



# All-Party Parliamentary Group for Students

## AGM Minutes May 2023

1pm Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May

Present: Paul Blomfield MP, Robin Walker MP, Alex Sobel MP, Wera Hobhouse MP, Alison Thewliss MP

In attendance: Chloe Field, NUS Vice-President, and Hannah Sketchley, NUS Campaigns Manager

Apologies from: Lord Willetts, Caroline Lucas MP.

### 1. Election of officers

The following Officers were re-elected:

Chair: Paul Blomfield MP, Vice-Chairs: Robin Walker MP, Alex Sobel MP, Wera Hobhouse MP, Alison Thewliss MP, Caroline Lucas MP, Lord Willetts.

### 2. Financial report

There had been no income or expenditure over the last year. Paul Blomfield's office had provided the secretariat at no cost to the APPG.

### 3. Nomination of secretariat

The Chair highlighted the papers circulated before the meeting, outlining the National Union of Students (NUS) proposed role in providing the secretariat for the APPG and the action taken in implementing the recommendations of the Tuck Inquiry on which he had had received positive views from UJS.

It was noted that NUS had addressed the previous limited capacity for supporting the APPG by hiring to meet capacity needs. NUS added that the APPG plays an important role in providing student voice in Westminster and would be a priority for them.

The meeting unanimously agreed that the National Union of Students should be reappointed as the secretariat.

### 4. Discussion of future work

The Chair suggested that the APPG should aim to cover around 2 to 3 topic areas over the course of the next year and highlighted the following longlist of APPG topics has been suggested for the year ahead:

- Students & Work: What impact is the level of 'part-time' work having on the student experience?
- Skills, Lifelong Learning and Apprenticeships: Are we ready for the future of education outside the three or four-year degree?
- A bed for every student? Student Housing, Admissions and Student Number Controls.

- The Student Mental Health Crisis & Duty of Care: How should universities respond?
- What do students want from education regulation?
- The Nigerian Student Experience in UKHE: *Nigerian students are the fastest-growing group of international students in the UK, particularly in modern universities, and are very active in their students' unions. This year, the Nigerian Central Bank slowed payments to UK universities, causing students significant problems with their tuition fee payments.*
- Should we drop the limit on working hours for international students?
- Damp and cramped? Examining the quality of student housing in the UK.
- The experience of International Students in the UK: Fair recruitment, fair funding, and families

Robin Walker highlighted that the cost-of-living inquiry raised some serious concerns on the impact of excessive part-time work during their studies, which the APPG should focus on over the next year. He added that work on lifelong learning and skills could be useful, but that work on regulation might be assessed after the current inquiry of the [Lords Industry and Regulators Committee](#) on the role of the Office for Students had reported.

The Chair agreed and suggested that some of the issues sit more appropriately with the APPG for International Students and should be discussed with them.

Alex Sobel added that housing is a key issue within his constituency, where around 90% of his student casework is about housing. It was generally agreed that housing was an issue across the UK, although raising different problems.

Alison Thewliss felt that we should look at the driving factors behind the lack of accommodation for students, and how to address this lack of capacity. She also highlighted problems facing international students who had lost housing but had no recourse to public funds.

Wera Hobhouse raised the issue of students getting bad press when seen as taking accommodation away from families, as well as being required to move out of cities and commute to campus.

Chloe Field added that the rise of luxury style accommodation poses another challenge, as well as landlords significantly hiking rents year-on-year.

It was agreed that the Chair should hold a follow-up meeting with NUS to plan a more detailed work programme on student employment, skills and life-long learning and housing – to be shared for final agreement.

## **5. Details of next meeting**

The next APPG session will be held online on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May from 15:30-16:30, convened jointly with the APPG on Further Education and Lifelong Learning. The session will cover the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on students in FE, hearing evidence from college principals, the NUS lead for FE and students themselves. Briefing and joining details would be circulated the following week.