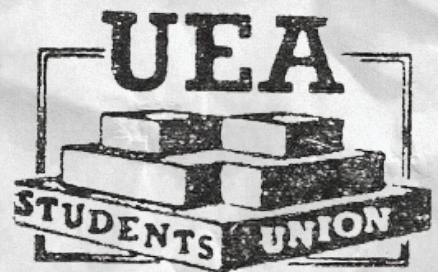




THE

UEA STUDENT MANIFESTO

2024



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Welcome



to the 2024 UEA Student Manifesto!

Hello!

Thank you for reading the UEA Student Manifesto 2024. This document outlines the political views and opinions of UEA students, what is important to them now and what they would do if they were in power. This manifesto is based on data collected in the weeks following up to the 2024 general election - we surveyed over one hundred students on a range of issues, some overtly political and some less so. In the next few pages we will break down this data and explain our interesting results!

This election follows an interesting period in our universities history: from the COVID-19 pandemic that closed campuses and paused all of our lives, the ending of the Erasmus scheme thanks to Brexit, a cost-of-living crisis that has put students in serious financial trouble, and now a higher-education funding crisis that could close some universities for good.

UEA Students' Union has supported students for 60 years, helping to build a community around the principles of equality, friendship, and freedom. It has helped students become active members of their local area through charity, culture and events. By hosting election hustings we hope to show that we are still key members of this constituency and community.

We hope our politicians will listen to our voices and take our views into account, whether in Norwich South or Westminster...



**Nathan Wyatt -
Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer 2023/25**

A history of UEA and the Students' Union

2023-24 marks UEA and UEASU's 60th Anniversary! The two organisations have had a significant impact on Norwich's culture, demographics, and particularly its politics.

UEA has a rich history of political engagement, dating back to the university's founding. UEA students have proudly stood at the forefront of every defining political issue of the past 60 years - in the '60s and '70s students on our campus were at the centre of the anti-war movement in the UK, graffitiing campus in support of Jan Palach and his self-immolation against the Prague Spring. UEA students fought to end apartheid in South Africa on our campus throughout the '80s and 90s, even setting up the SASSAF "Southern African Student Support and Aid Fund" Coffee Bar and sandwich café upstairs in the Students' Union building.

In the noughties and 2010s, UEA students marched against the introduction of tuition fees, supporting demonstrations organised by the National Union of Students that called for grants instead of fees, the removal of top-up fees and eventually, rallying against the increase of fees to their current level of £9250 per year.

