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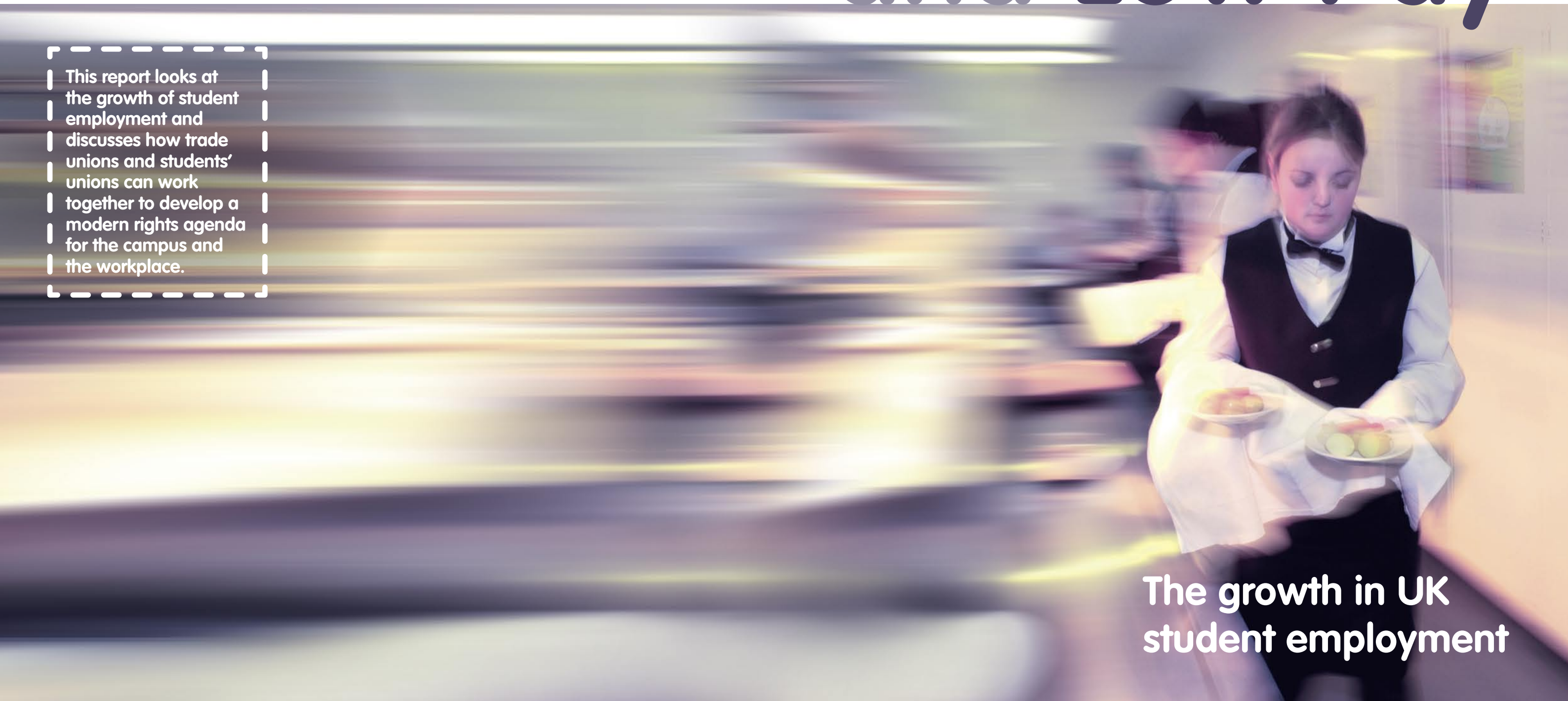
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# All Work and Low Pay

This report looks at the growth of student employment and discusses how trade unions and students' unions can work together to develop a modern rights agenda for the campus and the workplace.

The growth in UK student employment



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## Foreword \* \* \*



Earlier this year the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) signed a protocol agreement symbolising a new alliance between the student and trade union movements. While the NUS and TUC have enjoyed good working relations over the last few years, this agreement demonstrates a step change in our relationship.

Our roles are not quite the same, but now that studying and working are no longer mutually exclusive many students have interests as workers, just as trade unions have always been committed to a properly funded public education system.



Full-time students spend approximately £10,000 a year, with half of this being used to pay for living costs. Many students anticipate having debts at the end of every academic year, typically in the region of £8,000. The result is that increasingly students have to take paid employment during vacations and in term-time and this brings them into contact with the world that trade unions represent.

And yet few students are union members. Trade unions need to think about how they can reach out to non-union Britain and about how they can help people who move jobs on a regular basis.

We also need to raise awareness among students about trade unions. Their lack of knowledge about the benefits of representation and collective bargaining is one of the key barriers to recruiting students. That is why in recent years the TUC has worked in partnership with the NUS to find ways to bridge that gap.

The new protocol heralds a major advance in the relationship between trade unions and the student movement. It underpins our working partnership and supports existing union efforts to recruit working students and graduates. Many unions have a long history of relations in this area, which the protocol will support and help affiliates to build upon.

The protocol allows for a more organic relationship between the various TUC and NUS structures, helping to deepen the level of understanding between both organisations. The protocol will also provide for TUC support to help the NUS foster an organising culture among its officers and activists, building on the work of the TUC Organising Academy.

As the protocol notes, there is much that trade unions can do to support students in employment, but there is also a great deal that the student movement can contribute to the continuing development of a vibrant trade union movement.

We believe this marks the beginning of an important alliance based on the shared values of social justice, collective organisation and democratic participation on campuses, in workplaces and within the wider community.

Brendan Barber  
TUC General Secretary

Gemma Tumelty  
NUS National President

# Executive summary

## Over the last 10 years student employment has grown substantially (section 2)

- > Between 1996 and 2006 the number of full-time students of all age groups who supported themselves through paid employment grew by more than 50 per cent.

