

# STATEMENT OF COMMON CAUSE ON SCOTLAND'S UNIVERSITIES

Universities Scotland, NUS Scotland and UCU Scotland share a common interest in working for a university sector which provides wide opportunity for learners of all ages and backgrounds, which provides the quality of experience which learners deserve, which values the professional contribution made by staff and which is at the centre of an ambitious, successful Scotland.

We stand ready to work together constructively with the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament on the areas outlined in this statement of common cause.



nationalunionofstudentscotland

Universities  
Scotland



**UCU**  
University and College Union  
Scotland

## **SUPPORTING AN ACCESSIBLE AND INTERNATIONALLY COMPETITIVE UNIVERSITY SECTOR**

We support the Scottish Government's commitments to a university sector which is "internationally competitive and truly excellent in world terms" and to maintaining student numbers throughout the period of the Parliament. We welcome the Scottish Government's promise to fill any comparative funding gap between Scottish and English universities. Collectively, we look forward to working with the Government to re-assess the required levels of funding to meet this commitment once the impact of other developments across the UK have become clear.

## **A SYSTEM WHICH MEETS LEARNERS' NEEDS**

We believe there should be diverse routes to graduation which reflect learners' diverse needs and aspirations, and which build on the flexible spine of the Scottish four-year degree. As part of that, we wish to work constructively with the Scottish Government and with the school and college sectors to ensure that routes through college to university-level study are clearly signposted, and that learners are able to enter university at the point which best reflects their prior learning (for example where learners bring Scottish Baccalaureate or HN qualifications which make them well fitted for entry to the second or third-year of a degree course).

As part of meeting learners' needs, we believe the Scottish Government should improve the overall regime for part-time learners, many of whom currently face up-front costs for university study.

We recognise that a system which meets learners' needs requires adequate resources at school and college level as well as at university level.

## WIDENING ACCESS

We strongly believe that university study should be equally open to any learner who can benefit from it, regardless of their social or economic background. We look forward to working with the Scottish Government to promote action which helps every learner to realise their full potential. This will require action at pre-school, school and college levels as well as continued support for universities' outreach to learners from challenging backgrounds.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

We want every student to succeed at university and we recognise that financial pressures can be a major barrier to successful completion of studies. We want to see student hardship reduced, and support the Scottish Government's commitment to further progress on this front.

## RESEARCH

It is essential for Scotland to be a major force for research and innovation. We believe every learner at university should be able to study at an institution where teaching is informed by engagement in high-quality research.

## GOVERNANCE

We share an interest in the autonomous, effective and transparent governance of universities with management involving staff and students in a collegial way in the decision making process. This should be based not only on institutional autonomy but also individual academic freedom to protect scholarship and research from political or business motivated interference.

There will be times when UCU, NUS Scotland and Universities Scotland have different perspectives on issues. In these cases we will each offer MSPs our straightforward advice.

However, at the heart of the work of Universities Scotland, NUS Scotland and UCU Scotland is a strong set of shared values about the central contribution which universities can make to changing people's lives for the better, and to realising MSPs' ambitions for Scotland.

We believe the priorities should be to:

- meet the funding gap;
- maintain places;
- increase the opportunities for flexible degree-level study in Scotland;
- improve the system for part-time students (particularly in relation to part-time fees);
- boost rates of widening access;
- improve student support;
- ensure high quality research;
- promote the best possible governance structures involving staff and students in a collegial way in the running of institutions.

We will work in partnership together to deliver on these priorities where we can and we look to the Scottish Government to realise its promises in these areas, to enable us to meet these ambitions in full.



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