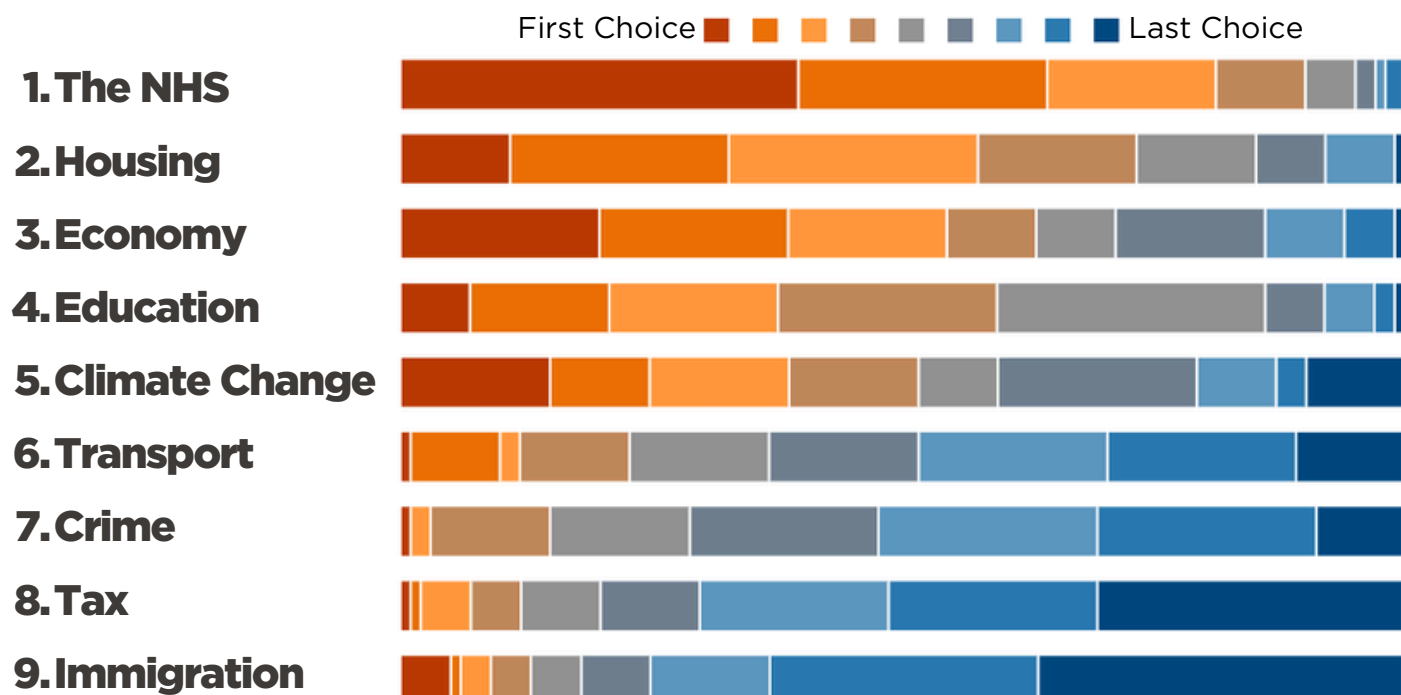
Since COVID, UEA students have campaigned forcefully against cuts to our education, support for transgender students, promoting accessibility, and fighting for the rights of students in Palestine.

The student manifesto highlights the key concerns of students in Norwich as of June 2024, and shows what could be the most defining political issue of the next decade...



The issues that matter to us

As part of our survey, we made students prioritise some key policy areas. The only prompt they received was ‘rank these issues on how important they are to you’.



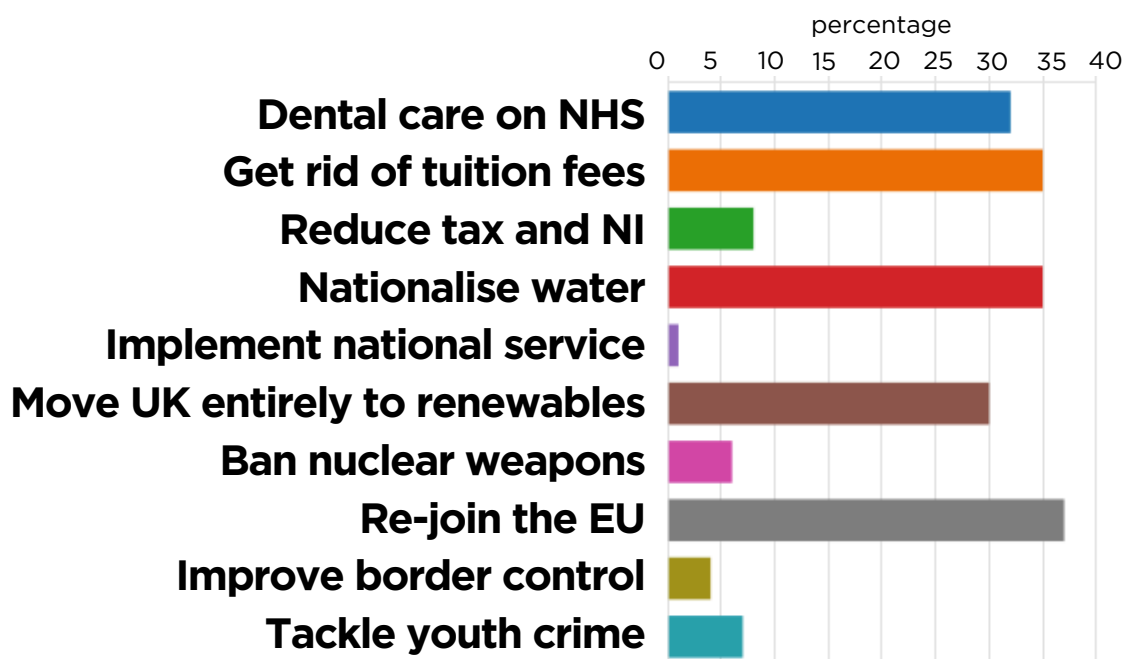
Unsurprisingly, the NHS was a huge priority for students, with over 40 percent of respondents putting it as the area that was most important to them. With many university students hoping to one day become doctors, nurses and GPs, is it any wonder that they are so passionate about the state of their future employer? UEA is lucky to be home to the Norwich and Norfolk University Hospital, just a ten minute walk from campus. We see how crucial these services are and how important it is that they are properly supported by our government.

