

Stephen Kerr MSP and Kaukab Stewart MSP,
Education, Children and Young People Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Friday, 06 May 2022

Dear Convener and Deputy Convener,

Colleges regionalisation inquiry

I am writing to you regarding your inquiry on college regionalisation which NUS Scotland believes is important and timely.

I have attached a letter which I have sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Economy. This sets out the 'perfect storm' that we believe college students currently face as a result of government cuts, strikes and the cost-of-living crisis.

As a result of the Scottish Government's budget for 2022-23, the college sector faces a total reduction in their budget for 2022-23 of £51.9million. This includes a real-terms cut of £23.9 million in their core budget and a loss of £28 million that was provided in 2021-22 to support them through the pandemic.

Cuts to college budgets not only put at risk the goal of college regionalisation – to ensure there are opportunities for all young to people to gain skills and knowledge – but put at risk key support services and the future of students' associations.

The role of college students' associations was greatly enhanced by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, embedding a requirement on colleges to ensure students are represented through students' associations. There is no doubt that college students' associations in Scotland have made remarkable developmental progress over the past 10 years, particularly through NUS Scotland's Developing College Students' Associations Project (funded by the Scottish Government). Nonetheless, we still have a long way to go to achieve the strong sustainable, autonomous and appropriately funded students' associations that are needed in our colleges. Indeed, cuts to college budgets put all of the progress already made at risk.

I hope this short note (and attached letter) assists you in your inquiry. I know that the NUS Scotland team have been in touch with your clerks to secure student officers and students' association staff to give evidence to the committee.

Matt Crilly
President, NUS Scotland

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills; Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Economy
Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Regent Road
EH1 3DG

Friday, May 6, 2022

Dear Cabinet Secretaries,

'Perfect storm' facing Scotland's college students

We are writing to you to express our concern that college students face a 'perfect storm' of cuts, strikes and cost-of-living pressures.

As we speak, students are attempting to navigate a Spring Exam Diet, but in doing so are facing incredible challenges. Due to the Scottish Government's cuts to colleges announced during this year's budget, students are at risk of losing vital support services and college staff are engaged in industrial action for fair pay.

It has taken prolonged effort during the most difficult of circumstances for students to reach the end of this academic year and it would be unforgivable if the government were to not act to prevent disruption which may impact students on the final leg of their achievement.

It has also taken years of hard work to build up many of the student services and student associations, whose ability to support students fully is being placed at risk. Government cuts are threatening the very existence of effective student representation at some institutions.

Student representation has never been more important, as we face a cost-of-living crisis with a broken student support system. [Our own research](#) has found that over 60% of students worry about money, with a third considering dropping out for financial reasons. Yet many students were excluded from your £150 payment distributed via the Council Tax system and most face another summer without upfront financial support.

Students have suffered a great deal during the pandemic, a fact recognised publicly by many Government Ministers. Please do not punish students by cutting the essential education funding we rely on. We need investment to ensure that students, staff or our colleges do not bear the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis we face.

We ask you to urgently prioritise student welfare and reverse your cuts to our education.

Matt Crilly
President, NUS Scotland

Ellie Jamieson, Ayrshire College Students' Association President

Sally Prentice, Borders College Students' Association President

Bernie Savage, City of Glasgow College Students' Association President

Amy Monks, Dundee and Angus Students' Association President

Rose Dodgson, Edinburgh College Students' Association President

Tali Fisher, Fife College Students' Association President of Welfare and Equality

Emma Wallace, Fife College Students' Association President of Education and Representation

Amber Little, Forth Valley Students' Association President

Claire Green, Forth Valley Students' Association Vice President

Joanna Thompson, Glasgow Clyde College Students' Association President

James McGunnigle, Glasgow Kelvin College Students' Association President of Learning and Teaching

Heather Innes, Highlands and Islands Students' Association Acting President and Vice President for Higher Education

Kellyann McGraith, New College Lanarkshire Students' Association President of Resource and Wellbeing

Hannah Carragher, New College Lanarkshire Students' Association President of Curriculum and Engagement

Alexandra Romeo Imade, New College Lanarkshire Students' Association President of Sustainable Partnership

Sasha Brydon, North East Scotland College Students' Association Regional President

Kirsten Koss, North East Scotland College Students' Association Depute President (Aberdeen/Altens)

Abbie C McGrath, West College Scotland Students' Association President

Jeanette Dobson, West Lothian College Students' Association President