

# POLICY PROPOSAL

TITLE: END THE BOYCOTT OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

PROPOSED BY: REBECCA ELLIOTT

SECONDED BY: RODDY JAQUES

---

## INTRODUCTION

This Policy Proposal aims to end the Students' Union's boycott of the National Student Survey (NSS).

The House of Lords have recently rejected plans to link the Teaching Education Framework (TEF) to tuition fees. If the House of Commons accept this amendment, the TEF will not be allowed to be used to determine the fees an institution charges, or the number of students they can recruit.

Also, the positives of the NSS greatly outweigh the reasons to boycott, as explained in this Proposal. Therefore, the Students' Union should no longer support the boycott, so the results of the NSS can be used as evidence to benefit current and prospective students.

---

## REASON FOR CHANGE

### Considering:

1. The NSS is completed by final year undergraduates to give feedback on their time at university, to make their voice and opinions heard.
2. The results from the NSS are made public to help prospective students to make informed choices when considering university.
3. The NSS is used by Students' Unions to help identify strengths and weaknesses to improve university for current students. By boycotting, the Students' Union cannot use the data attained from the NSS in campaigning on the issues that really matter to students, like the Library, assessment and feedback, and learning resources
4. On March 6<sup>th</sup> 2017, the House of Lords rejected plans to link TEF results to rising tuition fees and increasing recruitment of students.
5. Feedback given through the NSS contributes to University rankings, by boycotting the survey the University could fall in the rankings and this could damage the reputation of the University and the value of degrees from it.
6. Despite the boycott by the NUS and the University of Bath Students' Union, response rate to the NSS is at an all-time national high, and Bath is on track to hit the 50% target required to be counted in the TEF, so the boycott has not worked, meaning resources used to actively boycott have not had the desired effect and could potentially be better used elsewhere.
7. The TEF uses data from the last three years, so three years' worth of *successful* boycotting is required for this campaign to be successful.

8. Out of the approximate 600 Students' Unions in the UK, only 30 Students' Unions have chosen to take part in the boycott of the NSS. At the University of Bath Students' Union, although the policy was passed, only 1.3% of students voted for the motion to boycott the NSS, an incredibly small percentage of the student body.
9. This NSS boycott is not a one-off action. Once passed, policies are live for four years.

**Bath Students' Union recognises that:**

1. The NSS is vital for the Students' Union in gathering information to lobby the university to improve aspects such as increasing the size of the library or improving feedback from assessments.
2. Poor results within the NSS can be a catalyst for major reforms within academic departments.
3. There is no suitable alternative available with a high enough response rate, so data previously used by the Students' Union cannot be found elsewhere.
4. Even with response rates at a normal level, the Students' Union will be unable to use the results from the 2017 NSS as evidence to create positive change within the University due to their boycott action and distancing themselves from the survey.
5. The Students' Union uses data from the NSS to inform its "Top 10" every year. Loss of this data will make the identification of areas for improvement difficult.
6. The Students' Union has a good working relationship with the University. Taking action such as boycotting the NSS has the potential to damage this relationship, and so creating positive change in the future could become more difficult.
7. The NSS is still linked to the TEF.
8. The NSS and several of the additional question banks that come with it are used to provide feedback on the Students' Union itself, so it can continue to improve its services and opportunities for the student community.

---

## THE PROPOSAL

**Bath Students' Union will:**

1. Cease the boycott on the National Student Survey, including:
  - a. Ceasing the promotion of the boycott through posters, leafleting, emails and social media.
  - b. Educating students and staff about both positives and negatives of the NSS, so students can make an informed choice of whether to partake.
2. Continue to use the results from the NSS to inform Students' Union activity such as the "Top 10" in order to better the student experience at Bath.