Housing was the second most important area for students. With many living in sub-par student accommodation, paying exorbitant fees to live in former family homes in the ‘Golden Triangle’ with poor insulation and growing mould, it isn’t unexpected for students to want housing reform. With the huge increase to mortgage rates since 2022, home ownership seems an unachievable goal for the average student now, instead of an expectation.

Immigration placed last on our list, with 64% putting it in either 8th or 9th place. UEA doesn’t care about the culture wars, we just want the basics to work!

If we were Prime Minister...

The next question in our survey asked students what two changes they would make from a choice of ten hotbed political issues. A selection of left and right wing policies were presented, some of which have featured in campaign pledges from the mainstream political parties in this election period...



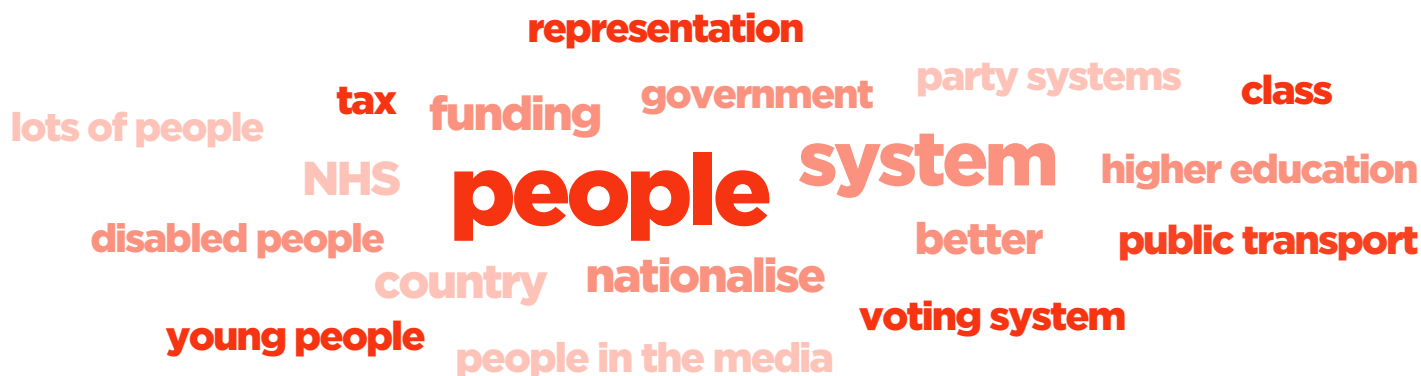
The results from this question highlight the unpopularity of the recently unveiled Conservative party plan to introduce national service for eighteen year olds. Just 12.5% of those voting conservative at UEA picked national service, despite it being their flagship policy regarding young people this election season. Just 1% of respondents viewed it as a priority.

