggests (part C, chapter 3, pp. 66-68) that Higher Education Corporations (HECs) should in future have the right to dissolve themselves into for-profit providers.

Conference also notes that providers such as Coventry University are already taking over large sections of their city/town centres and thereby increasing their asset portfolios.

Conference is aware that such developments could lead to the privatisation of publicly-owned spaces and that such assets will be extremely attractive to

'corporate raiders' such as hedge-funds. Such privatisation could therefore lead to the asset-stripping of town and city centres for the purposes of shareholder super-profits.

Conference agrees to launch a broad-based campaign to:

1. raise awareness amongst members, students, citizens and local authorities about these proposed changes
2. to commit existing higher education providers to place the public good above private profit and in the process democratise institutional governance.

### **HE9 (EP) Jeremy Corbyn and higher education policy**

Conference welcomes the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader, which represents a welcome shift in the UK political landscape. We applaud Corbyn's contribution to UCU's third Cradle to Grave conference and UCU's 2015 Casualised Staff meeting. We welcome his commitment to education as a human right, and opposition to ZHCs. Conference reiterates that coalition and Conservative policies have damaged HE, seeking to turn it into a market commodity at the expense of equality of opportunity. This has especially impacted on the number of part-time mature students. HESC asks UCU to engage with Jeremy Corbyn and his allies in order to produce policies that re-establish the right to higher education for people of all ages. Conference believes that good quality education requires secure contracts and good terms and conditions for all staff, and these must be part of any serious attempt to repair the damage caused in recent years.

### **HE10 (EP) Casualisation and the higher education green paper**

Government plans will increase casualisation, as for-profit 'providers' employ more staff on short term, insecure and zero hours contracts, undermining everyone's employment rights.

Large numbers of already casualised teaching staff extend themselves to do the best professional job for students, working far more than paid hours, receiving a full-time equivalent rate well below the appropriate point, working years without proper career development and uncertain of future work.

A time-consuming assessment process is an inequitable additional strain.

The best way to maintain standards is to support and reward staff.

The undermining of national bargaining and pay scales will mean fewer young casualised staff joining UCU.

Conference asks HEC to:

1. mount a strong national anti-Green Paper campaign, with materials demanding job security, proper pay rates and career development for casualised workers
2. lobby the Labour party, the SNP, Plaid Cymru and other sympathetic politicians for an EDM on these points
3. put pressure on VCs through local campaigns.

### **HE11 Fighting government plans for the reform of higher education**

Government plans for the reform of higher education are laying the ground for a privatisation of HE provision. The changes proposed purport to be about improving the quality of higher education in the UK but they are premised on the idea that the opening up of higher education to the market is the best way to improve teaching quality in the sector.

Conference:

1. reaffirms its opposition to the provision of education for profit and its commitment to a publicly funded university sector
2. resolves to campaign actively and urgently against the government's policy proposals with days of local, regional and national action, including a media campaign and a national march
3. calls on UCU nationally to organise a boycott of the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework
4. calls on UCU nationally to ensure the vital and professional support from offices located within the region, to enable branches to achieve the above, is fully resourced.

### **HE12 Boycott of the Teaching Excellence Framework**

HESC notes that:

1. the government's green paper Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice outlines the blueprint for the wholesale privatisation of Higher Education in England
2. central to this privatisation is the provision of increasing student fees, new debt for part-time students and new 'quality' inspection, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which imposes defined norms for provision of teaching in higher education.

HESC believes that:

- a. privatisation threatens the quality of teaching for students, and increasing student debt will not increase access to Higher Education amongst disadvantaged groups

- b. the introduction of the TEF will significantly undermine academic freedom and the links between teaching, scholarship and research embedded in higher education.
- c. HESC resolves to organise a campaign for a boycott of the TEF, and to oppose any bill to privatise higher education which may emerge from the green paper.

### **HE13 (EP) HE Green Paper and Teaching Excellence Framework**

Conference notes:

1. that the green paper and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) take place within a wider shift to a consumer model of education, including: the use of flawed metric systems and graduate employment outcomes for measuring teaching excellence; the raising of tuition fees beyond £9K; and further competition by private providers
2. the negative implications for academic freedom and equality, and perverse incentives to 'game the system' (similar to REF).
3. the success of the Cradle to Grave conference and the second HE Convention.
4. the importance of debating the implications of the HE green paper and TEF within branches and regions, particularly those outside of London.

