

Written evidence submitted by the National Union of Students

NUS Written Submission to Education Committee inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services

Introduction

1. The National Union of Students (NUS) is a confederation of almost 600 students' unions, amounting to more than 95 per cent of all higher and further education unions in the UK. Through our member students' unions, we represent the interests of more than seven million students. NUS represents students and students' unions to ensure that education is transformative, skills and learning are accessible and every student in the UK is empowered to achieve their potential.

Executive Summary

2. NUS carried out a survey of 9,827 students across higher and further education between Friday 27 March and Monday 6 April to discover their views on how COVID-19 had affected them. In the survey 20% of students reported that they were unable to access their education online and 33% of students did not agree that the education they were receiving was of adequate quality. This means they are at a critical risk of losing out on this year of education.
3. Despite suggestions that fee reductions or refunds would not be due to students where 'adequate online teaching', there is not a clear definition as what counts as adequate teaching. Placing the responsibility on individual students to make individual complaints is neither equitable nor efficient.
4. All students must be given the opportunity to redo this term of education, receive reimbursements for tuition fees paid upfront, or have this term's debt written off.
5. Given the disruption caused by COVID-19 no compulsory examinations should be taking place at this time and instead students should be graded on previous work.
6. The Covid-19 pandemic has crystallised and exacerbated a pre-existing crisis in affordability and rights for student renters. Inadequate maintenance packages and soaring rents have forced students to rely on wages, family income and commercial debt to pay their rent and these income streams are not sustainable in the current crisis.
7. Students who no longer require their university accommodation due to the closure of campuses, whether for this academic year or next, must be offered no-penalty releases from their tenancy contracts.
8. Our survey has demonstrated that 80% of students are concerned about their ability to manage financially during the outbreak, with this even more common among disabled students. The government should provide £60million of hardship funding to enable colleges and universities to provide support to their students who are in financial need.

9. In recognition that this year's cohort of education leavers will be entering the job market at a time of recession and will likely face increased rates of unemployment, we believe that the government should provide a grant to all education leavers to incentivise further study.
10. Students' unions provide vital services which students rely on for support and representation however many are at great financial risk as a result of the pandemic. If students' unions were no longer to be financially viable this would massively impact on the student experience for learners across higher and further education.

Impact of COVID-19 on teaching

11. COVID-19 has had a massive impact on all students, as campuses have closed and all teaching has been moved online. While institutions have been quick to respond to the crisis this does not mean that students are able to engage with learning, or receiving adequate support at this time.
12. Our survey of 9,800 students revealed that 20% of students who had been offered online learning were unable to access their education online and 33% of students did not agree that the education they were receiving was of adequate quality. While it is clear that effort is being made to put provision online, and staff especially should be commended for this, it is not adequate that students are dissatisfied with their learning experience.
13. The unique difficulties that disabled students face have not always been addressed by universities or government, with 21% of those who receive learning support saying they have not received adequate support to enable them to continue their work to the best of their ability throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.
14. Our survey found that of those who have a placement as part of their course, over three in four believe the current Covid-19 outbreak will have a negative impact on their ability to complete their placement and similarly for those on vocational courses around four in five believe the Covid-19 outbreak will have a negative impact on the vocational element of their course.
15. We have heard evidence that international students are not able to access key course content in their home countries due to restrictions.
16. Many students do not have adequate resources to learn at home due to a lack of space, poor technology, bad Wi-Fi connections, or other responsibilities such as childcare or looking after family members. While government announcements to help institutions direct funding to provide technology to students are very welcome, this will not be adequate for all students and for those who do benefit they have already missed out on many months of teaching.
17. Apprentices have also reported not having space to study or learn during COVID-19. After years of apprentices saying they do not receive their off the job training apprentices are reporting doing even less training whilst working from home or on furlough. NUS endorses the National Society of Apprentices' (NSoA) ask that the government return to a day release

model of training. The government should pay the wages of apprentices on day or block release.

