

Shaik Mohammed Qasim
Candidate for Vice President for Further Education - National Union of Students.

Power. Protection. Progress for FE.

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Four years ago, I moved to the UK as a student dependant.

I have experienced this system not as a policymaker – but as a student navigating immigration rules, financial pressure, and the realities of Further Education.

I served as the President of Leeds City College (2024/25) and I am currently a Campus Officer. I have seen first-hand what works – and where FE is structurally neglected.

I am running for NUS Vice President for Further Education because FE deserves more than symbolic representation.

It deserves power.

It deserves protection.

And it deserves structural change.

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WHAT I HAVE DELIVERED

During my leadership at Leeds City College. I;

- Strengthened student voice structures across campuses
- Represented 25,000 students across 7 campuses and 3 colleges on different levels of college (Group/college board, various committee meetings)
- Improved engagement between students and senior leadership
- Advocated for cost-of-living awareness and practical student support
- Built stronger accountability between officers and students

But change just locally is not enough.

We need change nationally.

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MY NATIONAL PLAN

1. FE Student Union Funding

FE students deserve representation that is resourced, structured, and independent.

Right now:

- FE student unions operate without a protected national funding framework
- Most rely on discretionary budgets from college
- Many colleges have no fully functioning union
- Handful of colleges fund full-time officers
- Student representation is dependent on the goodwill of the institution, not entitlement

If elected, I will:

- Campaign for better and protected student union funding in every FE institution
- Push for national minimum standard for FE unions
 - Democratic structures
 - Funded sabbatical roles
- Professionalise student leadership in FE
 - National FE leadership development programmes
 - Stronger coordination between colleges through NUS

2. Cost of Living Support

No student should choose between heating and education.

The cost of living crisis hits FE learners more unequally.

FE students are more likely to:

- Live in households with low-income
- Work part-time alongside studies
- Care for family members
- Study without maintenance-style financial support

Current support structures, including 16-19 bursary fund, focus mainly on course related costs, not actual living expenses.

Systems of application vary between colleges and adult learners are left without meaningful support.

If elected, I will;

- Campaign to expand the 16-19 bursary fund to cover essential living expenses
- Push for universal free meals for FE learners who may be disadvantaged
- Advocate for bursary adjustments that are linked to inflation
- Incorporate financial coaching with wellbeing support

3. Mental Health in FE

Mental Health provision in FE remains inconsistent and scarcely resourced

While schools and universities benefit from clearer national structures, FE occupies an unclear and ambiguous space.

- Mental Health Support Teams coverage is incomplete
- Adult students and apprentices are often excluded
- Waiting times can be long

FE learners face unique pressures: Financial insecurity, uncertainty around immigration, instability in employment and caring responsibilities and yet FE is not properly prioritised in the national mental health design.

If elected, I will:

- Fight for dedicated, protected national mental health funding for FE
- Fight for 100% coverage of Mental Health Support Teams
- Campaign for national minimum service standards
- Promote peer-led mental health advocacy and leadership training

4. Immigration and international FE students

As someone who moved to the UK as a student dependant, I understand this system personally.

International FE students are essential to our colleges and local economies – yet they face unfair barriers.

Unlike HE learners, many college students,

- Do not qualify for graduate route visa
- Must quickly get a Skilled Worker sponsorship

- Meet with salary threshold concerns that do not include entry-level vocational roles

The UK faces skills shortage in care, construction, engineering and hospitality, yet FE graduates who have trained for these areas are blocked from staying.

If elected, I will:

- Campaign for a post study work route for FE grads.
- Push for salary threshold adjustment aligned with occupations with shortage
- Advocate for fair dependant policies for mature learners
- Ensure that FE voices are integrated in national migration conversations

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Structural Change within the NUS

FE should not be a secondary thought within national student politics

If elected, I will:

- Strengthen FE coordination across regions
- Campaign for better union funding
- Push for better mental health support across colleges
- Increase visibility of FE issues in campaigns, nationally
- Better communication between local FE unions and NUS
- Publish transparent progress updates all throughout my term

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My Values

I believe in:

- Transparency and honesty
- Structural change over temporary fixes
- Difficult conversations over comfortable silence

I've a lived experience of leadership and a commitment to meaningful change

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Further Education teaches and educates millions and trains the workforce and yet it stays underfunded and underrepresented, which must change.

My name is Shaik Mohammed Qasim
I have led locally
Now I'm ready to fight nationally

Vote **Shaik Mohammed Qasim** for
VPFE at the National Union of Students