## Student employment is concentrated in retail and hospitality, two of the lowest paying sectors of the economy (sections 3 and 5)

- > Among all full-time students, the retail sector accounts for 40 per cent of employment, with nearly half a million students working in that sector.
- > Nearly a quarter of a million full-time students work in the hotels and restaurants sector, equivalent to 21 per cent of the working student population.
- > For all men working part-time, the average hourly rate of pay is £6.21 an hour in retail and £5.70 an hour in hotels and restaurants. For all part-time women the rates are even lower at £5.98 and £5.51 respectively.
- > Student employment in hospitality increased by just over a third between 1996 and 2006, with a clear gender split: the number of male full-time students working in this sector has grown by 22.9 per cent since Spring 1996. The number of female students has grown by 45.8 per cent, double the increase among male students.

## The growth in women students with part-time jobs has been much greater than among male students (section 4)

- > Part-time employment among full-time male students grew by 47 per cent. For women, however, part-time employment among full-time students increased by more than two-thirds (67.5 per cent).

## Students with jobs tend to spend many hours in paid employment and this has a serious impact on their education and well-being (section 6)

- > On average, full-time students with jobs tend to work 14 hours a week during term-time. Evidence also suggests, however, that one in five full-time students work between 15 to 20 hours a week, and a further one in five work over 20 hours a week.
- > Nearly 40 per cent of full-time students with jobs felt that their employment had impacted upon

their studies. Among part-time students, more than half felt that this was the case.

- > More than three-quarters of those full-time students who felt their paid work had an impact on their studies stated that working meant they spent less time studying and reading.
- > Around two-thirds reported that lack of time for studying impacted on the quality of their study work and a similar proportion reported increased stress levels and feeling overloaded.
- > A quarter of full-time students and more than a third of part-time students reported missing lectures or classes.

## Students from the poorest backgrounds are the most likely to have to work and suffer the consequences (section 7)

- > The negative consequences associated with taking on paid employment by students are likely to be felt disproportionately by those from poorer backgrounds. That is because the poorer a student's background, the more likely they are to need to work. Some 55 per cent of students from managerial, professional or intermediate family backgrounds undertook paid employment. Among students from routine/manual backgrounds, however, 61 per cent had undertaken some sort of paid work.
- > A higher proportion of working students came from backgrounds where their parents had no experience of higher education. Just over half, 53 per cent, of students whose parents had been through higher education had some form of paid employment. In contrast, 60 per cent of students whose parents had not been through higher education had to work.

Between 1996 and 2006 the number of full-time students of all age groups who supported themselves through paid employment grew by more than 50 per cent.

# 1 Introduction

There is perhaps nobody more in need of the protection offered by a trade union than the student who works in a bar, fast-food chain or at the rough end of retail.

There is no doubt that the student experience of higher education has changed substantially over the last 25 years. Since 1980, student numbers have trebled and the system of student financial support has been through a series of transformations. A new system of variable tuition fees has now been introduced. Alongside these developments, a growing number of students now have to take on paid employment to support themselves through their studies.

According to Government figures, more than half of full-time students and nearly all part-time students work during the academic year<sup>1</sup>. Many students commit a substantial part of their time to paid employment. On average, full-time students work 14-hour weeks during term-time, but one in five also works for more than 20 hours a week.

Many students work to pay for their basic living costs and the majority complain that low pay leads to them working longer hours. The effect on their studies is plain to see: a quarter of those students report missing lectures, seminars or tutorials due to work while almost one in five have missed deadlines.

Ten per cent of students have thought about dropping out for financial reasons. Likewise, lecturers teaching ten per cent of students have expressed concern at the effect of employment on those students' academic work.

This is worrying. Many student jobs are with some of the worst employers. There is perhaps nobody more in need of the protection offered by a trade union than the student who works in a bar, fast-food chain or at the rough end of retail.

However, trade union membership among full-time students is extremely low. In Autumn 2005, less than seven per cent of full-time students were trade union members. Among students aged 18 to 25, only four per cent were trade union members<sup>2</sup>.

This report looks at the trends in student employment and the impact that paid work is having upon students.

<sup>1</sup> Student Income and Expenditure Survey 2004/2005, Finch et al, Institute of Employment Studies/National Centre for Social Research, 2006  
<sup>2</sup> Labour Force Survey, Autumn 2005



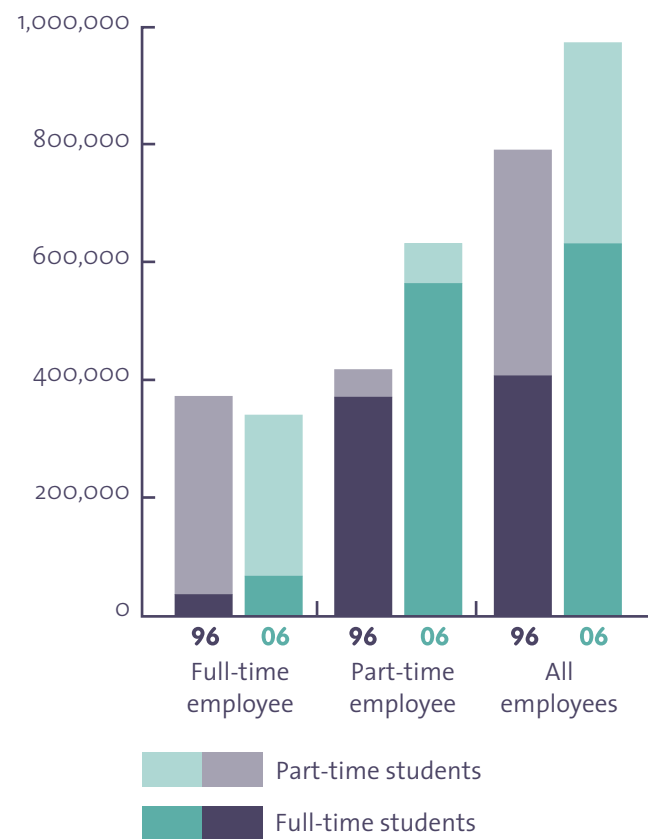
# 2 Trends in student employment

Between 1996 and 2006 the number of full-time students who supported themselves through paid employment grew by more than 50 per cent.

