

GENERAL ELECTION 2010

AN ALTERNATIVE MANIFESTO FOR POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION

UCU is the largest trade union and professional association for academics, lecturers, trainers, researchers and academic-related staff working in further, adult, prison, landbased and higher education throughout the UK.

We are calling on all parliamentary candidates in the general election to pledge themselves to our vision of post-school education.

That vision is founded on a fundamental belief in the intrinsic value of education as a force for the enhancement of the lives of individuals, the liberation of their talents and the realisation of a truly civilised, socially responsible, fair and prosperous society.

Education can and does determine the life chances of individuals. We know that those who hold qualifications and who participate in education and training go on to be healthier, wealthier and more active citizens.

As the country emerges from the worst economic recession since the 1930s the case for renewed investment in our public education system is overwhelming.

Our colleges and universities are key drivers of economic recovery, since they are the main sources of the skilled workers and professionals on which that recovery will depend.

However, they are also much more than that: continuation in education beyond compulsory schooling determines the life chances of individuals. Our society is more unequal than ever – improving access to education, and the quality of the education on offer is the basis for the creation of a fair society and for ending the massive waste of talent that characterises our current system.

UCU wants to see an end to the postcode lottery of access to educational achievement and for real equality of access.

We believe that everyone who has the ability and need should be able to access the type of education that is right for them within a high quality, publicly funded system.

UCU
University and College Union

MAKE
EDUCATION
COUNT

FURTHER AND ADULT EDUCATION



UCU stands for affordable, high quality learning for those who need it, when they need it and in a form that is accessible to them. We believe in a publicly funded adult learning system which is seen as an irreducible characteristic of life, work and culture and is acknowledged as essential to economic, social and civic life.

The stats:

- Over 3.5 million people attend FE colleges in the UK.
- 44% of university entrants come from FE colleges.
- In the last decade the number of vocational qualifications awarded has risen by 90%.
- Over 1.5 million adult learning places have been lost in the last two years.
- Funding to FE will be cut by 3% this academic year.

Further education is diverse and it is essential. The sector covers everything from A-level students, higher education students, those who are retraining after being made redundant, workplace learning, those in prisons and young offender institutions, night classes, informal learning, essential language tuition and much more.

FE has a vibrant role to play in adult education as we come to terms with an ageing society. It can no longer be seen as an afterthought but as one of the means by which the state, employers and individuals address the problems and issues raised by a changing and ageing society.

Lecturers in FE have a proud history of teaching and preparing young adults for employment as well as a whole range of academic progression. But they must have the professional auto-

nomy they need to create additional, coherent and relevant learning experiences for sometimes reluctant and disadvantaged learners.

In the last year, despite its contribution to society and the vital role in recovering from recession, FE has seen cut after cut, with thousands of teachers losing their job and courses being closed. This means that people who want and need a step into education, training and re-skilling cannot have access to the education they need.

To see a sustainable and functional FE system that meets the demands of our communities there must be:

- a halt to funding cuts, job losses and provision
- a publicly funded system that people can access when they need to, with proper information, advice and guidance
- a system where those who teach in adult learning are recognised for their contribution to individuals, the economy and to society
- an increase in like-for-like funding per FE student to match that in schools
- a system of governance that is accountable and democratic and which empowers learners, practitioners and their communities.

HIGHER EDUCATION



UCU stands for a system of higher education which is accessible to all; which encourages critical thinking in its students and full active engagement in their learning; which values teaching; in which good research is funded wherever it is found; and in which the contribution of all institutions is recognised, whether their main focus is teaching or research.

The stats:

- 2010 has already seen record numbers of applications to higher education—over 570,000 people have submitted applications, an increase of almost 23% on this time in 2009.
- Last year, around 140,000 people who applied to be a full time undergraduate did not get a place—UCU estimates that the number this year will be 200,000.
- For a student starting education this year, the average debt will be £23,000.
- UCU research shows that the gap between people living in underachieving areas and those in traditionally strongly achieving areas is widening.
- 14,000 jobs are at risk in the sector with the proposed £900 million cuts.

Higher education is facing a crisis. The trade unions, employers and practitioners all acknowledge that if action is not taken, the higher education system could be ‘brought to its knees’ with the possibility of thirty institutions closing.

Over 6000 jobs have already been lost or are at risk in the sector. Courses and indeed whole departments are simply disappearing. This comes at a time when people have listened to the government’s message to aspire for more through education—applications to higher education are at an all time high.

There are also profound fears about the direction of research funding and the ability of those within the higher education system to engage in research that is for the pursuit of knowledge and is curiosity-led. The idea that core funding for research will be linked to economic impact will undermine the basic principles of learning and discovery.

We also know that access to higher education is still a postcode lottery. Despite investment in widening participation, it is still the case that if you come from a low income background you are far less likely to hold a degree level qualification.

To see a higher education system that remains world-class and meets the demands of society and the economy there must be:

- a halt to funding cuts, departmental closures and job losses
- a system that is based on ability, not ability to pay
- a review of how higher education can be publicly funded to the same level as other leading European and OECD countries, alongside an increased contribution from employers who benefit from our graduates
- a system of research funding that is based on the pursuit of knowledge and academic freedom and not the guarantee of meeting an economic target
- accountable and democratic governance at all levels.



UCU HAS OVER 120,000 MEMBERS WHO ASK YOU TO CONSIDER AN ALTERNATIVE VISION FOR POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION

5 chances to support UCU's vision for education:

- 1** Will you support a high quality, publicly funded education system—at all levels of study—in which people are not deterred or prohibited by financial barriers?
- 2** Do you agree that those who need a 'second chance' should be given the means, information and funding to access education?
- 3** Do you agree that those who teach in education should receive the support, training and remuneration they deserve which should correspond with the contribution they make to individuals and society?
- 4** Should the incoming government be committed to widening participation in education at all levels, founded on equality, diversity and social inclusion and provide funding to back up that commitment?
- 5** Do you agree that lifelong learning should be a reality, not just a slogan?

You can see the full UCU manifesto for post-school education at:

www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/k/c/Manifesto.pdf