

NUS Conference - What's Happening?

And why should you care?

Remember in Surrey Decides when you were given the option to elect NUS Delegates?



Well #NUSNC16 is their time to shine!

The National Union of Students (NUS) holds its annual conference in Brighton next week, and ~delegates~ representing Students' Unions around the UK will all gather to vote on the policies they want the NUS to follow for the year to come.

Some of the policy proposals this year include:

nus
NATIONAL
CONFERENCE
2016



**'Should the NUS boycott the
National Student Survey?'**

'NUS and the NHS'

**'Solidarity with migrants
and refugees'**

So, who is going from Surrey?

Each Union is allowed to bring a certain number of representatives to NUS conference, depending on the student numbers at their University. We will be sending 4 people – Mustie Smith (current Union President), Alex Mackenzie Smith (current VP Activity) and Becky Ibbotson (Union Chair) who were all elected during Surrey Decides in March. Munya Mudarikiri (your current VP Voice) who goes to NUS Conference as part of his role at the Union, will be attending alongside them. You can watch the conference unfold live online [here](#).

What happens at Conference?

Every Union attending the conference is allowed to submit motions to be debated. Motions are documents which set out what that Union feels the NUS policy should be on a certain issue. So, for example, if a Union felt that the NUS should do more work to support mature students, they would create a policy setting out the reasons why, and what they feel should be done. If this is voted through at conference, it would become NUS policy for the year to come, and it should be acted on by the leadership of the NUS.

Decisions you should look out for...

NUS Conference, as standard, has **loads** of motions that will need to be discussed. You can read all of the motions [here](#), but just in case you don't have time, your delegation has picked out some key highlights:

Should the NUS boycott the National Student Survey?

A key motion in the higher education section of the conference is for the delegates to decide whether the NUS should launch a national campaign boycotting the National Student Survey (You guys probably know this as the NSS). The NSS is a key survey across all Universities and contributes hugely to league tables. Surrey does well in this survey, and as a result has seen a rise in the student experience league tables in recent years.

The UK government has recently announced a plan for the NSS to be a measure as part of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) – which may make it possible for some Universities to charge higher fees, using the survey outcomes to prove that they are offering excellent teaching.

Some Unions believe that the NSS is not fit for purpose and should not be used as a measure in the 'TEF', and other Unions believe that by boycotting the NSS and encouraging students not to fill it in, the UK government will review or possibly abandon its ideas altogether.

~This will be a key motion and one of the first to be debated~

NUS and the NHS

The NHS has been in the news a lot lately, with government cuts to services and the negotiations on the Junior Doctors' contract changes. Strike action has been taking place at NHS trusts around the country, against the new contract being imposed on doctors.

This motion is for the NUS to fully support the campaigns against cuts to the NHS, including the Junior Doctors' strike action. Some Unions would like this support to manifest itself in a national demonstration. The debate over whether the NUS should support protest action is likely to be a large part of the discussions at conference.

Many Unions feel that demonstrations have a real impact, can highlight issues in the national press and can push decision makers to take a different course of action. However, other Unions believe that joining a demonstration of this nature is unlikely to appeal to their student members, and that the best course of action would be to show solidarity with those affected in other ways, such as by lobbying government ministers and writing articles in the press.

The PREVENT agenda

The PREVENT agenda is the government's strategy to combat extremism from developing on campuses and in educational establishments around the country. It has always been a controversial topic and it's a strategy that the NUS have been against from the beginning, because they believe it labels certain students from different religious groups. You can read more about these issues here.

At Surrey, we are supporting this motion to 'Prevent the PREVENT agenda' – and we have helped to produce the motion that you'll see in the pack. However, your delegation believe in order to combat the negative impact of 'PREVENT', we need to make sure that we take part in the debate with the government and other bodies who do support PREVENT. There are some Unions who believe that to combat this scheme, we need to not take part in any discussions, and that the student movement should be distancing itself from the strategy completely.

Solidarity with migrants and refugees

This is a topic that can't be escaped in the national news in recent months and this motion sets out what the NUS should be doing to highlight the problems faced by migrants and refugees across Europe. The motion asks NUS to condemn the UK government for not taking enough action, and for the UK government to allow for more migrants and refugees to come to the UK.

Some Unions have proposed changes to the original motion that's been submitted, and want to make sure that the NUS works with the organisation Student Action for Refugees, and also to support some Students' Unions to become migrant and refugee welcome centres.

Changes to the way voting happens at conference

Towards the end of the conference, a series of motions will be debated which look at how the NUS conducts conference itself, the roles that exist within the NUS structures, and how these roles are elected. A few of these motions discuss making changes to the conference, so that delegates who are unable to be there in person can vote electronically, or so that students can directly vote for who they want to be their NUS President, rather than for votes to be cast through an elected delegation.

These issues are likely to be debated – with some Unions feeling that it is unfair that decisions are only made at conference by whoever is 'in the room' and other Unions believing that everyone is given an equal chance to be present, therefore voting in the room is the only fair option.

How can I stay informed?

The conference is streamed online, where the most dedicated students can watch the debates as they happen. For those of you who want to be able to see the key highlights, we will be live-tweeting from the NUS conference to let you know which motions pass, and how your delegation has been voting.

Join in by tweeting: **#NUSNC16**

You may not be going to Brighton, but we hope you'll be with your Union in spirit!



@ussuvvoice



@ussupresident



@ussuchair



@ussuvpactivity