

Manifesto for a

Knowledge Economy

10 Big Ideas for the next

Northern Ireland Assembly

The University and College Union is the largest post-16 education trade union in the UK. UCU in Northern Ireland represents 3,500 lecturers and academic related staff working in further and higher education. UCU campaigns for greater public investment in post-school education as well as for fair pay and decent working conditions for our members.

Colleges and universities are key economic contributors, both as local employers and providers of skilled professional and technical workers upon which businesses and public services depend.

UCU looks forward to working with the new Northern Ireland Assembly following the May 2016 elections to protect and enhance the further and higher education sectors – for the benefit of the economy and all aspects of wider society.

UCU is asking that a new Assembly Executive make investment in and protection of further and higher education its priority. Here are ten ways the Assembly can make that happen.

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1

Invest in the future - commit to increased public spending on the knowledge economy

- Northern Ireland is trailing behind the UK in public funding for higher education
- The London Economics report for UCU (November 2015) found that public funding is considerably higher in Wales, England and Scotland – with Northern Ireland trailing behind
- UCU calls for equity in public funding for HE in Northern Ireland
- UCU calls for the removal of all financial barriers for access to education
- UCU calls for a commitment to increase public spending on the knowledge economy

2

Protecting jobs and preventing cuts

- The post-16 education sector in Northern Ireland has carried the brunt of severe budget cuts – yet it is pivotal to all aspects of our society and economy.
- Hundreds of jobs have been shed across both the higher and further education sectors; hundreds of student places have been lost and dozens of courses abolished
- Further and higher education are key economic drivers. UCU calls on the new administration to increase funding for the sectors and protect universities and colleges from further budget cuts.

3

Good governance and accountability

- UCU calls for increased accountability in university governance. Vice chancellor pay is over inflated, not transparently justified and wholly disproportionate to other university staff salaries. This democratic deficit must stop.
- UCU calls on government to require all FE governing body members to undertake employment relations training to properly fulfil their statutory function as employers.

4

End casualisation - end exploitative working practices

- UCU is increasingly alarmed by the ‘creeping casualisation’ of further and higher education. The Campaign against Casualisation is one of UCU’s national priorities.
 - We ask that elected representatives support our campaign against casualisation.
 - UCU calls on elected representatives to protect further and higher education from casual contracts.
 - Government must require Queen’s University Belfast to issue proper employment contracts to over 1600 teaching assistants currently engaged on insecure ‘Contracts for Services.’
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Teaching excellence

- UCU asks elected representatives to support initiatives aimed at ‘improving’ the quality of teaching by supporting employers to provide meaningful professional development pathways.
- That good teaching is underpinned by good working conditions for all staff.
- That good teaching needs to be recognised in academic career structures.
- That all teachers deserve better job security.

6

Business education tax

- UCU opposes the imposition of all fees for tuition.
- The UCU calls for political support for a Business Education Tax.
- Employers who benefit from graduate supply must financially contribute to its infrastructure.

7

Free collective bargaining for FE lecturer pay

- UCU objects to lecturer salary being subject to civil service pay rules.
- Lecturer pay must be determined by colleges and recognised trade unions.
- UCU calls for free collective bargaining to be reinstated for further education lecturers.

8

Academic freedom

- UCU calls for statutory protection of academic freedom to all staff working in teaching and research including further education.

9

Apprenticeships

- UCU supports the improvement and status of apprenticeship programmes – but calls on the wealth of knowledge and experience of FE lecturers to be fully recognised.
- Apprenticeships should offer a route to professional status of license to practice.

10

Promote equality, social mobility and community cohesion

- UCU calls for further and higher education to be prominent across the new programme for Government.
 - The role of FE and HE in tackling poverty, equality, social mobility and community cohesion is essential. The new administration must recognise, endorse and support this.
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UCU's vision is for excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, the promotion of social justice through access for all to high quality education. We believe truly democratic governance must be embedded within education institutions. UCU invites dialogue with political parties, candidates, researchers and incumbents to discuss our manifesto for a knowledge economy

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