- > In Spring 1996, 406,880 full-time students reported having jobs. By Spring 2006 his figure had risen to 630,718 – an increase of 54 per cent.
- > The number of full-time students who worked full-time increased by 86.1 per cent over the last 10 years according to figures from the Labour Force Survey.
- > Now, nearly two-thirds of students who work are full-time students and part-time employees.

## Employment status of students aged 18 to 25

Labour Force Survey



The number of full-time students with full-time jobs has nearly doubled over the last decade, but this still comprises only a small proportion of student employment.

- > In Spring 1996, 36,171 students who attended university full-time also had full-time jobs. This was a relatively small proportion of students when compared to the number of full-time students with part-time jobs.
- > 370,000 full-time students worked part-time, more than 10 times the number working full-time. As students studying full-time would not usually be in a position to work full-time as well, this was to be expected.
- > By Spring 2006 the number of full-time students with full-time jobs nearly doubled to 67,324. However, this still represented approximately only one in 10 working students.
- > By 2006, the number of full-time students with part-time jobs grew by 192,685, an increase of 51 per cent.

In contrast, the number of part-time students with jobs actually fell between 1996 and 2006.

- > There were 382,707 part-time students in employment in Spring 1996.
- > This fell to just 340,846 by Spring 2006, a reduction of almost 11 per cent.

There has been a growth in part-time students with part-time jobs.

- > The number of part-time students with part-time jobs rose by 45 per cent, but in numerical terms this represented a relatively small growth from 46,745 to 67,785.
- > This contrasts with a fall in part-time students working full-time from 335,962 to 273,061, a decline of nearly 19 per cent.

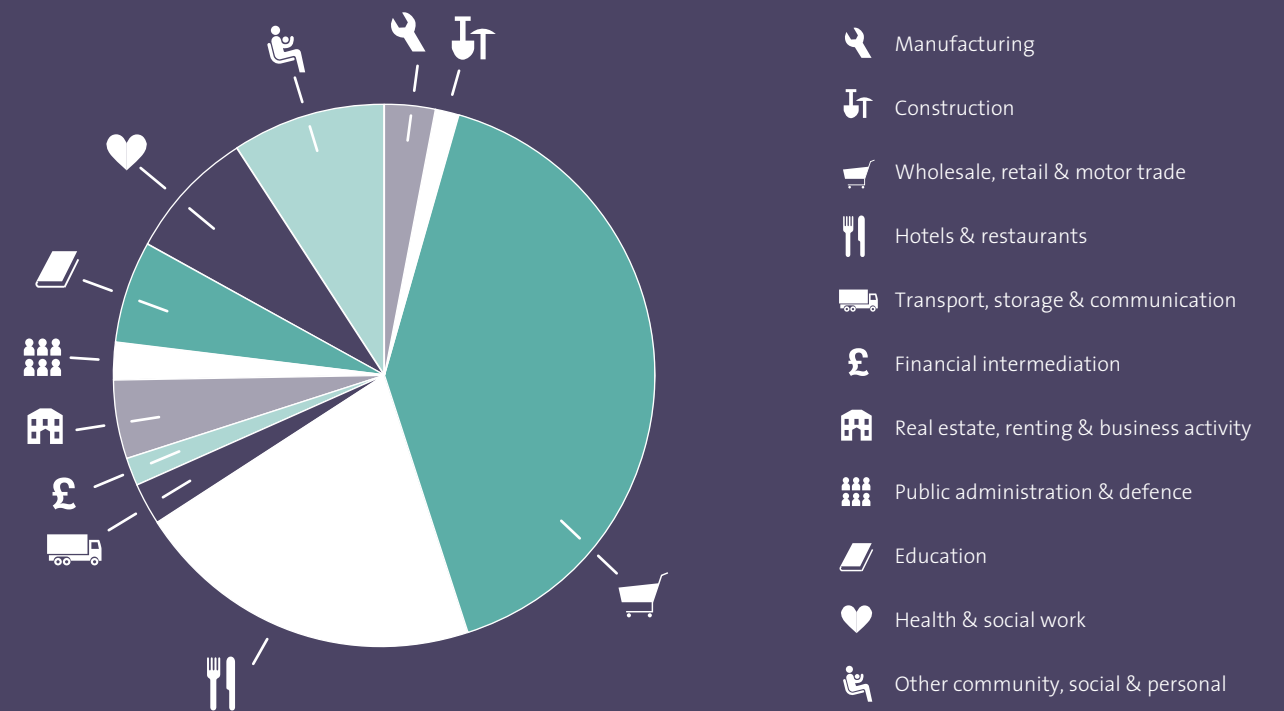
# 3 Where students work

Two sectors account for the vast majority of student employment: retail and hospitality. Together these make up nearly two-thirds of the paid employment of full-time students.

Among all full-time students, the wholesale, retail and motor trade category accounts for more than 40 per cent of employment, with nearly half a million students working in that sector. Nearly a quarter of a million full-time students work in the hotels and restaurants sector, equivalent to just over one in five of the working student population. Beyond these two industries, no other sector accounts for more than nine per cent of working students.

For full-time students aged between 18 and 25, the picture remains broadly similar. In this age group the wholesale, retail and motor trade accounts for more than 43 per cent of employment while 23 per cent of full-time students work in the hotels and restaurants sector. No other single sector accounts for more than eight per cent of working students.

The pie chart below breaks down the wholesale, retail and motor trade and the hotels and restaurants sectors into more detail and compares them with other sectors.

