

General Election 2017

A manifesto from the University and College Union Scotland

May 2017

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To avoid a brain drain of international talent, we need to send the message that staff and students from around the world are welcome in Scotland.

Education is the cornerstone of every successful economy and society. Learning boosts people's skills, increases their employability, enhances individual wellbeing and improves productivity, bringing benefits both to the individual, the economy, and to society as a whole.

Education is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, however there are a number of important areas reserved to Westminster which have a massive impact upon Scotland's higher education sector. Ahead of the general election on 8 June, this manifesto sets out the key issues we are asking the incoming UK Government to address.

PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF AND STUDENTS

Our global workforce is a key strength of the education sector, and international staff and students make a hugely valuable contribution to our colleges and universities. However, the government's focus on reducing net migration, along with the refusal to guarantee the rights of European citizens working in the UK after Brexit, means the future for international staff and students is uncertain. To avoid a brain drain of international talent, we need to send the message that staff and students from around the world are welcome in the UK. Thousands of overseas staff and students are currently living, studying and working in Scottish universities. To avoid a brain drain of international talent, we need to send the message that staff and students from around the world are welcome in Scotland.

What should we do?

- Immediately guarantee the right to remain of EU citizens working and studying in the UK.
- Remove international students from the net migration target.
- Reintroduce the post-study work visa in Scotland.
- Communicate a positive and welcoming message to international staff and students.

SECURE AN EFFECTIVE POST-BREXIT SETTLEMENT FOR UNIVERSITIES

UK universities – including the 19 Scottish higher education institutions – all benefit from collaboration, funding and study exchange programmes operating within the European Union. Scottish universities received over 111 million euros from the EU Horizon 2020 research funding programme in the first 18 months of the initiative.

What should we do?

- Seek to secure continued UK participation in the Horizon 2020 research and innovation framework programme for the remainder of the current programme.
- Continue access to Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes.

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- Develop successor initiatives to the European Regional Structural and Investment Funds.
- Maintain freedom of movement for EU staff and students.

OPPOSE MARKETISATION IN EDUCATION

The Higher education and research Act introduces alarming concepts of privatisation and competition into the sector in England. The UK government has linked further tuition fee rises in England to a Teaching Excellence Framework, risking quality and the international reputation of the sector. Just five Scottish universities have signed up to the next phase of the Teaching Excellence Framework, but this does set a dangerous precedent for the sector in Scotland.

What should we do?

- Oppose for-profit provision within further and higher education throughout the UK.
- Oppose the Teaching Excellence Framework and any proposed link to tuition fees.

INVEST IN THE EDUCATION WORKFORCE

Employment rights are reserved to Westminster, and universities see thousands of staff employed on zero-hours contracts. We need a more sustainable approach to building the education workforce of the future, and better protection for employment rights.

What should we do?

- Eradicate zero-hours contracts and strengthen duties on employers to offer secure employment.
- Promote action on excessive workloads.

THE PREVENT DUTY

The Prevent duty requires university and college staff to have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’, but in practice it risks undermining the relationship between staff and students, restricting academic freedom and stifling the right to question and challenge ideas with which we disagree. Staff take their duty of care towards students seriously, but the ability to debate difficult issues, question received wisdom, and advance new ideas within our education institutions is essential.

What should we do?

- End the use of the Prevent strategy in education.

ABOUT UCU SCOTLAND

The University and College Union Scotland is the largest union and professional association for staff working in higher education. Across the UK we represent around 100,000 academic and professional staff, in Scotland we represent over 6,000 staff in universities and higher education institutions. We campaign for greater public investment in post-school education as well as for fair pay and decent working conditions for our members.