The most popular choice, just marginally beating tuition fees and water nationalisation, was to re-join the European Union! This could be seen as a surprising choice, given that first year UEA students would have been just ten years old when we voted to leave the EU. However, this choice has had huge economic ramifications, and robbed many young people of the opportunity to study and live in Europe. Young people have heard 'Brexit means Brexit' for most of their life, and still don't seem to buy it. Maybe it's time for a mainstream political party to start talking about it again...

All things considered, students aren't asking for much! They want to be able to see a dentist, access clean and reliable water, make university more accessible and transition to a more sustainable society. These aren't huge demands - the UK can do these things and we want it to!

What we would change

The next question in our survey asked students ‘if there was one thing they could change about the UK, what would it be?’. Respondents were allowed to write as much or as little as they want. Here are some of the key themes:



It’s easy to pessimistically read into this data, particularly when it looks like UEA students’ top wish for improving the UK is, quite simply, to swap out its inhabitants. However when you look into the individual responses a more positive picture is painted:

“To make the country more accessible and caring for disabled people.”

“Reform the asylum seekers system so people can be processed faster, and fairer.”

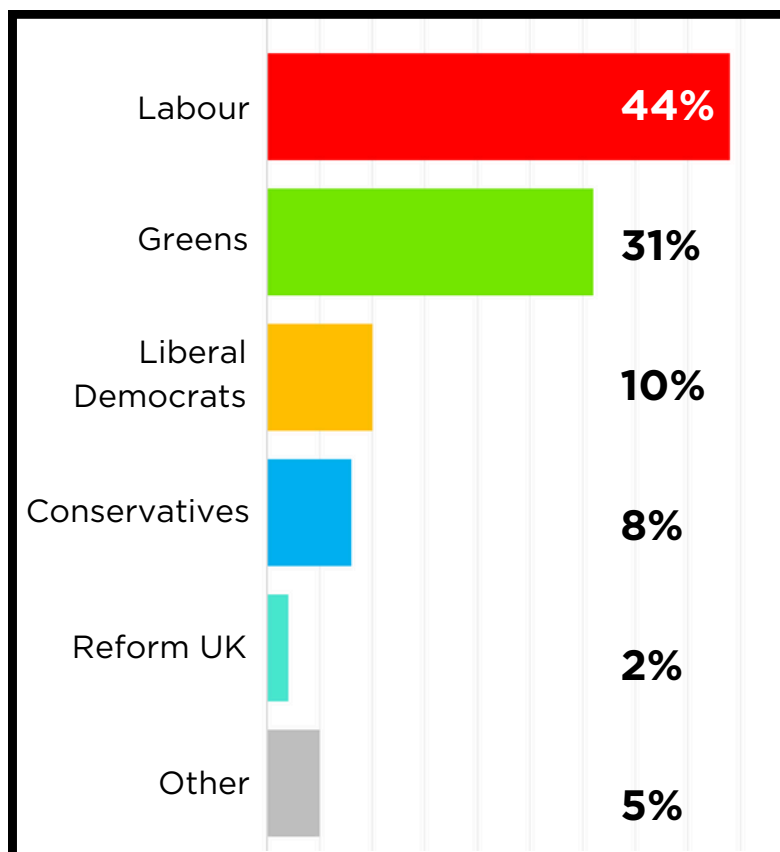
“Develop a comprehensive and independent civic education for young people to develop a population which can confidently engage in decision making about their futures”

The most pressing demands from students were the need for institutional and systematic reform, whether that be in education, the NHS or housing, and the desire for nationalisation of our industries, with a particular focus on the rail network. Norwich, albeit a lovely city, is also quite a remote location. Students often travel hundreds of miles a year between home and university, and so suffer first hand the unreliability of the UK’s privately-owned rail infrastructure. Paying huge sums of money for services that are often running late doesn’t sit well with UEA students, especially with one respondent who simply put that they would “make the trains cost less.”