18. The impact is exacerbated for certain groups of students such as those on performance-based courses. Many specialist institutions that provide these courses are not set up to provide any form of online learning and have therefore experience more problems in responding to the crisis as it requires a major cultural shift. Furthermore, students often will not have the resources they need, such as musical instruments or space to practice, to continue studying or access to collaborative work that is crucial for their teaching. These students would like to see greater clarity from the government and a recognition of the unique issues that they are facing.
19. Whilst some universities and colleges have been able to provide innovative methods of teaching for their students, this is not always the case for the majority of students. Certain examples of teaching methods that have allowed courses to continue during this period should not be used as arguments to deny the negative experiences of other students.
20. Even for those students who do have the technology necessary to benefit from online learning the effects of currently studying during a global pandemic often mean they will struggle to engage with their teaching. In terms of individual priorities throughout this pandemic, students very understandably rank their health first, followed by education and then finances.
21. The Petitions Committee recently published a report calling for more financial support for students in light of the disruption of COVID-19. As part of this the Committee recommended that *“given the importance of the higher education sector to the UK economy, and the exceptional circumstances facing both universities and university students, the Government should consider providing additional funding to universities to enable them to pay any refunds university students are entitled to as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. The Government could also consider alternative means for reimbursing students, where an independent process has found that they are entitled to a refund, such as reducing student loans of students who are entitled to a refund.”*¹
22. The same report also called on the government to work with the OfS and the OIA *“to establish a new system which enables all students to easily seek a full or partial refund of their tuition fees, or to repeat part of their course”*.²
23. We have heard evidence from our members that they are dealing with increased numbers of students contacting them with wellbeing concerns. Students are reporting increased levels of isolation, with these issues exacerbated for international students who may be working on different time zones and therefore unable to communicate with their classmates. While universities and colleges have been working admirably to support students at this time the nature of trying to study during a global pandemic needs to be recognised and students should be supported to make decisions that are right for them, including having the option to pause their education and redo this term at no extra cost.

¹ Petitions Committee, Second Report - The impact of Covid-19 on university students, 13th July 2020

² Petitions Committee, Second Report - The impact of Covid-19 on university students, 13th July 2020

24. The fairest option for all students is to give everyone the ability to retake the entire year of their education at no additional cost, in recognition of the disruption caused. Access to redo the year must be combined with extended eligibility for maintenance support, to ensure that it is an affordable option for all who choose to do so.
25. If students choose not to redo the term then they must have any fees they have paid in 2019/20 reimbursed or debt written off. For home and EU students who have paid fees via student loans, this should occur by cancelling or writing off any related student loan debt and any interest accrued. For international students and others who have paid upfront, this should occur through direct reimbursement, with universities and colleges accessing a central fund to underwrite this cost.
26. For those who opt for reimbursements or write-offs we have been careful to ensure that these proposals do not risk institutional sustainability, as we recognise the enormous financial difficulties facing institutions at this time. Instead we propose that the governments across the UK collectively write-off any debt accrued for this term's education and that the UK government establish a central pot of funding, with equivalents established through the Barnett formula, to which institutions can submit claims to reimburse their international students and any others who have paid up front. This would be in line with the recommendations of the Petitions Committee. We recognise there may be specific student groups who need tailored solutions such as allied healthcare students.
27. A whole cohort of students would lose faith in the UK's education system if they are not financially reimbursed for missed teaching. It would also result in these students who are likely to graduate during one of the most severe recessions this country has ever seen being saddled with extraordinary levels of debt without the student experience to show for this.
28. Prospective international students are highly likely to know someone who is also studying abroad in their chosen destination, and these students can be influential in the decisions prospective students make, be that in regard to institution, course or country of study. For international students, who have paid many thousands of pounds, a failure to provide some financial recompense will be seen as enormously unfair, and risk damaging the reputation of UK higher education. With opportunities for international recruitment set to decline it is essential that institutions provide all international students with a positive perception of their experience of the UK's education system.
29. Without clear definition it is impossible for students to judge whether their online learning has been adequate. While the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Office for Students (OfS) have issued guidance to providers on what adequate teaching involves, similar information has not been provided to students.
30. The current processes set up to deal with complaints are not adequate to deal with the level of complaints that we are likely to see as a result of Coronavirus. The Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) received 2,371 complaints in 2019, if even 1% of students in higher education were to complain to their institution and have this passed on to the OIA this would represent roughly a tenfold increase in the number of complaints they had to deal with.

31. Students are still likely to seek reimbursements and we are sure that some will be successful. But the fairest option for all students, and the best way to ensure that the current complaints processes are not overwhelmed is for the UK government to take a national approach.

