

1. TEFinitely not! Campaign against TEF, and for boycotting the NSS

This idea would involve campaigning against the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and boycotting the National Student Survey (NSS) with specific actions outlined in the third section of the proposal. In 2017 the NSS will run from 6 February 2017 to 30 April 2017.

This Union Notes:

Westminster plans to raise undergraduate tuition fees above £9,000 using the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which is included in the Higher Education paper currently progressing through parliament.

If fully implemented, the TEF will assess the quality of teaching according to questionable metrics; these TEF results will enable institutions to raise their fees.

The main three metrics used to measure 'teaching excellence' are:

- The National Student Survey (NSS), which measures final year students' satisfaction.
- The retention rate of students at the university. (How many students complete their degrees).
- The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DLHE), which looks at the employment status of students six months after graduation.

The TEF will give every Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) institution a gold, silver or bronze award depending on how they score on the NSS and other metrics.

Institutions which score highly in the TEF will be able to raise fees in line with inflation from 2017-19, followed by even higher fees in years to come.

This Union Believes:

That this iteration of the TEF is fundamentally flawed.

The TEF will have severe ramifications for the dynamics and shape of the higher education sector, entrenching inequality between providers and running counter to the government's ambition to widen participation and enable social mobility. The reforms fundamentally contradict the idea of education as a public service.

Changes to HE should be in the interests of students, not profit. Education should be a public good without restriction.

That the TEF will incentivise universities to focus on meeting the metrics of the TEF and progressing in league tables, rather than encouraging better quality teaching. Further, that teaching excellence can never be fully measured or reflected by these metrics.

There are many reasons to oppose the NSS, for example, it discriminates against BME academics, it is centred on crude, narrow evaluations of 'customer satisfaction' rather than genuine dialogue and democratic feedback, and exerts undue pressure on staff due to potential penalizations imposed by Universities because of low survey scores, pitting students and staff against one another.

Boycotting the NSS and the DLHE will disrupt the introduction of the TEF.

That the NSS is, nevertheless, the university's primary tool for directly acquiring feedback and instigating improvements within departments.

This Union Resolves:

To mandate the sabbatical team as a whole to campaign against the TEF in its current form owing to the implications for fees and the university learning environment.

To mandate the President to write an open letter to the Vice Chancellor expressing the Student Union's concerns about the TEF, and to call on the University to publicly condemn the TEF and use its influence in Universities UK and the Russell Group to campaign against the TEF.

YUSU will explore other vehicles for students to provide the university with qualitative feedback, with a view to improving future students' experience.

To organise a boycott of the NSS and DLHE i.e. encourage students not to participate this year.

In addition to:

1. Refusing to promote the NSS or have any pro-NSS material in any SU media channels;
2. Running a campaign collecting pledges from final year students to boycott the NSS;
3. Working with UCU to discourage the NSS promotion by academics and encourage academics to actively promote the boycott instead;
4. Promoting the boycott through posters, leafleting and social media especially when the survey is released.
5. Taking part in national actions and demonstrations linked to opposing the marketisation of higher education.