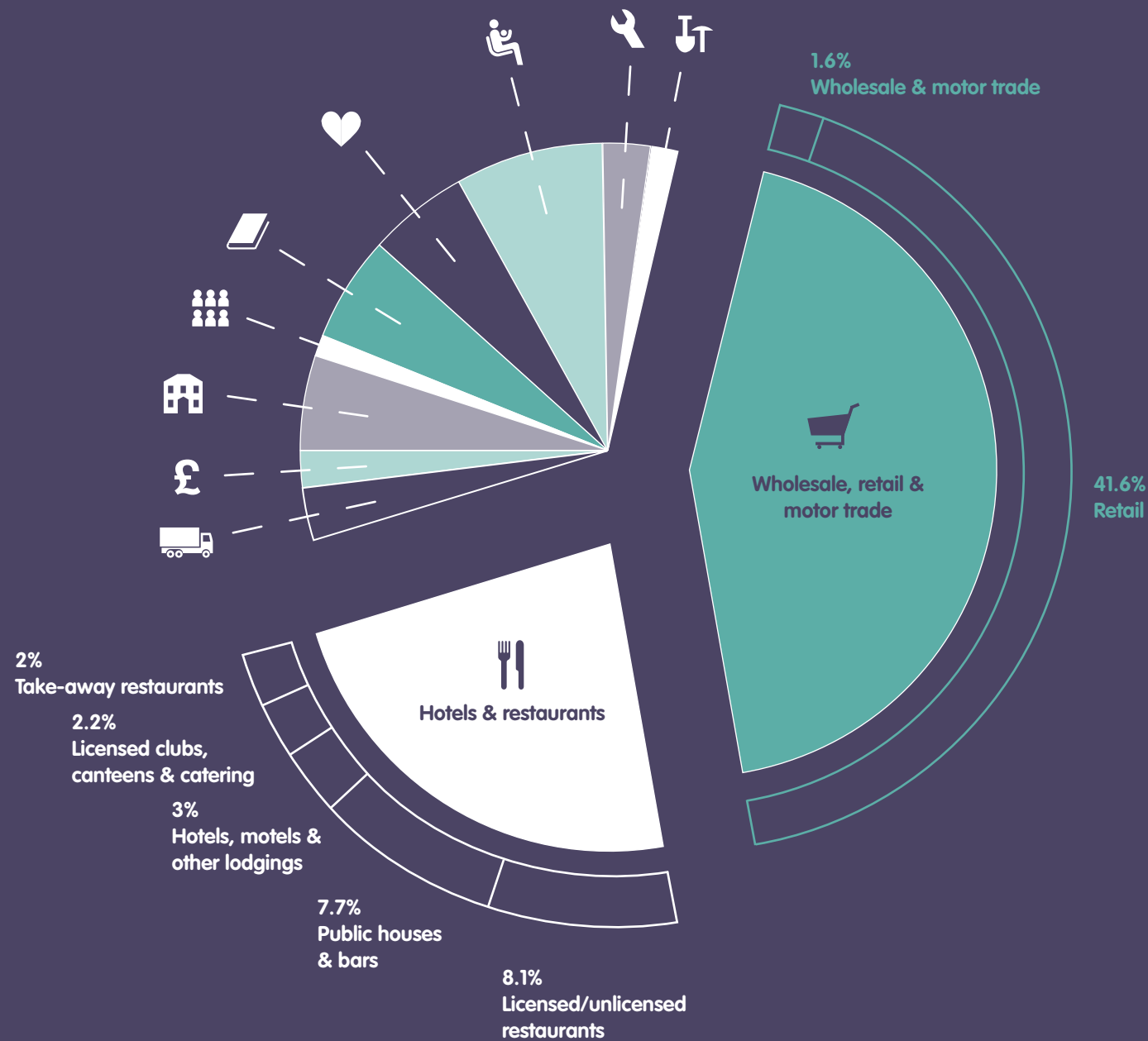


Full-time student employment by industry – all age groups

Labour Force Survey

# 4

## Differences in employment between men and women



Full-time student employment by industry – aged 18 to 25

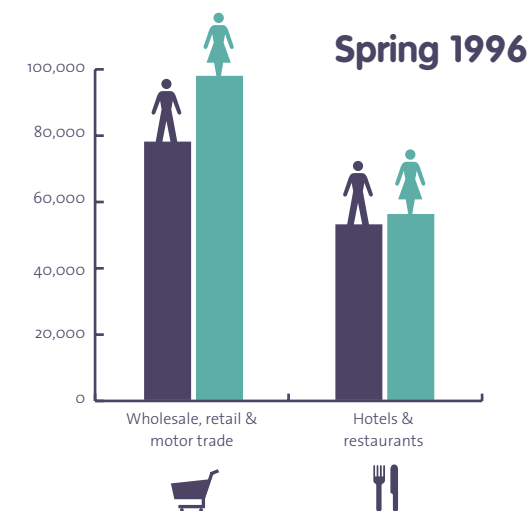
Labour Force Survey

The largest single concentration of full-time student employment is in retail. More than 40 per cent of 18 to 25 year old full-time students with jobs work in this sector. Restaurants are the next largest employers of full-time students, accounting for eight per cent of employment. This is closely followed by public houses and bars, which employ nearly 50,000 full-time students, representing 7.7 per cent of student employment in the age group.



56% of all full-time students undertake paid work. 52% of all male full-time students work, in comparison to 59% of all female full-time students.

According to the latest edition of the Student Income and Expenditure Survey (SIES), carried out for the Department for Education and Skills, more than half of all full-time students undertake some form of paid employment. The proportion of female students who work is slightly higher, at 59 per cent, compared to 52 per cent of male full-time students<sup>3</sup>.