Examinations and Assessments

32. Coronavirus has impacted every area of education, with its impact on students' final qualifications and exams an overwhelming concern for 72% of students. Across the board 85% of students are worried about exams and assessments.
33. Two of the hardest hit groups of students are those on vocational courses and on placement, and disabled students. Three quarters of students on a placement are concerned that it will have a negative impact on their ability to complete it, and a 79% of those on vocational courses are concerned that the vocational element of their course has been negatively impacted. Those who receive support to learn at their institutions are severely impacted by the move to online learning. Only half of those in receipt of support agreed that they continued to receive adequate support to work through the pandemic. Disabled students were also more likely to have financial concerns than non-disabled students.
34. Unsurprisingly four in five students ranked their health as the number one priority during the Covid-19 outbreak. In a worrying time, 91% of students tell us they are worried about someone in their family and 63% of students are worried for themselves. This demonstrates that the attention for many students is very understandably elsewhere and student welfare must be prioritised at this time.
35. Given the significant pressures on students it is important for the entire sector to prioritise their welfare above everything else. It is vital that there are no compulsory exams this year. Institutions should take this opportunity to implement better practices in assessing students on work completed through the entirety of their courses, rather than one-off exams, and learn from this in their future teaching.
36. For those in further education we have engaged thoroughly with Ofqual on the processes for examinations this year. We accept that through the approach they have taken they have attempted to protect student opportunity.
37. However, all of the proposed approaches would likely replicate or worsen existing inequitable impacts on marginalised students, in particular Black and Disabled students. We recognise that any approaches that could effectively mitigate these equality impacts were likely outside of the potential approaches Ofqual has been commissioned to take, however we do believe more work could be carried out by the Department for Education to better understand these effects and attempt to minimise them.
38. We very much support proposals that ensure consistency and certainty for students, regardless of location, including measures to prevent regrading of results downwards at a later stage due to appeals. We would propose a much broader and in-depth appeals approach, in order to give the option to students and educators to critically examine inequities generated or sustained by the approaches Ofqual proposed.

39. We would highlight that the approach Ofqual proposed was reactive and did not consider sustainability beyond this examination period, which may not reflect the reality of successive waves of infection and lockdown, or generate a more equitable approach than the pre-Covid-19 status quo.
40. Many universities have already taken measures to remove compulsory examinations and introduced 'no-detriment' policies, which NUS very much welcomes. However, it is unfair for students that the uptake of these are not universal and will mean that students will be disproportionately affected by the pandemic. While we recognise the importance of institutional autonomy in higher education, we do not believe that it is right that students should universally face massive levels of disruption without any agreed measures on how examinations in higher education should be carried out.
41. NUS' proposed options for final year assessments were that students should be able to choose to complete and graduate with a grade given based on their prior attainment. Some final-year students may have felt that a grade based on their previous performance would not have been an adequate reflection of their ability. If they wanted to graduate or complete their courses this academic year and wanted the opportunity to take an exam or submit a dissertation, they should have been given this through a redesigned, open-book exam format or a flexible submission deadline. Students who wished to, should have had the option to extend their time in education to complete their degrees. This could mean deferring this term to take place in the Autumn. This should be at their own discretion and made possible through self-certification. It should absolutely be at no cost to the student, and further discussions should begin on the financial support available for students to do this.
42. There are unique problems for certain groups of students that may have had to be dealt with separately. For instance, students studying for practical performance-based degrees were often told to submit a recorded portfolio or accept an aggregated mark. This ignored the fact that many students did not have access to adequate recording equipment or other equipment, such as musical instruments or the space for performances. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have access to this equipment. For these students we wanted to see options to extend their time in education explored to allow them to perform their final showcases, continue to use resources available at their institutions and benefit from the kickstart into creative industries that this provides.
43. It is likely to be the case that the full impact of COVID-19 on student progression will not be immediately apparent. We would urge the Department for Education to work with other bodies such as OfS and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to evaluate any quantitative data that they have more urgently than normal time periods entail. This should particularly focus on where non-continuation rates and attainment gaps may have worsened for certain groups of students.

Student Accommodation

44. In the UK in 2018/19, 551,000 full-time higher education students lived in the private rented sector (PRS), predominantly in Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). A further 513,000 students lived in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) owned and operated by a

mix of universities, for-profit companies and a small number of charities and housing associations.