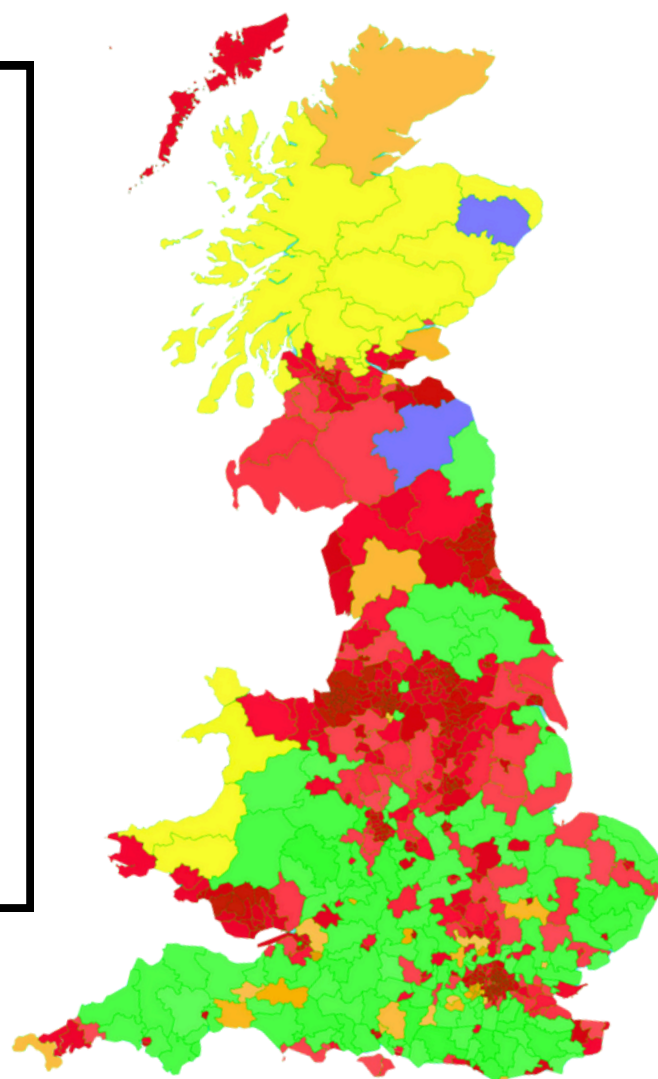
Many students spoke about the need for changes to our voting system - particularly with our first past the post elections. One student wrote that they would “reform the voting system to one that actually represents the views of the people, rather than one that has forced us into a two-party system.”

Student Voting Intention

The next question in our survey asked students “if you were going to vote today, what party would you choose?” The results of this poll can be seen below on the left hand side. On the right hand side is a projection map, showing how these results would play out on a national level in a general election.



Predicted Seats: Labour 443, Greens 137, Lib Dem 32, Conservative 2, Reform 0
Labour Majority of 236



Geographical Boundary Lines courtesy of Ordnance Survey OpenData © Crown copyright 2013. Copyright Electoral Calculus 2023

75 percent of UEA students chose a left wing/centre-left party, in comparison to just 10 percent choosing a right wing/far-right party. This puts UEA students in line with the voting intention of 18-24 year olds who, according to YouGov, 71 percent choose a left wing/centre-left party and just 14 percent choose a right wing/far-right party.

The Liberal Democrats are clearly yet to win the trust of UEA students back after the tuition fee policy u-turn in the early 2010's, however 10 percent is comparable to current nationwide polling for the Lib Dems, which averages around 9-13 percent.

Concrete Confessions

After asking students what party they were voting for, we then asked them why. Respondents could answer as much or as little as they wanted.

Labour

For those voting for Labour, the motivations were clear. 25% of respondents mentioned 'Tories' in their reasoning, usually accompanied by some variation of 'to get the ___ out', 'I hate the ___', or 'the ___ deserve to be demolished'. For those voting Labour, it was clear that this wasn't necessarily a vote for that party, but rather a vote against the other. One student wrote that they 'dislike the labour party but I support removing the Tories.'