Full-time student employment by gender – aged 18 to 25

Labour Force Survey, Spring 2006

Overall, the rise in student employment has been more marked among women rather than men. For full-time students of both genders, employment rose by 54 per cent among those aged 18 to 25. For men the increase was 47 per cent, while for women employment rose by more than two-thirds (67.5 per cent).

The retail sector has seen a major increase in student employment. The number of full-time students employed in retail has risen by 57 per cent. The increase has been virtually the same for both men and women.

Student employment in hospitality has risen by just over a third, with the number of full-time students aged 18 to 25 employed increasing by 34.7 per cent. However, there is a clear gender split: the number of male full-time students working in this sector has grown by 22.9 per cent since Spring 1996. The number of female students increased by 45.8 per cent, double the rate among male students.

In Spring 1996, 51.4 per cent of 18 to 25 year old full-time students working in hotels and restaurants were women. By Spring 2006, the proportion of female students working in the sector had grown to 56 per cent, with a corresponding fall in male students employed to just 44 per cent.

<sup>3</sup> Student Income and Expenditure Survey 2004/2005, Finch et al, Institute of Employment Studies/National Centre for Social Research, 2006

# 5 Pay and conditions for working students

In terms of labour market turnover, hotels and restaurants represents by far the most mobile sector in the economy.

Across the whole economy, just under one in five employees has been in their job for less than a year. In retail, the figure is one in four.

However, the hotel and restaurant sector has the highest turnover of all with more than a third of employees in post for less than a year. The sector is reliant upon a casual workforce, of which students are a significant part.

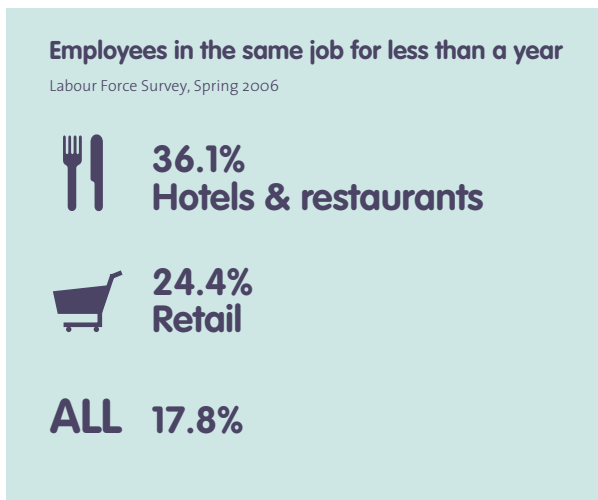
According to the latest SIES figures, rates of pay for full-time students in continuous work – as opposed to casual jobs – averaged approximately £5.73 an hour over the whole academic year and £6.10 during term time<sup>4</sup>. These rates suggest that students are concentrated in some of the lowest paying jobs. This is born out by the fact that students are concentrated in retail and hotels and catering, which have some of the lowest average rates of pay.

Figures from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings show that the average hourly rate of pay for all employees is £13.13. Measured against this, the average hourly rates in retail of £9.35 and in hotels and restaurants of £7.91 are very low.

Given that the majority of students are likely to occupy part-time jobs within those sectors, it is worth examining how average hourly rates for part-time work compare in retail and hotels and restaurants.

The average hourly rate of pay for all part-time female employees is £8.62. For all male part-time employees it is £9.68. The retail trade and the hotels and restaurants sectors have the lowest average rates of pay for both part-time men and part-time women. For men the rates for retail and hotels and restaurants are £6.21 an hour and £5.70 an hour. For part-time women the rates are even lower at £5.98 and £5.51 respectively.

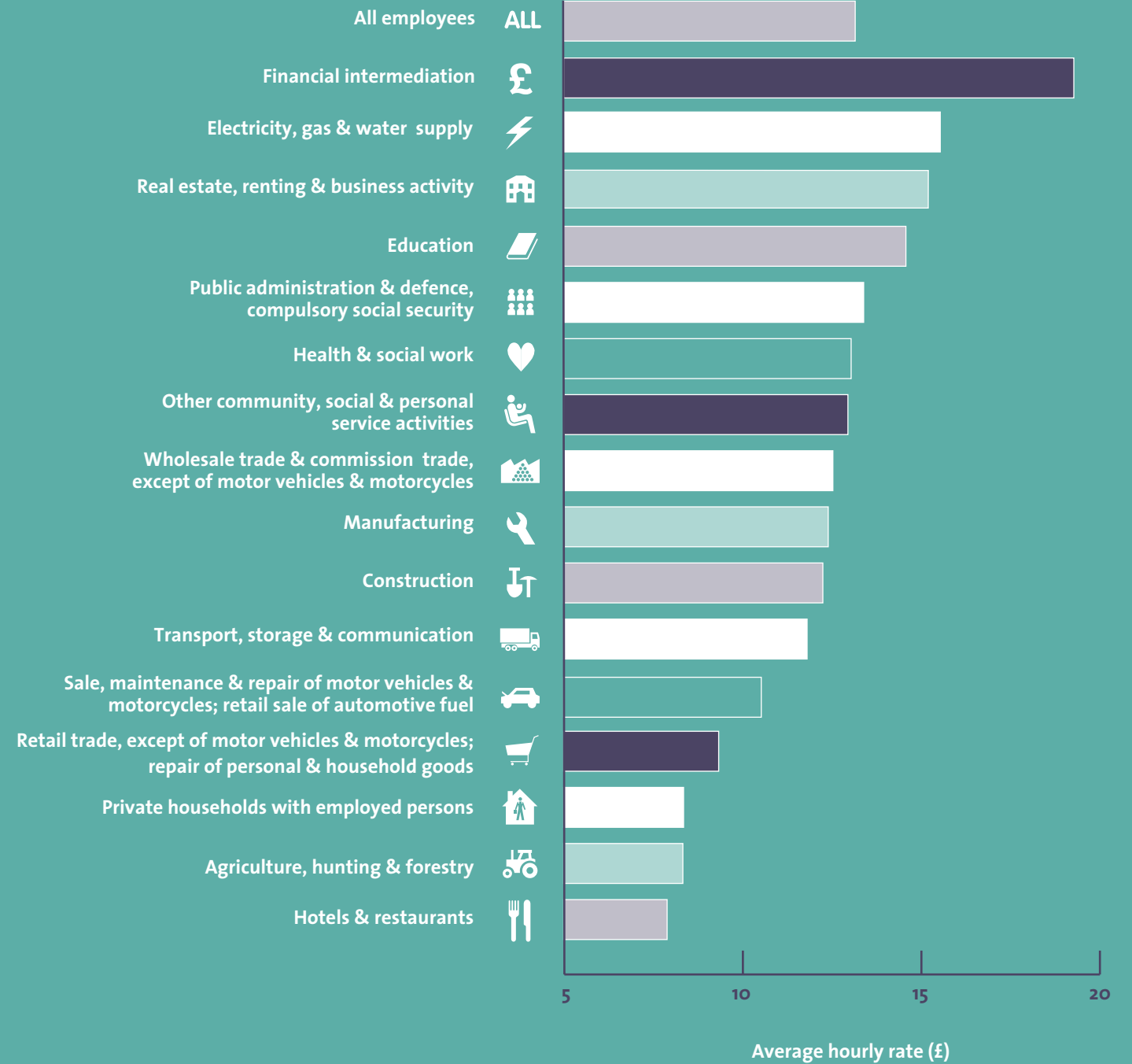
<sup>4</sup> Student Income and Expenditure Survey 2004/2005, Finch et al, Institute of Employment Studies/National Centre for Social Research, 2006



