

Tom Guise – Vice-President Democracy & Resources

NUS Delegate Report

Annual Conference 2010 Newcastle Gateshead

I was not elected by a cross-campus ballot to be one of your delegates to NUS Conference. I had to fill a place at last minute due to one of our delegates dropping out. Unfortunately there was not enough time to hold another election, or ratify the decision in Guild Council. I think it's only right therefore, that I present an extensive report on the decisions I made on your behalf. I'm more than happy to answer questions relating to this report, in Guild Council or via email t.guise@guild.bham.ac.uk

Detailed information can be found here:

<http://www.officeronline.co.uk/events/nationalevents/276866.aspx> but I am also happy to answer any questions personally.

University of Birmingham delegates received special box seats, indicating their importance on the national scene.



Motions*

Motions at NUS conference are much like at Guild Council in format. The policy recommendations document can be found here;

http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/NC2010_CD11_FinalProposals.pdf

There were amendments which were voted on but I haven't listed them here. If you have a specific question on an amendment please let me know.

If a motion isn't listed below but is in the policy document it means there was not enough time to debate that motion due to the NUS' guillotine rule that limits the time of debate. Just in case anyone asks about my view on it, no I don't like the idea of shutting down political debates. It was used as a tactic by the various political factions to extend the guillotine via procedural motion and this led to even less debate on other key issues later in the conference.

Higher Education Zone		
Motion	Voted	Result
301 Higher Education Funding	For	Passed
302 National Student Survey	For	Passed
303 Complaints & Appeals	For	Passed
304 Assessment & feedback	For	Passed
305 Quality	For	Passed
306 ICT and tech-enhanced learning	For	Passed
307 Part-Time Students	For	Passed
308 Hidden Course Costs	For	Passed
309 HE Achievement Record	For	Passed
311 Uniting Unions	Against	Passed

Society & Citizenship Zone**		
Motion	Voted	Result
401 Votes at 16	For	Passed
402 Electoral Reform	For	Passed
403 Influencing Parliament	For	Passed
404 Neighbourhood	For	Passed
405 Local Citizens	For	Passed
406 Safe & Cohesive Communities	For	Passed

Union Development Zone		
Motion	Voted	Result
501 Campaigning & Activism	For	Passed
502 Student Activities	For	Passed
503 Participation & Engagement	For	Passed
504 Changing Membership	For	Passed
505 Finance & Governance	For	Passed
506 Communications	For	Passed
508 Engaging Postgrads	For	Passed
509 FE Union Development	Abstained	Passed
515 RAG & Fundraising	For	Passed
517 Supporting Council Chairs	For	Passed

Welfare Zone		
Motion	Voted	Result
601 Student Accommodation	For	Passed
602 Private Rented Sector	For	Passed
603 Neighbourhood & Community	For	Passed
604 Crime	For	Passed
605 Health Costs	For	Passed
606 Sexual Health	For	Passed
607 Mental Health	For	Passed
608 Pastoral Care	For	Passed
609 Finance & Debt	For	Passed
610 Transport	For	Passed
611 Students as Workers	For	Passed
612 Student Parents	For	Passed
613 Faith & Safety	For	Passed

*The NUS group their policy sections into 5 'zones', Higher Education, Further Education, Society and Citizenship, Union Development and Welfare. As a HE Delegate I did not participate in any debates or elections relating to Further Education. I personally take the view that I was there to represent HE students and that my participation in FE debates would have been unfair and unrepresentative.

**The Society & Citizenship Zone had very little time for debate due to the guillotine rule used by NUS which places strict time-limits on debates. The order of conference debates is decided by a priority ballot which is open to all delegates and Soc & Cit often comes last. Throughout conference the guillotine was challenged leading to very little time at the end for Soc&Cit.

Elections



The winners of the full-time officer elections. I voted for all unless specified.

President – Aaron Porter

Vice-President Higher Education – Usman Ali (**I voted for Charlie Leyland**)

Vice-President Further Education – Shane Chowen (**I did not vote**)

Vice-President Union Development – Ed Marsh

Vice-President Society & Citizenship – Susan Nash

Block of 15

This is a group of 15 part-time officers who work with the full-time officer team. I voted in order of preference for the following candidates.

1. Thomas Graham
2. Danni Grufferty
3. Rachel Wenstone
4. Pete Mercer
5. Emily-Ann Nash
6. Amer Reza
7. Lynne Brown
8. Sophia James
9. Andrew Hartley
10. James Pickin
11. Javed Anjum Sheikh

Student Trustee Election

I first preferred Fabian Neuner.

