

Hi! I'm Lewis, the current Education & Employability Officer at Sussex SU, and I'm running for Vice President for Higher Education at NUS.

I'm standing because students are being failed: by the government, by regulators, and frankly by NUS for not being bold enough. I'm already doing this work both locally and nationally, and I want to scale it up.

Some of the things I've delivered in my 18 months at Sussex:

- Changed university policy to allow greater flexibility for working students.
- Delivered, alongside the Sussex4Palestine campaign, a Socially Responsible Investment Policy that has divested millions from unethical companies
- Saved students over £500,000 in bus fares by cutting student ticket fares
- Frozen rents on our cheapest accommodation to keep education accessible
- Continued supporting liberation groups and pushing their work towards a national movement

Here are my promises to you:

Supporting students through cost of living crisis and tackling rising bills

I've successfully pushed for rent freezes at Sussex.

Nationally, I want to:

- Campaign for expanded maintenance grants for **all** students who need them - not just students studying courses that the government decides are important (oh, and not just £20 a week...)
- Support sabbatical officers to achieve rent freezes and better living conditions, challenge rent hikes and end exploitative accommodation models.
- Pushing for the NUS trading consortium to keep prices low for students in our SU bars and shops

Campaigning for International students

Despite being a home student, it's blatant to me that international students have the roughest deal. International students are not 'cash cows'. They should not be the ones keeping the sector afloat, and the government must invest properly in HE and maintenance grants must not be funded by international student fee hikes. I will fight the international student levy, lobby for an extension to the graduate route visa and to remove the threshold for this. International students should be allowed to bring dependents on their student visa, and should not have to pay a surcharge to access the NHS. I will advocate for the removal of the 20-hr work restriction to provide international students with better financial independence and reduce reliance on unfavourable work conditions.

Fighting for free education and against marketisation

Obviously, we all think that education should be free (but in the capitalist hellscape that we live in) we need to fight where we can to stop the further marketisation of HE. I've been fighting the impacts of the new TEF (teaching Excellence Framework) and it being linked to tuition fees over the past few months, and I believe that NUS isn't doing enough to fight this.

As VPHE I would:

- Pressure government to stop “Super-TEF”
- Challenge the OfS on TEF implementation
- Organise the student movement nationally to resist further marketisation (and hopefully reverse it!)

Student health & disability justice

Students should be able to register with both a home GP and a university GP. This is a simple, practical win, especially for disabled students and those with long-term conditions. I will campaign for the government to reform Personal Independence Payment (PIP), so that it is fair, and accessed based on need, not on the economic or social capital of the applicant.

Supporting marginalised communities

No student should face discrimination due to their gender, identity, sexuality, disability, race, religion, and class. Students deserve the freedom to live authentically and experience a life filled with joy.

Seeing the OfS punish Sussex for protecting trans students has only compounded my want for better for our Trans+ community. I want to make this fight national, working closely with VP Liberation and student communities to ensure the government and HE institutions take Trans issues seriously. Trans rights are human rights and Trans people should have the right to access gender affirming care. This gender affirming care should be freely available to all on the NHS. Transgender students should have access to facilities: both physical (e.g. bathrooms) and recreational student activity (e.g. sports clubs & societies). BUCS and sports' National Governing Bodies should be inclusive and allow participation of all students into their preferred category.

I want to support women (and other marginalised genders) in the call to make misogyny a hate crime, to push the government into taking action on gender-based violence, and finally making public harassment illegal.

Palestine and International solidarity

Over the last 18 months I've worked with SUs, sabbs, and student campaigns, to push for divestment, institutional accountability within NUS, and protection for students punished for peaceful protest. I completely condemn the systematic killing of civilians in Gaza, the occupation of the West Bank and Israel's continued escalations in the Middle East. I call for a permanent ceasefire, unimpeded humanitarian access and greater engagement with the Palestinian state now it has been recognised by the UK government. I believe that NUS should be cutting ties with organisations believed to have links with settler-colonial practices, and advocating for divestment across the education sector, and further, at a national level. NUS must be a genuinely liberatory organisation- not one that looks away when it's hard.

If these priorities resonate with you, I'd really appreciate your no.1 vote and/or endorsement.

And if there's something you feel is missing, or a priority you want to see represented, I'd genuinely love to talk. I hope that my manifesto shows that I do achieve what I promise and that it ensures that if I get into this role that I will fulfil my promises, actively listen to others' concerns and stand up for students' rights to make sure that our voices are heard!

Thanks so much for your time. Please shout if you need anything at all; you can find me at @votelewis4NUS.

In solidarity,
Lewis

Happy voting :D