**The retail trade and the hotels and restaurants sectors have the lowest average rates of pay for both part-time men and part-time women.**

## Gross hourly pay by sector, all full-time employees

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, Office for National Statistics



# 6

## The impact of employment on students

### Gross hourly pay by sector, all part-time employees

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, Office for National Statistics



Proportion of those who feel affected by undertaking paid work while studying (%)

Source: NatCen/IES SIES Survey 2004/05

The latest SIES estimates that full-time students in regular or continuous jobs throughout the academic year worked on average 14 hours a week. This is consistent with previous studies.

However, previous SIES figures indicated that one in five full-time students worked between 15 to 20 hours a week; and a further one in five worked over 20 hours a week<sup>5</sup>.

According to the latest SIES figures, nearly 40 per cent of full-time students with jobs felt that their employment had impacted upon their studies. Among part-time students, more than half felt that this was the case.

More than three-quarters of those full-time students who felt their paid work had an impact on their studies stated that working meant they spent less time studying and reading. Around two-thirds reported that lack of time impacted on the quality of their studies. A similar proportion reported increased stress levels and feeling overloaded. Moreover, a quarter reported missing lectures or classes.

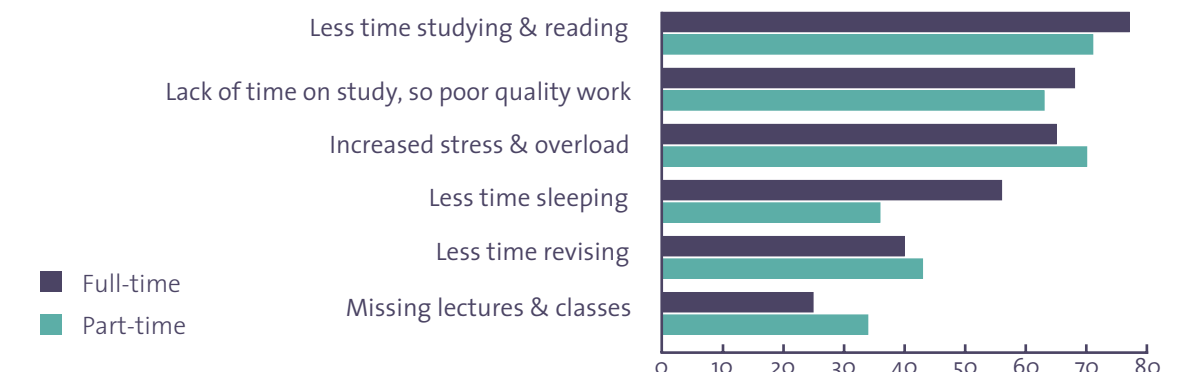
Figures from a Labour Research Department (LRD) survey commissioned by the TUC found similar results. A quarter of working students in the LRD survey reported missing lectures, seminars or tutorials while almost one in five had missed deadlines.

Ten per cent of students have thought about dropping out for financial reasons<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, lecturers teaching ten per cent of students have expressed concern at the effect of employment on those students' academic work.

The SIES found a similar pattern of impact for part-time students who worked while they studied. Just over 70 per cent reported having reduced time for studying and reading. Almost as many stated that they felt increased stress levels as a result of combining work and studies. Nearly two-thirds complained of a lack of study time affecting quality of output. More than a third of part-time students who felt their paid work had an impact on their studies reported missing lectures and classes.

