

Naomi Beecroft #1 for VPHE

I'm running for VPHE as a principled anti-cuts activist and member of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts. I believe we should build a serious, militant movement against the government's dismantling and privatising of education – not just waiting around until the next election – and that we should put liberation at the heart of improving access to education.

Education should be liberating, and we need a movement that fights oppression and puts liberation issues at the forefront. I will make NUS fight against misogyny and sexism, racism, anti-LGBTQ bigotry and ableism, as well as classism and the economic and social structures that create poverty, oppression and misery.

People running for this position often use a baffling array of buzzwords – like 'access' and 'widening participation' – without explaining what they mean. Normally, they are a piece of rhetoric, designed to make passive and tired policies look vaguely progressive and shiny. Meanwhile, for the last three years, NUS has actively betrayed those of us who have actually tried to have a fight the government.



To really widen participation and access, we need to make university free. Just as importantly, university will never be genuinely accessible whilst women, black people, disabled people, LGBTQ people and poor people are systematically oppressed.

If I ever produce a toolkit, it will tell campus activists how to run serious large-scale campaigns, how to organise in departments, what to do if you get attacked by the police, and how to fight university managements over cuts. It wouldn't tell you to sit around and wait for the next election while repeating the words "quality" and "access" over and over again. Winning small battles is important, and NUS needs to fight harder on anonymous marking, accessible buildings, and gender neutral toilets – but it also needs change its political approach. The NUS must become militant in its battle against fees, cuts and privatisation. These are not abstract ideas, but processes that are affecting real students every day: we are more financially precarious than we ever have been before.

Over the past few years in particular, oppressed students have been systematically disempowered, disadvantaged and ignored by almost all parts of the political spectrum. The financial barriers that the main political parties create and have created keep working class people out of higher education. NUS's fight against the increase in tuition fees was weak at best. In 2010, when underprivileged and angry students attacked Millbank Tower, the NUS leadership scabbed – condemning those directly involved, and those involved in occupations and protests thereafter. These protests were not perfect, but NUS tragically failed at providing the support that it should have.

And, over the past few months, much of the so-called left has often also had little to offer students. This summer, when women students attempted to no platform George Galloway for being a rape apologist, certain 'leftwing' factions – Student Broad Left and the SWP – opposed their desire to do so.



Misogyny in the student movement is rife – and we cannot brush it under the carpet.

The student movement can be a radical force in the fight for societal change; Chile and Quebec show us exactly what a grassroots, militant student organisation can do. I want the UK to also be on that list. To achieve this we need an NUS that recognises strikes, occupations and marches are part of the process in which we fight for the best interests of our universities.

My priorities if elected:

- Campaign for a truly free education system - this doesn't just mean no tuition fees, or a half-baked attempt at 'access' like a graduate tax. It means no fees and a full living grant.
- Fight for autonomous liberation. Education will never be accessible while racism, sexism, LGBTQ-phobia and ableism are systemic.
- Democratise universities: put the power to decide what is taught and how it's taught in the hands of students and staff.
- Campaign for free childcare on all campuses.
- Fight discrimination in academia: we need to see more people from minorities involved in our education.
- Secure better pay and working conditions for post-graduates and PHD students whose cheap labour is exploited by universities.
- Support the UCU – cuts and privatisation are harming our lecturers, we should be at their side in their fight for better pay, pensions, and the battle against job redundancies.
- Unionise all student workers and implement the living wage in all our institutions.
- Oppose the UKBA's xenophobic immigration controls. International students are a vital to our HE system, we need to fight against deportations and invasive monitoring. **I stand for open borders.**
- Fight to increase funding for part-time students.
- Protect the right to dissent on our campuses- no to injunctions, victimisations and manipulation.
- Campaign for liberation sabbaticals on all campuses.

