



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **NUS Scotland President James Alexander joins forces with Scotland's Colleges**

The Association of Scotland's Colleges (ASC) has recruited the current President of the National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland, James Alexander, to help shape a policy of fair student support, as they campaign to replace the current loans system with means-tested bursaries.

There are 28,000 higher national students at Scotland's Colleges, with an average age of 31. These students, who mainly study at HNC level, live in households with an average income of less than £18,000 and juggle up to 9 different income streams.

James Alexander's new role at the ASC will help inform the ongoing debate on how to move towards a fairer and more joined up system of student support, with a particular focus on the ASC's "bursaries not loans" policy. The ASC will be consulting stakeholders on this policy over the summer, and James will be leading Scotland's Colleges' response to this consultation, ensuring that the needs of college students remain high on the Scottish Government's agenda.

During his time with NUS Scotland, James has played an active lobbying role on behalf of students and was a key figure in the debate on the abolition of the graduate endowment. He will assume his new position with the ASC at the start of July.

James commented: "I am delighted to be joining the ASC and looking forward to getting stuck into the debate on student support once again. Often this debate is too focussed on university students and, whilst of course they are important, the students of Scotland's Colleges should be of equal consideration to Government Ministers.

"I am determined to ensure that that Scotland's Colleges are heard loud and clear in the ongoing debate on student support."

Howard McKenzie, Acting Chief Executive of the ASC, said: 'I am very pleased to welcome James to what is a strong policy team at ASC. His experience campaigning for the rights of students at Scotland's Colleges will be incredibly valuable, and I know my colleague Principals are grateful for the level of support the NUS currently offers to college students.

"James will play an important role in Scotland's Colleges' ambitious plans to ease the financial burden of studying at further and higher education level. It is essential that the system of student support is reformed to boost the number of skilled people entering the job market at technician level. Our economy is crying out for people at this level, and to achieve this we must have a fair system that recognises university and college students equally."

"We see the best way of doing so as replacing the current system of student loans with a fair and affordable system of means-tested bursaries administered by the local College that enables students to dovetail into the benefit systems, council tax relief, paid employment and other income streams."

Sue Pinder, Convenor of the ASC's Principals' Forum said: "The Principals of Scotland's Colleges recognise the importance of modernising Scotland's funding for learners. There are few people with greater experience of student issues than James Alexander and I wish him all the best in what will be a challenging role. The Scottish Government wants education to be based on the ability to learn and not pay. Scotland's Colleges are fully behind that ambitious goal, and we will work to help the Government achieve that in the months to come."

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