

Vote

# Jesse Dodkins

for VPFE



## My Record

As a student rep at Exeter College, I've been helping to organise the fight against the brutal attacks on Further Education (FE). Whether it's been campaigning against cutbacks or joining protests on spiralling student debt, this year I've been to the fore in struggle to secure a decent future.

Working as part of the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign, I've helped organise protests against super-exploitative zero-hours contracts, low pay and job insecurity. That's because I believe all of us deserve the chance of a decent, secure job paid a real living wage. I've helped build solidarity between students and education workers as well.

When the recent strikes took place, I proudly stood on the picket lines alongside my lecturers. When the far-right, racist EDL organised a march through my city I was at the forefront in helping to organise students from my college to join a counter-protest. If elected to be VPFE, I hope to have the chance to lead the struggle nationally and help build a genuinely fighting NUS - one that stands up for all students.

## Serious action to defend FE

The vicious Con-Dems think FE, vital for millions of working class people, is an easy target. We're facing severe attacks from multiple angles. Over £250 million was cut from the FE budget in the last spending review, and that comes after a 25% cut in funding since 2010. Meanwhile, government funding has been slashed for students aged 24-26, new FE student loans are saddling tens of thousands of us with crippling debt, and the crucial lifeline of EMA has been cut. Given this dire situation, producing reports and lobbying MPs is not enough. NUS must take responsibility for mounting a serious, mass campaign to defend FE, and win access to decent education for everyone.

- If elected I will:
- 1. Fight for a mass, national demonstration** - properly organised and mobilised for - in which demands on defending FE are featured just as prominently as those related to HE
  - 2. Organise a 'Defend FE' campaign** which can be taken up on every campus in the country
  - 3. Prepare and mobilise for protests, student strikes and college occupations.** These should be organised across the country
  - 4. Oppose all cuts to FE funding** and fight every attack that occurs, be it at local or national level
  - 5. Build links with trade unions and workers in struggle.** Only by fighting alongside college workers and others, will we be able to halt the cuts and secure a decent education for everyone

**socialist  
students**



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## Free Education

Many people incorrectly assume that FE is free to access. This is not true. Thousands of FE students are struggling to pay fees on their courses, and the government has recently set up a student loan system leaving us in a similarly dire situation to university students. NUS must demand FE is free of charge to all learners. This is the only way to make FE genuinely accessible.

Like many of my fellow college students, I have ambitions to one day go to university. But the prospect of being saddled with £50,000 worth of debt makes me worried I won't be able to. University fees aren't just an issue for HE students, the fight for free education is one which affects everyone in society. That's why I oppose all tuition fees and will fight for free education. Enormous wealth exists in society – the problem is it's in the wrong hands. I say make the rich 1% pay for education – not us!

If elected I will:

- 1. Fight to abolish all fees in FE**
- 2. Demand the new loan system is abolished and replaced with grants to support students living costs**
- 3. Make these central demands of a 'Defend FE' campaign**
- 4. Work alongside campaigners in HE fighting for free education and for an end to spiralling student debt**
- 5. Support a fully funded, democratically run, publicly owned education system - free and accessible to all**

## Bring back EMA (but make it better!)

EMA was a lifeline relied upon by thousands of students. It's time NUS organises a serious campaign to bring it back. This should be mounted nationally, demanding this government, or any future Labour one, reverse this vicious attack. But we can make local demands as well. Tower Hamlets and Southwark councils have funded a replacement for EMA. If they can do it, there's no reason why others can't do the same. We must demand EMA is improved as well as restored. £30 a week is inadequate and EMA was only available to some 16-19 year olds in full time study. We must demand that it is extended to all FE and sixth form learners, whatever their age or background. Because £30 a week doesn't cut it, we should call for grants that genuinely cover the cost of living.

## Decent Jobs

As a member of the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign and a low-paid, part-time worker myself, fighting for real jobs - with secure contracts and a living wage - has been one of my focuses over the last year. It's fine to talk about employability, but what students entering the 'world of work' really need is more jobs. There are currently more than five job seekers chasing every vacancy. In addition to that, those of us in work are often in precarious, zero-hour style jobs. This isn't good enough. We need to fight for the government to carry out a mass programme of job creation and we should help to organise young workers to take on the super-exploitation of zero-hours contracts and casualised employment. I'll work with Youth Fight for Jobs and the Bakers' Union initiated Fast Food Rights coalition to help build the struggle for a better deal for young workers.

I say:

- 1. Fight for a mass government programme of job creation**
- 2. No minimum wage exemptions for young workers and apprentices**
- 3. Fight for a real living wage**
- 4. Flexibility for us, not our bosses - scrap zero-hours contracts**

## Democracy in FE

It's vital that we improve democracy within FE and increase participation in NUS by FE students. We need to ensure all officer and delegate positions in FE students unions are subject to campus wide elections. We should reinvigorate students unions by organising decision making general meetings to get students involved in campaigning and allow them to set the agenda. I'll fight for greater students union representation on college governing bodies and a genuine say in how things are run.

## Solidarity & Liberation

FE is particularly important for working class people and offers opportunities to students who have often been locked out of education because of various forms of disadvantage. Cuts and attacks on FE disproportionately affect women, LGBT people, black and Asian students as well as those with disabilities. If elected I'll make sure issues that affect all these groups are featured heavily in our campaigns and help make sure FE students unions make fighting sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism and all prejudice, a central part of their work.