Reports

NUS publishes reports on its activities which are approved at Annual Conference. I voted in favour of all the reports to be approved, except the report on Further Education, and I have detailed some of the reasons behind. These reports can be found here:

http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/NC2010_CD5_Zone_Reports_0.pdf

Higher Education Zone

The NUS has further developed its tuition fees campaign. This has been a national priority campaign 'Funding our Future', and has seen town takeover events across the country and the Vote for Students campaigns that commits politicians to sign a pledge to not vote for tuition fee increases.

The HE Zone reported back on work carried out on the student experience, assessment & feedback, post-grad study and supporting students in the recession.

I voted to approve the report.

Society and Citizenship Zone



The best way to describe this zone is to compare it to work the Guild carries out on ethical and environmental, community and democratic engagement issues. This makes this zone a special interest for me.

A key element of the zone over the past year has been the development of the Vote for Students campaign. The zone has also campaigned for political rights for students in Burma, HE improvements in Iraq,

sustainable green impacts on campuses and votes for 16.

I voted to approve the report.

Union Development Zone

This Zone focuses on the support that NUS provides for constituent member unions in relation to democratic engagement on our campuses and student activities in particular.

The VPUD reported of the work of the activist academies that were held across the country turning union officers and key individuals into campaigning activists. These are being further developed and a bigger roll-out is expected next year. We also heard about work being done to develop and support key unions in the Arts institutions and further education.

I voted to approve the report.

Welfare Zone

This zone incorporates the work our VP Welfare does but with some extra responsibilities for housing and community safety.

We heard about awareness campaigns for student employment rights. Due to the delays in processing student loans, the NUS have been lobbying behind the scenes with vice-chancellors and prominent housing providers asking for leniency with payments.

The zone has also been campaigning to strengthen the tenancy deposit protection scheme.

I voted to approve the report.

Trustee Board and NEC

This report included updates on the work of the Trustee Board and recommendations from the Appointments Panel of external Trustees which I approved.

It also included a more admin/clerical update of the NEC and I liked the table used to show attendance at NEC meetings. *Perhaps it's something that the Guild should adopt for the Officer Group meetings?*

Accounts and Estimates

I voted to approve the Accounts and Estimates. For the first time in 10 years NUS is reporting a surplus and the finances are in good hands. More money is being spent and devoted to campaigns, not just the priority campaign, but also campaigns for the liberation associations and in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

However, I felt that there was not enough time for delegates to scrutinise the accounts and the National President only had 10 minutes to present them. I have made this view clear to NUS and I hope next year there will be more time for financial scrutiny.

Censures on officers

Wes Streeting was censured for not doing enough work on the Palestinian conflict. I voted to reject the censure as I thought Wes has spent his time developing NUS' higher education priority campaigns and building a financially stable national union. The censure did not pass.

Bellavia Ribeiro-Addy, Black Students Officer and Daf Adley, LGBT Officer were censured for their behavior during the Durham affiliation referendum. Bell and Daf had sent a letter to Durham Students Union expressing concern and threatening officers for allowing their debating society to host BNP members in a debate. They had also spoken to the Vice-Chancellor at Durham. Their actions on behalf of NUS were awful and they at no time attempted to speak to the students union about their views. This led students to call for an affiliation referendum which voted overwhelmingly for Durham SU to disaffiliate. I voted to censure both Bell and Daf. Bell's censure passed but Daf's fell. Both votes were very close.

Final thoughts

2010 conference was my first experience of Annual Conference and my first experience of Newcastle!! Great city, great nightlife! ☺

I immensely enjoyed the experience even though it was a lot of hard work for delegates. It was interesting to see the politicised nature of the event. Some people think we do factions in the Guild but you don't know what a faction is until you see it at annual conference. Slating in elections is a must and to win you simply must have decent factional support. I don't really know whether that's good or bad on the national level. I certainly don't mind factions and I think they can be good as long as you're open about it. Labour Students and Far-left candidates always put their political views on their manifestos but Organised Independents do not and I think if you're open and honest about your politics then no one can really criticise you. It's important to know what people's values are to a certain extent.

I didn't find it all too overwhelming, the sessions were chaired very well with clear explanations as to what a yes or a no vote meant in each instance so it was very easy to follow. I would encourage this practice to be built into our own Guild Council meetings.