How those affected felt work implicated their studies (%)

Source: NatCen/IES SIES Survey 2004/05

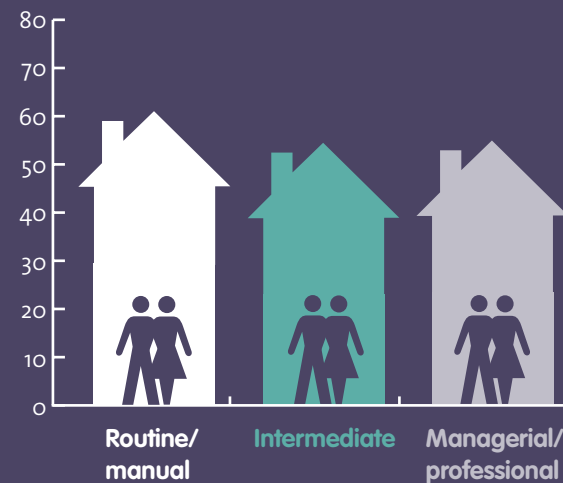


5 2002/03 Student Income and Expenditure Survey: Students' Income, Expenditure and Debt in 2002/03 and changes since 1998/99, Professor Claire Callender, London South Bank University and David Wilkinson, The Policy Studies Institute, Nov 2003  
6 Students@Work.2000, TUC, Feb 2000



# 7 The background of working students

There is a significant likelihood that the poorer a student's background, the more likely they are to need to work. Some 55 per cent of students from managerial, professional or intermediate family backgrounds undertook paid employment. Among students from routine/manual backgrounds, however, 61 per cent had undertaken some form of paid work. This suggests that one of the determining factors of whether a student has to work is the degree to which their family is able to support them through their studies.



Proportion of full-time students undertaking paid work, by socio-economic background (%)

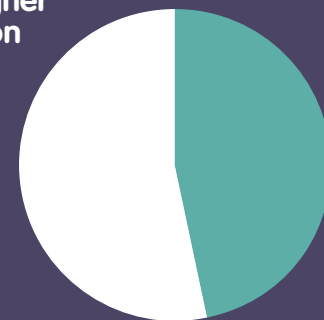
NatCen/IES SIES Survey 2004/05

The evidence regarding parental experience of higher education further supports this notion. A higher proportion of working students came from backgrounds where their parents had no experience of higher education.

Just over half, 53 per cent, of students whose parents had been through higher education had some form of paid employment. This contrasts with 60 per cent of those students whose parents had not been through higher education working.

Given that obtaining qualifications is deemed to help individuals earn more income, the statistics provide further indication that students' need to work during their studies is correlated with the resources they can draw upon from their own households.

Parents did not have higher education

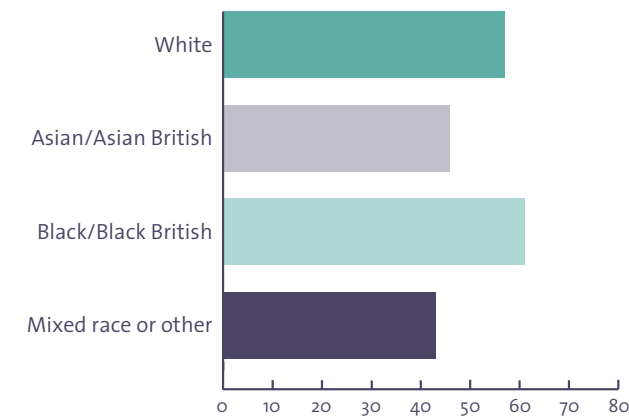


Parents had higher education

Proportion of full-time students undertaking paid work, by parental experience of higher education (%)

NatCen/IES SIES Survey 2004/05

Figures show that there is also a variation in employment depending on the ethnic background of students. Less than half of students (46 per cent) who categorised themselves as Asian or Asian British worked and only 43 per cent of students from mixed race backgrounds worked. This compared with 57 per cent of white students and 61 per cent of Black or Black British students.



Proportion of full-time students undertaking paid work, by ethnicity (%)

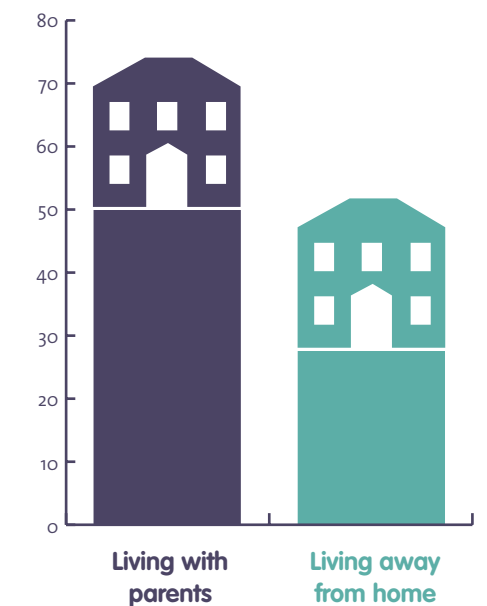
NatCen/IES SIES Survey 2004/05

Full-time students who lived at home were far more likely to work than those who lived away. Just over half of students who lived away from home had jobs. However, nearly three-quarters of students who lived with their parents worked.

According to Callender and Wilkinson<sup>7</sup>, those students most likely to live with their parents were from minority ethnic communities (44 per cent compared to less than one in five white students) and were from the lowest social classes (29 per cent compared to 20 per cent from the highest social classes). They were nearly twice as likely to be attending new universities (28 per cent compared to 16 per cent at old universities).

Proportion of full-time students undertaking paid work, by living circumstances (%)

NatCen/IES SIES Survey 2004/05



<sup>7</sup> 2002/03 Student Income and Expenditure Survey: Students' Income, Expenditure and Debt in 2002/03 and changes since 1998/99, Professor Claire Callender, London South Bank University and David Wilkinson, The Policy Studies Institute, Nov 2003

# 8

## Conclusion

As this report illustrates, employment among students has grown in recent years. The main sources of work are sectors such as retail and hotels and restaurants. Although there are some very good employers in these sectors which recognise trade unions and offer good terms and conditions, there are also many examples of exploitation in those sectors.

The low average pay reported by students reflects the concentration of students in low-paying sectors. However, it is highly likely that the concentration of students who are largely unorganised by trade unions reinforces the low pay in those sectors.

It is clear that the need to work to support themselves financially has a significant impact upon the academic performance of students. Given that nearly 40 per cent of full-time students and more than half of part-time students with jobs felt that their employment had impacted upon their studies, there is great cause for concern. For many students this can mean less time spent studying and increased stress levels. A quarter of full-time students and more than a third of part-time students reported missing lectures or classes.