45. A long-standing crisis in affordability for student renters has meant that student maintenance loans do not cover the cost of rent for most – and many do not receive this funding at all. Students rely on wages and family income to pay their rent and both of these income streams have been badly hit by Coronavirus.
46. Nearly three in four students are concerned about their ability to pay rent as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. One in three are 'very' or 'extremely' concerned. Financial concerns over rent have to be seen in the context of students' wider financial situations. 95% of students are concerned about the economy, and 81% about their own job prospects.
47. Three out of five students we surveyed were in part-time, full-time or casual (0-hour) employment. Of these students, 85% of FE and 87% of HE students said that their work has been affected by Coronavirus. On top of this half of students say that the income of someone who supports them financially has been impacted by Covid-19, with one in five saying it has had a major impact.
48. Students need access to additional financial support to help pay their rent, through a £60m national student hardship fund and rent suspensions for the duration of the crisis. To prevent financial difficulties for student tenants being exacerbated further down the line and to ensure any government financial support is effective there must also be a universal ban on in-tenancy rent increases for 12 months and a moratorium on all rent increases in the PBSA sector for 12 months.
49. Furthermore, due to lockdown, international travel restrictions and more, thousands of students are having to stay in their term-time properties for longer than expected but will not have budgeted to pay rent for this extended period. Our survey found that one in four students who are living in privately rented accommodation/owned halls of residence say there is some likelihood that they will need to stay in their current property beyond the original planned contract date.
50. Universities closed or moved teaching online yet hundreds of thousands of students were stuck paying rent for term-time properties they were no longer residing in – creating unnecessary financial difficulties for them. Our survey found, around one in three students would have liked to be released early from their current rental obligations, yet fewer than one in ten had been given the opportunity to do so.
51. As a result of systemic pressure-selling in the student rental market by landlords and accommodation providers, most students signed tenancies 6-9 months ago for the next academic year, many of which will begin between June-September – but university may not recommence as usual.
52. Government must ensure students are able to leave any tenancies they have signed for this current and next academic year early with no-penalty – including the safe return of tenancy deposits and up-front rent. This could be done by the UK Government introducing a system of indefinite tenancies which can be broken by the tenant with 28 days' notice as they have in Scotland.

53. Students also require protection from eviction and to do so the Government must bring forward their manifesto commitment to end Section 21 'no fault' evictions permanently and end all Section 8 evictions for rent accrued during the Coronavirus crisis period. Amending Section 8 to state that rent is not lawfully due for arrears related to Coronavirus would ensure that no-one lost their home as a result of the pandemic. Arrears accrued during this period should not affect a tenant's credit score.

Student Workers

54. In our survey, 62% of HE students and 58% of FE students reported having a job alongside study (full-time, part-time, zero-hours, casual, or other). However, the lockdown has hit student workers hard – of those working, 85% of FE and 87% of HE students said that their work has been affected by Coronavirus.
55. Half of students say that the income of someone who supports them financially has been impacted by COVID-19, with one in five of those students saying that it has had a major negative impact. 80% of students are concerned about their ability to manage financially during the outbreak, with this even more common among disabled students.
56. Most other safety nets in society fail to catch students as most full-time students are prevented from claiming Universal Credit and many do not earn enough to qualify for statutory sick pay, while those in self-employment or the gig economy may not have paid through self-assessment long enough to qualify for support from the relevant Government support scheme.
57. As a result, nearly three in four students are concerned about their ability to pay rent as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. One in three are 'very' or 'extremely' concerned. 80% of students are concerned about their ability to manage financially during the outbreak, with this even more common among disabled students.
58. Students need a solution which can be flexible enough to adjust to their personal circumstances with as little bureaucracy as possible. This can only mean university and college hardship funding, which is designed to be as open and fair as possible regarding eligibility. However, eligibility criteria for some of these funds would need to be extended to include international students and ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged.
59. However, we have concerns that the current hardship funding available for students at some institutions will not be adequate to deal with the number of students of support. We have heard from students at one Russell Group institution that they had over 800 applications for the first round of COVID-19 hardship funding with a pot of £220,000 used up fully and 340 students receiving an award. They had to fundraise for further support.
60. Another institution had over 200 applications and over £30k awarded in just two weeks alone. They announced that once their funds have run out there will be no further support and students are only eligible for awards if they have less than £500 in their bank account.
61. Many further education colleges do not have hardship funds available to support students, leaving these students particularly vulnerable at this time.

