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UCU (University and College Union) is the largest and leading trade union representing members in further education, higher education and the lifelong learning sectors in Northern Ireland. Our vision is for excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, the promotion of social justice through access for all to high quality education and to truly democratic governance within institutions. We believe in the liberation of potential through education and in social partnership as the building block on which to build future policy.

GENERAL ELECTION 2010:

A MANIFESTO FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND



THEMES:

MAKE EDUCATION COUNT

UCU in Northern Ireland is asking candidates to make education count in their constituency. We're working closely with the Ulster Teachers Union and Irish National Teachers Organisation to highlight the reality that Northern Ireland still has some of the most disturbing statistics in the UK—for example:

- Northern Ireland has the highest percentage of people without qualifications (one in five)
- UCU analysis of Northern Ireland's eighteen political constituencies highlights that where you live can still affect your chances of educational access, attainment and opportunity. We're asking politicians to make sure that education counts in their constituencies—to seek out and stamp out inequalities in education.

FUNDING: INVESTING IN QUALITY, INVESTING IN OUR ECONOMY

Slashing the further and higher education budgets is short-sighted. Short-term solutions lack vision and make no sense. Politicians will appreciate the bigger picture—whereby adequately funded and resourced universities and colleges secure a strong foundation for the future. Other countries such as Germany and France are increasing investment in education at this time.

UCU is calling for an end to wasteful duplication; for example centralisation of services in further education would release funding to be directed at the delivery of learning.

PROTECTION: PROTECTING JOBS AND PREVENTING CUTS

A fair deal for lecturers and teachers. Across the UK, university and college lecturers are losing their jobs. In Northern Ireland, UCU's job is to protect our members. Protect jobs and prevent cuts in further and higher education.

UCU WANTS:

ACCOUNTABILITY

Corporate probity and standards of governance that stand up to scrutiny. We need autonomy with accountability: more community and trade union representation on governing bodies.

OMBUDSMAN FOR FE

UCU has made representations to the Department for Employment & Learning for the remit of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman to be extended to cover the Further Education sector (the DEL Minister supports this—we need a decision from the OFMdFM).

FE LECTURERS' PAY

Still determined under civil service pay rules in Northern Ireland—this is unfair. FE lecturers' pay should be determined by negotiations between the colleges and the recognised trade unions.

RECOVERY FROM RECESSION

A recognition of the role of higher and further education in mitigating the effects of the recession especially for young people and in providing a basis for future economic recovery.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

End race hate and bigotry; FHE institutions that provide shared space for a shared future.

SUPPORT FOR AFFORDABLE LIFELONG LEARNING

Removal of barriers to post-compulsory education and training; increase accessibility to people of all ages, areas, and abilities.

PRIVATISATION

Prevent it from creeping into our universities and colleges—further and higher education must remain a public service not an opportunity for speculation and profit.

INDEPENDENCE

An adequately funded democratically run university system which allows staff and students to pursue truth without hindrance and ensures that scientific knowledge remains a public good available to all.

HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW

UCU welcomes the review of higher education in Northern Ireland. UCU is working with the Steering Group to ensure Northern Ireland has an adequately funded HE sector which contributes to the creation of new knowledge and provides access to the highest quality teaching and research for the benefit of the economic, social and cultural life of the region.