Some Labour voting students mentioned the local MP for Norwich South, Clive Lewis. One wrote that they like "Clive Lewis, I think he does a good job representing us.". Despite the Labour Party not being viewed favourably by students overall, it seems that our local MP has had an impact on the community here at UEA.

Greens

For those voting for the Greens, there were three main reasons: support for their environmental policies, disillusion with the Labour party, and support for the Greens' stance on Palestine. One student wrote that they "have a pretty clear manifesto with principled candidates. They also don't shy away from speaking up about the massacre occurring in Gaza. My only issue with them is their distrust over nuclear energy." Although the high proportion of green voters may appear to be just a protest vote against Labour, this answer indicates that actually there is real support for (most of) their climate based pledges and environmental policy.

Liberal Democrats

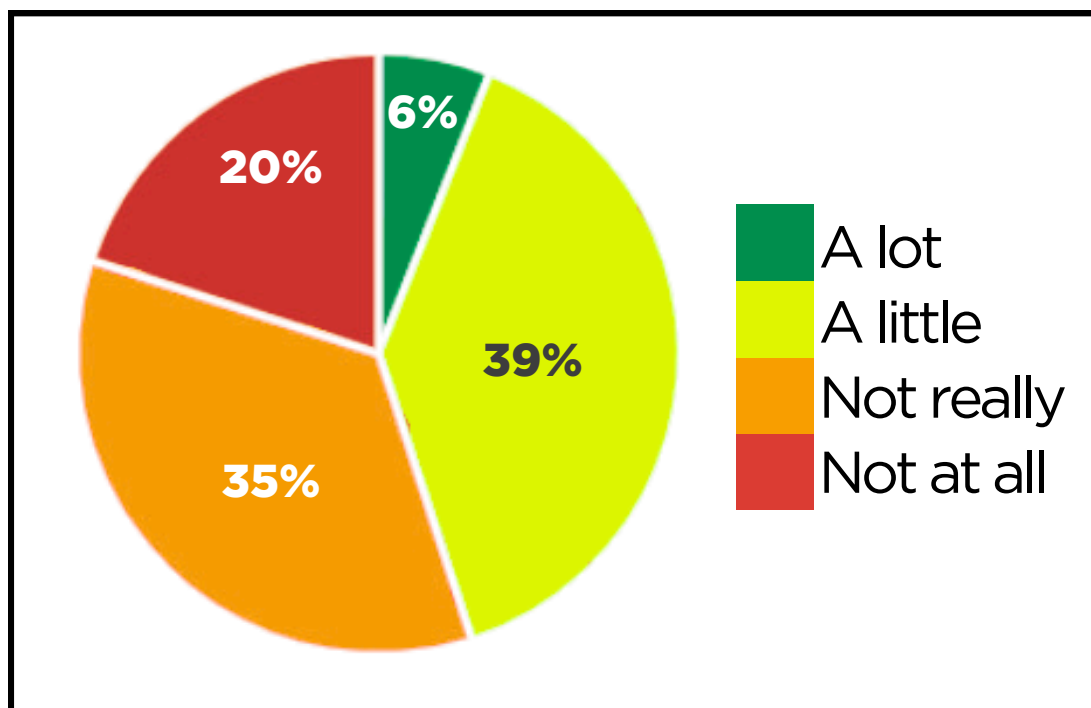
The Liberal Democrats received support from student voters for three main reasons: their water pollution plan, ideological reasons, and dislike for both Labour and the Tories. There was a pragmatic tendency from those choosing Lib Dem however, with one student saying they 'also support the Labour party', and another who said 'if the tories were looking like they might take the win I would vote labour'

Conservatives and Reform UK

Of the Conservative and Reform voting students that we found, there was a general dislike for Labour and Starmer - with one student writing that they 'don't trust him.'