62. Although hardship funds provide a vital source of support, it is clear that the funds available are not adequate to cope with the financial needs of students at this time. Announcements made by the government to enable universities to use existing funds of £46 million to boost hardship funds are welcome recognition that these funds need greater support but NUS holds concerns about the impact that this will have on access and participation activities, which this money is primarily being directed away from. We would like to see the UK government provide £60 million of new funding to university and college hardship funds, plus additional funding which should be delivered through the Barnett consequential to bolster hardship support across the UK.
63. Apprentices have faced specific problems during COVID-19, with many apprentices being furloughed and receiving 80% (£3.31 p/h) of the minimum apprentice wage (£4.15 p/h) to live on. We would support NSoA's recommendations of government that they provide nationwide concessionary bus travel to young apprentices to make getting to work affordable for the lowest paid, and introduce a cost of living wage for apprentices.

Education leavers

64. It is impossible to know exactly what effect COVID-19 will have on the wider economy and the job market but this is of significant concern to students – 95% were concerned of the impact on the wider economy in our survey. Similarly, 81% of students are concerned of the effect that the Coronavirus crisis will have on their own job prospects and 71% are concerned of the impact it will have on their employability. They must be given reassurances at this troubling time and government must act to support these students, who set to lose out massively.
65. We are already hearing of stories from students who have had offers for their dream jobs withdrawn as a result of COVID-19. More than a quarter of businesses are reducing the number of graduates they recruit this year, according to a recent survey by the Institute of Student Employers (ISE)³. It is likely that, as following the financial crisis of 2008, more education leavers will experience 'occupational scarring' as time spent in low-paying occupations reduces future earnings prospects, both due to pay progression being weaker in these occupations and because moving to higher-paying occupations is relatively rare and pay effects do not immediately cease.
66. Everyone leaving education this summer, whether on completion of university study, A-Levels or a vocational course, faces a constricted job market and reduced opportunities for employment. While the headline unemployment rate for the UK is 3.8%, the equivalent unemployment rate for the 18-24 age group is already more than 2.5 times as large at 10% and can be expected to grow as the effects of the current crisis filter through.
67. We know from research into previous recessions the effect that this can have on the earnings and employment of education leavers. By studying college graduates during the 1980s severe recession, Professor Lisa Kahn found that graduates earned roughly 17.5 percent less per year than if had they graduated during normal market conditions. The

³ Professor Lisa Kahn, *The Long-Term Labor Market Consequences of Graduating from College in a Bad Economy*, *Labour Economics*, 2010, 17(2): pp. 303-316

effects of this are long lasting: the persistently low wage effect only wears off after two decades.

68. For those leaving education during a recession it has been shown that for those with lower levels of education, the chance of being in work falls by over 20%, while for graduates the chance of being in a low-paying occupation rises by 30%⁴.
69. The unemployment rate in the UK could reach 21%, which would cause a recession likely to eclipse any experienced for the past 80 years. Education leavers, along with all those in vulnerable and precarious situations in the job market, must be protected in this scenario. We would like to see the UK government introduce a grant equivalent to one year's training for education leavers that can be used for further training and education, retraining and other activity that will improve their job prospects.
70. This would have wider economic benefits by stimulating increased spending amongst this group and directing funding towards education providers. It could also help to resolve a situation in which a whole cohort of education leavers enter the job market at a time when unemployment is particularly high, increasing the over-supply of those seeking employment, by encouraging education leavers into further study.

Healthcare Students

71. Students on some courses have been particularly affected by the pandemic, especially those studying nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare courses. All of these students have had their placements cancelled and many have now volunteered to work in the NHS during this time.
72. These students will be our key workers of the future and so we believe that it is particularly unfair that they are still paying for tuition when they are not able to complete placements or for some not able to engage with education at all as they are working for the NHS.
73. The inequality is compounded by the fact that students in their final year now were the first to pay tuition fees following the scrapping of the previous NHS bursary, and will be the only ones to miss out on the new NHS bursary set to be introduced from next year.
74. Along with trade unions representing healthcare professionals we are calling on the government to reimburse tuition fees or forgive current debt for all current nursing, midwifery, and allied health care students; abolish student-funded tuition fees for all nursing, midwifery, and allied health care students starting in 2020/21 and beyond, in recognition that they will be supporting vital public services; and introduce universal, living maintenance grants that reflect actual student need.
75. NUS also holds concerns about the availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for students who are volunteering in the NHS as well as those working in care homes. We are urgently looking for reassurances from government that adequate PPE supplies will be provided to all key workers.