Such consequences of paid employment are likely to be felt disproportionately by students from poorer backgrounds. Nearly two-thirds of students from routine/manual backgrounds had undertaken some form of paid work, compared to only 55 per cent of students from other backgrounds. Moreover, a higher proportion of working students, 60 per cent, came from backgrounds where their parents had no experience of higher education, compared to just over half of students whose parents had been through higher education.

As employment among students continues to grow, there is a role for both trade unions and students' unions to address the welfare needs of students. A modern rights agenda for students must include the workplace as well as the campus.

The new partnership between the NUS and the TUC, symbolised by the protocol agreement, provides an opportunity to develop just such an agenda. Jointly, we will support initiatives to ensure that students gain a proper understanding of their rights at work and are protected in the workplace.

**A modern rights agenda for students must include the workplace as well as the campus.**

# Appendix

## PROTOCOL GOVERNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS AND THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS



# Appendix \* \* \*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol covers the relationship between the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC).
- 1.2 The NUS and the TUC are affiliate-based, democratic organisations committed to representing the best interests of their members.
- 1.3 The TUC represents six and a half million workers in 64 affiliated trade unions.
- 1.4 The NUS is the representative organisation for students in further and higher education, and represents 5.2 million students in over 700 affiliated students' unions, guilds, associations and councils.
- 1.5 The elements of this protocol cover three areas:
  - > strategic engagement between both organisations
  - > support at an operational level
  - > constitutional relations between the NUS and the TUC.

## 2. Overarching principles

- 2.1 Both the NUS and the TUC are committed to ensuring that working students are protected from exploitation in their employment. Trade unions can help students to understand their employment rights and how to ensure that they are protected from exploitation in the workplace, especially through trade union membership. Students' unions can help trade unions to understand the issues facing working students.
- 2.2 Beyond issues of immediate concern to the world of work or further and higher education, both the trade union movement and the student movement share a concern to develop a new generation of activists who are engaged in the political process, participants in their local communities and campaigners for social justice.
- 2.3 Developing a relationship between the NUS and the TUC around a common belief in the need for a more proactive organising culture in the

workplace and on campuses is a key element for both organisations of building a broad coalition in favour of a shared vision of a fairer and more equitable society.

- 2.4 Central to this shared vision is a joint commitment to equality for women, young and older workers, people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers and students.

## 3. Strategic engagement

- 3.1 A major aspiration of both organisations is that a more activist based culture is developed and that there is a greater understanding of trade unions within the student body.
- 3.2 Similarly, both organisations aim to develop a greater understanding of the employment problems faced by working students and to engage in projects and initiatives which help trade unions to recruit and represent students who are in work.
- 3.3 Both organisations also believe that activism and representation should continue beyond further and higher education and that as far as possible graduates should be encouraged to join the relevant trade union.
- 3.4 A key element of the partnership between the NUS and the TUC will be support for union efforts to organise working students. A further element will be to support the efforts of unions in recruiting graduates in career professions.
- 3.5 Through this protocol both the NUS and the TUC will agree to establish a single, coordinated approach to joint activity between the trade union and student movement, thereby adding a greater degree of credibility and long-term planning to their activities.
- 3.6 The NUS and the TUC will agree to establish a joint committee made up of representatives from both organisations. This committee will act as the main vehicle for liaison between the NUS and the TUC.

- 3.7 In particular, this committee will work with TUC-affiliated trade unions to support and coordinate recruitment initiatives among working students within NUS-affiliated students' unions.

- 3.8 This committee will also work with the NUS and relevant trade unions to develop and strengthen links with graduates in unionised professions and those pursuing careers in non-unionised sectors of the economy.

## 4. Operational support

- 4.1 The NUS will, through its regional offices, facilitate trade union access to students through its constituent students' unions and support trade union campaigns to organise working students.
- 4.2 The NUS will encourage its constituent members to use best practice in their employment practices and to recognise trade unions to represent their staff including working students.
- 4.3 The NUS will also encourage students' union officers to work with campus trade unions in further and higher education.
- 4.4 The TUC will offer support through the Organising Academy to develop student activists and to train student union officers. The TUC will also support NUS initiatives to retrain existing regional officers as regional organisers.
- 4.5 The TUC will work with the NUS to establish a programme to identify and recruit potential activists and to create a national network of students to build campaigns on campuses and in workplaces.
- 4.6 The TUC will also work with the NUS to develop its staff in the regions and to build a complementary network of professional regional organisers able to harness the trained activists towards NUS and trade union campaigns.

## 5. Constitutional relations

- 5.1 Both the NUS and the TUC respect each other's independence, but both organisations also believe that the aims set out above can be best pursued through participation of the NUS in some of the TUC's decision-making structures and of the TUC in some of NUS's decision-making structures.
- 5.2 Under the terms of this agreement, therefore, NUS will be invited to send an observing delegation of six representatives to the TUC Young Members' Conference.
- 5.3 NUS will be invited to send two representatives with observer status to the TUC Young Members' Forum.
- 5.4 NUS will be invited to send observers to the appropriate regional structures of the TUC.
- 5.5 The TUC will be invited to send an observing delegation of six representatives to NUS National Conference.
- 5.6 The TUC will be invited to send an observer to relevant policy zone sub-committees of the NUS structures.
- 5.7 Where reserved business is under discussion in any TUC or NUS structure, it is understood that observers may be asked to withdraw from those meetings for the duration of those items.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This protocol represents a strengthening of the relationship between the NUS and the TUC at a time when a growing number of students are coming into contact with the world of work. There is much that trade unions can do to support students in employment, but there is also a great deal that the student movement can contribute to the continuing development of a vibrant trade union movement. The elements of this agreement symbolise a powerful association in favour of social justice, collective organisation and democratic participation on campuses, in workplaces and within the wider community.