Conference resolves:

To commit union resources to make campaign resources available for organising local and regional public meetings, with NUS where possible, to raise awareness and debate the consequences of the HE Green paper and the TEF, and how to oppose them.

### **HE14 (EP) The green paper and TEF**

Conference notes:

1. that the green paper on higher education is a blueprint for more private providers in HE and for privatisation of existing institutions
2. the TEF is a means to help achieve this, masquerading as an attempt to improve teaching quality
3. the proposed use of invalid teaching quality measures, such as employability, destination of leavers and lifetime income
4. the threat to certain disciplines from these measures, notably the arts
5. the insidious introduction of management observation of lectures at London Metropolitan University.

Conference calls upon the NEC to lead a coordinated campaign of lobbying and industrial resistance to the plans described in the green paper.

## **HE15 (EP) The HE green paper, women and gender equality**

HE Sector Conference notes with concern some possible adverse implications for gender equality in the higher education green paper. These include:

1. the proposed growth of private for-profit providers and the impact of their employment practices on casualisation, equal pay and equal opportunities
2. the proposal that HE providers can exit the sector rapidly and the implications for female students who are unable to relocate easily because of domestic circumstances including caring responsibilities
3. the extent to which research and teaching on gender studies will be supported by the new private providers
4. the possibility that metrics used for TEF will encourage discrimination against female staff and students.

HESC resolves to campaign for full equality proofing of all proposals to change the landscape of the HE sector and to ensure that issues of gender equality are fully addressed in the debate around the green paper.

## **HE16 LGBT equality and inclusiveness in HE and the TEF**

Conference notes with concern the proposed teaching excellence framework including student survey links to assessment of teaching. Conference notes that student feedback is open to bias. There is danger that bias can lead to targeting LGBT staff, including backlash when LGBT staff challenge negative attitudes.

Conference calls on UCU to:

1. produce guidance about LGBT inclusiveness, its relevance to HE teaching and learning and how it can be advanced by branches. This should focus on how LGBT inclusion is central to positive working environments and can help determine student choice
2. clearly advocate that wherever family is promoted, including the 'Family Test', it be LGBT inclusive
3. review and report on HEI recording cases of LGBT discrimination
4. campaign for discrimination to be considered a significant factor in some negative student feedback and for mechanisms to be implemented to mitigate against the impact of this. Include information about this in campaigns about the TEF.

## **HE17 (EP) Teaching Excellence Framework, metrics and equality**

HE Sector Conference expresses concern about the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and specifically the reliance on quantitative metrics to measure teaching quality: 'Employment/Destination', 'Retention/Continuation' and 'Student Satisfaction'.

HE Sector Conference believes such metrics do not meaningfully or accurately measure teaching quality and contribute to discrimination in HE.

HE Sector Conference notes research at the University of California which found female staff consistently receive lower scores on module evaluations; and at the University of Reading demonstrating lower NSS scores for courses taught by black staff.

HE Sector Conference believes the focus on graduate destinations ignores the role of socio-economic privilege in the jobs market.

HE Sector Conference resolves for the UCU campaigns team to produce campaign materials for branches to publicly debate and campaign against the TEF with NUS and relevant equality groups, highlighting the implications for equality, and if implemented to research the equality impact of the TEF.

### **HE18 Disabled staff and the Teaching Excellence Framework**

Conference notes that the green paper for HE, 'Fulfilling our Potential' has damaging implications for the funding and governance of UK higher education. The metrics contained in the 'Teaching Excellence Framework' replacing HEFCE, DfA, OFFA will affect disabled workers disproportionately through micromanagement of lecturers by managers coupled with increased student evaluations and feedback. These metrics could lead to higher level of stress, a worsening of pre-existing mental health conditions, disciplinary action, or could be used as criteria for redundancy.

Conference resolves to:

1. campaign against the TEF and brief branches on implications of the TEF for disabled staff.
2. argue for academic freedom and allowing lecturers to teach without fear
3. organise public meeting/demonstration in parliament coinciding with the first or second reading of any bill and involve disabled members.
4. include disabled members rights in consultation on TEF with the government, demanding reasonable adjustments to mitigate any disadvantages.