Representation in Politics

The next question in our survey asked students whether they felt that the mainstream political parties represent them. Respondents were given 4 choices: a lot, a little, not really and not at all.



Of all the respondents who will vote at the next election, just six percent said that they felt that the mainstream parties represent them a lot. It should worry our politicians that students, a sizeable demographic in this country, feel so underrepresented on a national level, particularly when the left/centre-left parties are hoping that the student vote will carry them to victory in many constituencies.

Students don't often forgive political parties who pretend or simply refuse to represent them. You only have to see how the Conservative vote has collapsed amongst the young in the past decade; In 2010, just under one third of 18-34 year olds voted for the Conservatives at the general election. Current polling estimates that just 8.5 percent of 18-34 year olds will vote Conservative in the 2024 General Election. Norwich South was held by a Liberal Democrat from 2010-2015, but changed hands after the coalition failed to abolish tuition fees. The student vote has serious influence - just make sure you listen to us!

The National Union of Students' 'Manifesto for our Future'

This past year UEA Students' Union has worked closely with the National Union of Students, with our officers attending the student all party-parliamentary group to discuss housing policy, cost of living crisis and more.

Nathan has worked with NUS vice-president for higher education Chloe Field on the 'Manifesto for Our Future', setting out what students and apprentices want to see from the next government to improve student life, education and society as a whole on a national level.

The manifesto has five sections:

1: In the first 100 days, break the student crisis cycle

Students are struggling with basic necessities like food, rent, and travel. 94% of students are cutting back on necessities.

2: Invest in a thriving future, invest in education

Education is the only thing that will equip us to solve the great challenges of the future. No more sticking plasters: we need funding and curriculum reform.

3: Homes for our futures

We have 50p per week left after our rent. Inflated property value harms everyone other than the lenders.

4: A welcoming and inclusive future

The 'hostile environment' and the 'culture wars' have divided our society, stoked hate, and increased racism.

5: A healthy future

We need to address both the mental health crisis right now and the root issues that are making us unwell.



International Students

UEA is a broad and diverse community- we are lucky enough to have over 3,500 international students, from over 100 countries around the world! However in recent years being an international student has been made increasingly difficult. Just this year, UEA has seen a 40% drop in international students following a tightening of VISA restrictions. Fluctuations in currency, particularly the Nigerian Naira, have meant many international students could no longer afford the fees they initially agreed to.

While those who are from commonwealth nations, including Malta and Cyprus, are eligible to vote, many international students are unable. Because so few of our international community have their voices heard in this regard, it is all the more important that we amplify their concerns.

We approached our international student officers, asking them what the biggest troubles international students face are.

Ali Sabba, International Student Officer 2024/25

1. Financial Challenges: High tuition fees and living costs, combined with limited work opportunities due to visa restrictions.
2. Cultural and Social Integration: Language barriers and difficulties in adapting to new social norms and academic practices, leading to isolation and homesickness.



Liz Bigalke, International Student Officer 2022/23

As an international student I feel really overlooked. Being elected by UEA students has introduced me to this country's democracy which I now know a lot better than the process of my home country. When trying to rent as part of my degree or after graduation it is very difficult as you have to provide a guarantor, which most home students put their parents down for. International students don't have this opportunity as they moved here on their own.



Comments from our student leaders

We asked our student leaders what they wanted to see from the next government. Here's what they had to say:

Sam Pyle, Labour Society President 2024/25

I'd like to see a tax on wealth and a tighter windfall tax put in place in order to pay employees working in the public sector appropriately. I'd like to see a Universal Basic Income introduced to tackle the homelessness crisis our country has, and I want us to effectively tackle the climate crisis.



Naa Yarley Yartey, Green Society President 2024/25

Tackling the climate emergency must be treated with the utmost urgency. We need immediate action to prevent breaching 1.5C of warming within this parliament, protecting our economy, society, and the natural world from devastating damage. We will hold the incoming government accountable for its promises on climate action, affordable housing, ensuring a greener future for students and future generations.



