

# POLICY PROPOSAL

Policy number 2016/17-5  
Passed on 8th December 2016 at policy round

TITLE: BOYCOTT THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

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## INTRODUCTION

The government's proposal for reform to Higher Education has been widely criticised by the National Union of Students, and by the University and College Union.

As part of the reforms, the Teaching Excellence Framework will rate a university's teaching, and will partly be based on the results of the National Student Survey. Universities that score highly will be permitted to raise their tuition fees in line with inflation – students in 2017/18 will pay £9,252, and fees will reach £11,800 by 2026.

The NUS has announced a nationwide boycott of the NSS in order to invalidate the results, and thus hinder the government's attempts to increase fees and marketise Higher Education. The Students' Union should join the NUS in taking action against the government's deeply flawed proposals.

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## REASON FOR CHANGE

### Considering

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) is completed by final-year undergraduate students in order to rank universities across the country.
2. The NSS is likely to be one of the metrics used in the Teaching Excellence Framework, which itself could be linked to higher fees (1).
3. Research has shown that the NSS systematically discriminates against black and minority ethnic academics (2).
4. The NUS is mandated to organise a national boycott or sabotage of the NSS as part of a strategy against the government's reforms to Higher Education.

### Bath Students' Union recognises that

1. The NSS is a tool for marketisation, and is used to standardise Higher Education, pitching incomparable teaching practices against each other, and ranking universities to fuel a notion of "value for money".
2. The focus on an academic style of learning disproportionately affects art and other specialist institutions that do not fit this framework.
3. The NSS is counterproductive to creating liberated, autonomous universities.

(1) <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/higher-education-white-paper-key-points-glance>

(2) <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/biased-students-give-bme-academics-lower-nss-scores-says-study>

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## THE PROPOSAL

### **Bath Students' Union will**

1. Organise a boycott of the National Student Survey, including:
  - a. Refusing to promote the NSS
  - b. Promoting the boycott through posters, leafleting, and social media.
  - c. Educating students and staff about the problems with the NSS.
  - d. Working with the UCU to encourage staff to actively promote the boycott.
2. Work with the University and UCU to create a local, non-metric-focused alternative to the NSS, to assess and thereby improve students' learning experiences.
3. Campaign for the NUS to disaffiliate itself from the NSS.

(1) <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/higher-education-white-paper-key-points-glance>  
(2) <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/biased-students-give-bme-academics-lower-nss-scores-says-study>