⁴ Stephen Clarke, Growing Pains: The impact of leaving education during a recession on earnings and employment, Resolution Foundation, May 2019

International students

76. We have concerns that international students who plan to study in the UK from September but may no longer be able to meet English language testing requirements due to testing centres being closed around the world.
77. Furthermore, some international students coming to the UK for the next academic year may be subject to the 14-day quarantine restrictions. If this is the case it is essential that universities and colleges provide them with accommodation for the duration of this period, at no extra cost to the student. Institutions must also ensure that they have access to support services during this period such as food delivery services and mental health support.
78. Given the projected drop in international student recruitment, with research by the University and College Union (UCU) and London Economic estimating that international student numbers might fall by 120,000 next year, we would like to see the government show flexibility to Tier 4 visa applications and introduce immediate proposals to streamline the application process to make it simpler and cheaper to apply.⁵
79. If international student numbers were to drop by this amount not only would this have a huge effect on the finances of many institutions, but the learning experience of many students would suffer. One of the major positives of the UK's education system is the diversity of the student body which allows all students to have international experiences on campus. If international student numbers were to fall this would be to the detriment of all students.
80. COVID-19 is also likely to exacerbate problems for EU students due to start next academic year, as it has raised the possibility of some institutions pushing back start dates to January, if government restrictions make this the safest option. Were they to do so, this would now require EU students who were due to start in September 2020 to apply for Tier 4 visas they would not have otherwise needed, at very short notice. Given the current situation we would like to see the Home Office guarantee that all EU students who were due to start before January 2021 will be allowed to study visa-free in the UK, regardless of when their institution returns to formal teaching.
81. We have also been informed of cases of international students falling into financial hardship as a result of losing occupations during the pandemic. This has often created problems for them with paying their tuition fees on time. Many university hardship funds do not currently allow international students to apply for funding, and we believe that this should change. We have also seen cases of universities threatening to report students to the Home Office for failure to pay tuition fees on time, and given the major disruption caused by the pandemic we would ask for further flexibility to be shown by universities.

Students' union funding

⁵ London Economic and University and College Union, Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on university finances, April 2020

82. Students' unions provide vital services which students rely on for support and representation. They are a core part of the make-up of the tertiary education sector.
83. Students' unions rely on two main sources of income – block grants and profit from trading services, particularly on campus-based institutions. The success of trading services depends on students being on campus. We have major concerns that as a result of institutional funding pressures, alongside a significant impact on their commercial income, many of our member students' unions will no longer be financially viable.
84. As a result of the lockdown students' unions have missed out on significant amounts of potential income due to loss of trading opportunities. It is also likely that campuses will not be fully open for the next academic year, and even if they are social distancing measures will prevent students' unions from operating under normal conditions.
85. Similarly we have already heard from many of our members that the block grant they receive from their institutions is set to be significantly reduced for the coming academic year. If this does occur many unions will have to cut back on the support services they are able to offer to their students.
86. We would also like to see guidance issued by the Office for Students on the importance of students' unions and how institutions can work with them to ensure the best outcome for student experience and that their Education Act commitments are met. Partly as stressed above this is to ensure that they are adequately funded but also:
 - That a partnership approach is taken with the institution engaging with representatives from the students' union in their planning and crisis-response;
 - That institutions support students' unions with developing new policy to support students in light of the crisis;
 - That communication between the institution and students' union is transparent and effective;
 - That student input is facilitated through the students' union in decision making and that the student experience is considered at all stages;
 - That return-to-campus and further contingency planning including forecasting is undertaken in partnership, particularly looking at opportunities to enhance the commercial income generated by both parties and to ensure students are well supported in their arrival/return.

Reopening universities and colleges

87. Now that the UK has started to move out of lockdown a further problem that has emerged is how university campuses and colleges plan to reopen. We believe that the primary concern in any decisions made regarding reopening campuses should be staff and student safety.
88. In July, NUS ran a survey of 1,067 students to discover their views on the re-opening of educational institutions and whether they planned to defer their studies. From this survey, over a third of respondents said they would not feel safe at all with face-to-face teaching in September 2020, including two fifths of international students. But only 13% said they would not feel safe at all if this approach was used from January 2021.

89. Similarly, 22% of students said they feel extremely safe to enter or return to accommodation in September compared to 43% in January 2021. Yet, 9 in 10 students felt safe to return to education if they are taught exclusively online.
90. We think that these results make clear that universities and colleges must not rush back to in-person teaching as this is likely to undermine students' trust that decisions are being made to keep them safe. We would very much welcome further guidance from the Department for Education as to how universities and colleges should reopen safely.

July 2020