William Ballantyne - Liberate Society President 2023/25

The next government must fix the growing inequalities the UK faces such as housing, education and wages. Progress must also be made to rein in privatised rail, water etc... All of whom benefit the shareholders and not the consumers who rely on them. Put people first.



Sam Calenti - Conservative Society President 2023/24

The amount of bureaucratic red tape within governmental and civil departments hinders the government carrying out any meaningful work. Many of these barriers need to be revised or fully removed so that the government can create better opportunities, more jobs and improved housing for the future of our country.



Comments from our student leaders

Amarachi Odoemela - Afro-Caribbean Society President 2023/24

I would like the next government to stick to their promise of actually halving inflation, I can't even afford to have a cheeky Nando's anymore, let alone mortgage a house in the next 10 years!



Ameer Al Magidi - Arab Society President 2023/24

As the president of the Arab society, we demand a government committed to ensuring equal opportunities and justice for all, while fostering economic growth and social cohesion. We insist on immediate action to stop the genocide in Gaza, advocating for transparent governance and respect for human rights.



Tobias Lambe, Disability Peer Support Group President 2024/25

No matter what government gets elected there is two things we will push for, accessibility and inclusive university for all. This includes courses, support system, accommodation and more. Too many students are not being able to reach their goals and thrive at university because of the system. We will be ready to advocate on behalf of all disabled students



Lilith Holland , Marxist Society President 2024/25

Out with the Tories, but no faith in a Starmer government - both are owned by the billionaires and arms dealers. We fight for a workers' government, to kick out ALL the war criminals, and to expropriate the rich!



Questions for our representatives

The final question in our survey asked students 'If you could ask your MP one question, what would you ask?' Some students interpreted this as asking their local MP, where as others talked about the MP in their home constituency. Some examples can be seen below.

Questions for Clive Lewis, Norwich South MP

Will you support full nationalisation and better public services?

How many hours do you work per week?

Why have we given up our pledge on net zero by 2030?

Why has Keir Starmer back tracked on his 'green new deal'?

What can you do in the Labour Party to support Palestine?

Will you lobby for students and students' living costs?

Why aren't you acting against SIZEWELL C and the other similar projects in the area?

How can I trust you're going to stick to your word?

What do you intend to do to fix student poverty, when students are given such little maintenance loan?



Questions for other MPs

My home MP is conservative - I'd ask him why he's voted against gay rights/marriage so many times!

Why have you chosen to stand down only now that it is looking likely you'll lose your seat - is your constituency and the people in it not worth fighting for?

Why the f*** have you ruined our water? (Mines Therese Coffey)

Conclusion

We hope this manifesto has provided a unique insight into the minds of UEA students, what issues are pertinent to them and what we would change about the UK if we had the power.

The UK is currently at a crossroads. In just under a month we could be under the stewardship of a new political party, the first time in 14 years that this has happened! It is important not to discount how monumental a cultural change this could be. Those entering their first year at UEA would not have even begun primary school when power changed hands from Gordon Brown to David Cameron.

Things have changed drastically in the past 14 years - the credit crunch, recession, the rise of the SNP, austerity, the Scottish independence referendum, the end of the coalition, the EU referendum, the rise and fall of UKIP, Windrush, Corbynmania, Boris becomes PM, COVID-19, lockdown, eat out to help out, Brexit completed, furlough scheme, the fall of Boris, Liz Truss becomes PM, the death of the Queen, Liz Truss resigns before a lettuce goes mouldy, Sunak becomes PM, and a potential recession again.

It's safe to say that students have been through a lot in the most formative decade of their lives, with their teenage years dominated by crisis after crisis. Students want and deserve a bit of stability - for many this will be their first time voting, their first time having a real say in the direction of this country.

We hope our politicians listen to our concerns and embed our thoughts and opinions into their decision making process.

Thank You!



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan".

**Nathan Wyatt -
Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer 2023/25**



uea
students' union
2024

