

Committee Title	Student Voice					
Date of Meeting	12 th February 2018					
Item Number and Title/Subject	Scottish Government Student Support Review					
Paper Presenter	Kevin Campbell, Student President					
Brief Summary of Issues/Topic	In the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, NUS Scotland effectively campaigned and achieved a review of student support. For over a year, NUS Scotland have been part of the Review Group Board. The independent Student Support Review, "A New Social Contract for Students in Scotland" has now been published. The attached NUS Scotland briefing sets out the proposals that are included in the report, and what NUS Scotland is calling for next.					
Recommendation(s)	Information		Discussion	X	Approval	
	<p><i>Any member can ask a question by raising their voting card and being recognised by the Chair to speak.</i></p> <p>Student Voice is asked to discuss the recommendations within the Student Support Review, as outlined within the NUS Scotland briefing.</p>					
Who have you consulted when developing the paper?	Executive Committee					
Staff/Student Protocol	Yes		No	X	N/A	
Will any decision approved directly affect the work of staff?						
Should the paper be submitted to any other committee following its consideration/approval at this meeting? If yes, please state the committee and proposed date of submission.	No					

The independent Student Support Review, “A New Social Contract for Students in Scotland”

In the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, we campaigned for a review of student support, which we won. For over a year, we have been part of the Review Group Board. The independent Student Support Review, [“A New Social Contract for Students in Scotland”](#) has now been published. This briefing sets out the proposals that are included in the report, and what NUS Scotland is calling for next.

In summary, the recommendations include:

- An entitlement to a total of £8,100 financial support for further and higher education students, tied to the cost of living
- A proposal to significantly increase bursary support to over £4,000 for the poorest students in both further and higher education
- Changes to the terms and conditions of student loans, including raising the loan repayment threshold, and a write-off of further education student loan debt for students moving from further to higher education course
- Ensuring a positive interplay between benefits and the student support system, to ensure no-one in receipt of benefits is financially worse off by accessing education
- Choice on timing of student support payments
- Replacement of the 100 per cent attendance is replaced with a flexible and fair attendance criteria

A minimum income of £8,100

The report recommends that all full-time further and higher education students will receive a guaranteed minimum income of £8,100, calculated on the basis of the Scottish Living Wage.

This is a substantial increase to the current level of student support. This year further education students who receive support will receive a maximum of £97.33 a week, the equivalent of £3,893 over 40 weeks. This compares to a maximum of £7,250 annual support for higher education students. This system means students are discriminated against based only on their level of study, rather than any personal circumstance – and does not reflect the cost of living which all students face equally.

Improved bursary support

The report commits to protecting bursaries, and sets out a number of options for how this guaranteed minimum income could be reached, in terms of the mix of bursary to loan.

Of all the options set out, the option NUS Scotland prefers is a 50/50 mix of loan to bursary, as this would deliver the greatest increase in bursary support, reaching £4,050 for the poorest students. Ultimately, however, the final decision on how student support will be funded will be for the Scottish Government to decide.

NUS Scotland will continue to campaign for substantial investment in bursary support for further and higher education students. And, in the longer term, we will continue to campaign for all students to have a right to guaranteed bursary through a Universal Living Grant.

A better deal for graduates repaying student loans

Currently, graduates in Scotland start repaying loans once they earn over £17,775. This is substantially lower than in England and Wales, where the threshold is set to increase to £25,000.

The report recommends that the Scottish Government increases the graduate loan repayment threshold to £22,000, and that remaining debt from student loans is written off in full after 30 years – instead of the 35-year repayment period in place at present. In the longer term, it is recommended that the Scottish Government should consider increasing the threshold to £25,000.

A positive interplay between benefits and the student support system

While entitlement to student support can be positive, and creates financial security for many students – entitled support can automatically count as income, whether you take the full amount or not, and have negative consequences for benefits payments.

The report includes a recommendation on the development of a new special support payment system to ensure no student loses their benefit entitlements.

Choice on timing of payments

Currently students have no control over the timings of their support payments, and students are left with no support over summer months. We'd like to see a payment system which gives students options, including spreading their support payments over 12 months rather than nine, and more flexibility on when or if they receive the 'double payment', which higher education students currently receive at the start of the year.

The student support review recommends that students are given choice on the timing of payments, "within set pre-defined parameters."

A new attendance policy for colleges

Currently, students at college have to have a 100 per cent attendance rate, with limited self-certified absences in order to receive their bursary.

**The Independent Student Support Review,
"A New Social Contract for Students in Scotland"**

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We believe that attendance should not be tied to student finance and any attendance policy should instead be written from a welfare and pastoral perspective.

The Student Support Review recommends that the current 100 per cent attendance is replaced with a flexible and fair attendance criteria, with the introduction of new national guidance that is both fair and flexible, and consistent with further and higher education.

Contact information:

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch:

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