

Section 6: Shaping the Future of Learning...

Introduction

New technology and expansion are set to change the learning experience of students, and at the same time, mergers are also going to have a huge impact on the type and mode of study institutions offer. I want our movement to be a step closer to our goal of tertiary education: high standards of teaching for all and where the student experience is not hampered by technology but to benefit from it. Universities' borrowing restrictions and the lack of state investment has accelerated the privatisation of student accommodation, with some devastating effects. This year, I have supported and attended students' unions taking actions against mergers and hall privatisation.

On the quality front, I have actively campaigned to defend the function of the QAA and for robust quality assurance mechanisms. I have also successfully campaigned for the abolition of the visitor system and for the introduction of a faster, fairer and independent student complaints system.

Over the coming year, I will ensure this area of work, often ignored, but vital to the quality of learning and teaching for our students, is prioritised. I will support unions responding to mergers and work with QAA & LSC to open up our institutions to public scrutiny and ensure they are delivering high standards of teaching and learning for all students.

Accountable post-16 Education

The threat of GATS and the increasing reliance on private sector investment poses huge obstacles to the accountability of institutions to both the taxpayers and to students. Universities and colleges are entrusted to use public money to provide education, and yet they are under little scrutiny to meet their obligations. Post-16 education institutions must provide accurate and reliable information on quality, service provision and how they spend public money. This information should be comparable with other post-16 institutions so potential students and parents can make informed choices, and the government can target their resources better. I will prioritise working to reform the way post-16 education is governed and is accountable to students. I will continue to support the role of the QAA to ensure we get value for money for our education. I will also work with the VP FEUD to secure local and national representation for students on the Learning and Skills Council.

Personal Development

Training and vocation is increasingly playing a central role in post-16 education. Many institutions offer students modules to aid their personal development. The

voluntary work in students' unions and in the community is too often ignored, and yet students develop new and valuable skills through them. As President, I will work with UUK for the full implementation of Progress Files and a national accreditation scheme to recognise the work students do outside the classroom.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Increasingly students demand and expect a high quality of teaching and learning. It is right that as part of our campaign for a better funding system, we lobby ministers for the investment to maintain high standards. It is ironic that a schoolteacher is expected to attain teaching qualifications and yet to teach in Universities no such standards apply.

Next year, I will work with Institute of Learning and Teaching to encourage university lectures to be trained through the ILT programme, and will actively lobby vice-chancellors to meet the cost of training their staff.

Effective student feedback is vital in shaping the future of teaching and learning. Institutions that actively involve their students in reviewing their learning programmes enhance both the quality and learning experience of students. I will continue to lobby the DfES & UUK for the implementation of a comprehensive 'Students Satisfaction' survey to gather student opinion. I will develop a national e-mail network of school, faculty and course representatives with a view to facilitating discussions and developing a model standard of learning and teaching that meets the demands and expectations of students.

Responding to Mergers

Mergers between universities and colleges are increasingly taking place, and too often students' unions do not even get consulted. This creates insecurity for many of our teaching and support staff and threatens the existence of local students' unions. Students are forced to change courses or move to different campuses halfway through their studies.

NUS must be in a position to support local union responding to mergers. This must also include providing legal support where unions have decided to challenge mergers. I will provide unions with briefings on mergers, including information on recent mergers and their impact on students and students' unions.

Enriching Further Education

Curriculum 2000 was designed to give further education students choice and flexible learning; but two years after its introduction, many colleges remain reluctant to fully implement the enrichment agenda of Curriculum 2000. Many FE students continue

to be denied the opportunities to develop their personal skills and get involved in extra curricular activities.

Next year, I will work with the VP FEUD to lobby for the full implementation of the Enrichment Agenda and give FE students the opportunity to enhance their learning experience.