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BUILDING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

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A multilateral international agreement to
defend education against global marketisation

CHALLENGING THE GLOBAL MARKET IN EDUCATION



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1. The signatories to this agreement welcome the international character of higher education and research, which historically has been a key feature of the academic community. However, we note that the growing market in tertiary education is becoming international in scale and scope and further note that this international market has profound consequences for staff working in the sector.
2. Manifestations of this international market include:
 - the expansion of large higher education institutions across borders, leading to the establishment of new international facilities and new forms of provision
 - the emergence of major transnational education providers in the private and 'for-profit' sector
 - the growing movement of academic labour and students across international borders, in itself a positive development, though open to institutional misuse
 - the international commodification of academic labour, most notably through trade agreements and casualisation
 - threats to the national characteristics of universities in many countries, through the promotion of homogenous 'international' institutions and study programmes, which pose a challenge to national cultures and to academic freedom

The signatories note that these developments can pose a threat to academic freedom, educational quality, and staff employment standards.

3. Accordingly, the signatories agree to:
 - campaign together to establish the right of all staff, regardless of international boundaries and whether in public or private employment, to join and take an active part in trade unions.
 - campaign to ensure that all staff employed in tertiary education institutions are covered by recognition agreements, regardless of the geographical location of a given facility, or of whether the employer is in the public or private sector.
 - work toward developing closer co-operation including in particular membership agreements that will ensure that:
 - a) academics moving between states are able to access union services and transfer membership,

subject to their employment status and to the specific transfer arrangements between the unions concerned.

b) the movement of academics between unionised countries is monitored as closely as possible to ensure continuity of membership and representation

c) membership of each signatory union is promoted by all parties to the fullest possible degree among academic staff moving between states for longer periods.

- campaign to ensure that all tertiary education employers, whether public or private sector establishing 'offshore' facilities, or transnational private sector employers, employ staff on a fair and equal basis which should 'level up' pay and terms and conditions for staff regardless of employer type or international boundaries.
 - campaign to protect the national characteristics and diversity of higher education institutions
4. To this end, the signatories agree to:
 - campaign to ensure that transnational employers, whether public or private, who establish facilities in other states employ all staff on a consistent and equal basis and maintain the highest possible employment standards for all employees, regardless of whether they come from the employer's 'state of origin' or the 'host' state
 - share information on transnational education companies operating across international boundaries
 - co-ordinate joint campaigning and bargaining on an agreed basis within transnational companies to ensure the maintenance or establishment of a common employment framework that ensures the defence of employment standards and promotes best practice across international boundaries.
 - monitor and share collective agreements and best practice as they are established in the furtherance of constituting a common employment framework at the highest possible international level
 - co-ordinate both the monitoring of the use of casual contracts and campaigning to reduce their use in tertiary education
 - share knowledge about and promote best practice in the establishment of proper career paths and stable employment conditions for those on casual contracts

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- work together to promote and enforce the principles of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of higher education teaching Personnel
- monitor and share information on the development of international and transnational public sector and private sector research and teaching facilities to ensure the maintenance of high standards of academic freedom and to defend and help put into effect robust quality assurance mechanisms
- co-ordinate, wherever possible and appropriate, joint campaigns in defence of academic freedom and academic standards
- work with Education International for the pursuit of the common objectives set out in this agreement. ■