**Vice-president National Union of Students National Conference Report**

*This is Mauro’s conference report – the below is his explanation of how and why he voted on various motions at NUS conference.*

* **General Conference feedback**

We had three days of attending a range of workshops that had different aims. Some were solely for digging deeper into policies and having discussions with the proposers, to either suggest amendments or have a better understanding. Other workshops were put in place to encourage networking which is beneficial as you can meet Sabbs/delegates from bigger/smaller SU’s.

Personally, I have found networking at NUS great as we are able to give each other ideas. For an example, the “Give it a go” initiative the SU are implementing, was from a conversation we had at NUS**.** Similarly, I spoke about our Active Bystander pilot and the members were really interested in it.

From attending the sessions, I believe decolonising the curriculum and implementing support mechanisms for students with poor mental health is something most universities/SU’s are attempting to tackle now. To a certain extent, we are facing the same issues as others so there is an opportunity for the unions to campaign and solve issues together.

The conference was really well organised, with numerous discussions being facilitated through zoom breakout rooms. Having the opportunity to speak to the policy proposers was terrific, as we could have relaxed discussions on the problems they are trying to solve. Additionally, we are able to suggest amendments to proposals, so it was good to have an input.

* **Candidate votes**
  + **National Scrutiny Council -** National Scrutiny Council (NSC) members are elected to scrutinise and examine the work of [NUS officers](http://nus.unioncloud.org/our-officers-volunteers) and hold them to account. NSC supports the work of NUS UK and supports the delivery of the Plan for Action. As well as providing scrutiny and oversight, members can get involved in ‘wraparound support’ for officers, ensuring they are effective.

## AYSHA SAEED - UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND STUDENTS' UNION

Aysha has been focusing on welfare policies and making sure there is support accessible to students with poor mental health. Coming from an SU with a similar size to us, Aysha aims to encourage NUS to support the smaller institutions and ensuring that welfare issues are still at the heart of our union.

## AKANSHA AGRAWAL - DURHAM STUDENTS' UNION

Akansha has previous experience in auditing which means she will have the skills to analyse and scrutinize campaigns. Akansha stated “The pandemic will not be an excuse for any negligence and the campaign must be unbiased!” which is true, many people are using the pandemic as a reason to why they have not kept high standards, and it is excellent that Akansha has recognised that.

## IJLAL KHALID - UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX STUDENTS' UNION

I voted for Ijlal as he has a lot experience working on important campaigns at his SU. Campaigns such as promoting anti-racist spaces and supportive, inclusive communities. This is a lot of the work NUS are currently doing so his knowledge and experience will be useful when ensuring that the NUS stays true to being a campaigning force.

1. Sara Bafo
2. Adam Roberts
3. Seun Twins
4. Saqlain Riaz
5. Lotte Marley
6. Maliha Reza
7. Ellie Gomersall
   * **Democratic Procedures Committee -** Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) is all about running NUS’ democracy in a fair, impartial manner. The job of DPC is to set and implement rules to make sure our democratic spaces run well. This committee is made up of nine students, elected at NUS National Conference each year to represent student views and run our democratic spaces.
8. Anna Marshall
9. Meg Price

* **Policies voted for**
  + Fees and Finances – voted FOR

“*Fighting for financial relief on the education received since the start of the pandemic. Free education remains a priority, with the goal of investing in an educated community, which will lead to a better society. In the short-term, the Government should provide a full fee rebate for this academic year. This should be followed by a plan to scrap tuition fees, and fully fund education going forward. Within this, there may be negotiation around year-on-year fee reductions*”.

I feel like this is something our students would like to support as in the past year we have recognised their frustrations and disappointments with the way this academic year has gone.

* + Mental Health – voted FOR

“*The aim is to transform the structures which currently produce the conditions in which mental health problems are sparked and exacerbated within education institutions, with the ultimate vision being a higher education system which places students and their wellbeing at the heart of university policies and structures. Universities and Colleges will have properly funded mental health support for all those who need it, but this will be combined with a proactive preventative approach to addressing problems that can impact students’ mental health*”.

Extremely relevant to everyone in society. Our physical, mental, and social wellbeing will go through ups and downs throughout life and our academic journey in general. It is important we have the support mechanisms in place and not let funding prevent having these measures in place.

* + Sexual violence, NDAs and Relationship Abuse – voted FOR

## “*This policy will increase the awareness and understanding for the issues of sexual violence and relationship abuse within student life and will help drive institutions to update themselves to provide sufficient support for students experiencing these issues*”.

## The proposers (Sheffield Hallam Students' Union, University of Strathclyde Students' Association, University of York Students' Union) stated that almost two third (62%) of students and graduates have experienced sexual violence at UK universities, which is a concerning statistic. Therefore, it is pivotal we are aware of the current issues and have access to resources and funding to support those who are experiencing these issues.

* + Erasmus+ – voted FOR

This policy commits NUS to raise awareness around the deficits of the Turing scheme and highlight to students and the public that it does not equate fully to Erasmus+

* + Student Housing – voted FOR

“*If this issue was solved, students across the country would receive adequate compensation for the time they were unable to use the properties they have paid for, reducing financial hardship and stress for students at this time. There would also be legislative changes to regulate the way that student rental contracts operate, stopping the exploitation of the current student housing market*”.

If only this policy was in place before the pandemic. I know a lot of our students faced many hurdles due to their housing/rent situation, so it was appropriate to vote in favour of this! If anything else happens in the future, the legislative amendments will hopefully improve student rental contracts as the moment, they are extremely difficult to get out of.

* + Cost of Living – voted FOR

“*Universities should be lobbied to make clear the real costs of being a student and the additional activities they promote as being part of the student experience, such as engaging in sports and societies, eating on campus and accommodation beyond first-year university managed provisions*”.

This will help the transition into university as some students struggle balancing their finances. It will also give students realistic expectations for when they go to university. This policy is inclusive, focusing on different types of students such as apprentices, disabled students, mature students, students with caring responsibilities etc. Some ideas they have include equalising minimum wage and pushing for living wage increases across the board, offering short- and long-term financial aid, reviewing transport costs etc.