

POLICY PROPOSAL

Policy Title:	ATOS/MAXIMUS off our campus 2015	Date Policy Proposed:	May 2015
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Union Notes:

1. ATOS are a french IT company that were paid by the government's Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to conduct Work Capability Assessments (WCAs).
2. ATOS have since declared they are removing themselves from their contract, and the US-based company MAXIMUS has now taken over the WCA process.
3. The WCA has been criticised as unreliable and unethical. The British Medical Association in June 2012 voted unanimously to call for the WCA to be scraped 'with immediate effect and be replaced with a rigorous and safe system that does not cause unavoidable harm to some of the weakest and vulnerable in society' [1]
4. The WCA is also unreliable in that medically unqualified 'decision makers' (civil servants) in the DWP determine whether someone is classified as 'fit to work'.
5. Disability Campaign groups report that at least 1000 people have died after they had been declared 'Fit To Work' by ATOS. The Black Triangle Anti-Defamation Campaign in Defence of Disability Rights has also been recording the number of deaths that have received publicity. [2]
6. Their unreliability is further demonstrated in that 40% of appeals to ATOS decisions are successful and a further 70% when there is legal representation involved.
7. John McArdle, co-founder of Black Triangle, said MAXIMUS had been found guilty of "disability discrimination and massive financial irregularities in the use of public funds in the US".
8. Judges in the law system have also stated that the WCA discriminates and disadvantages people with mental health issues, with support from Rethink Mental Illness, the National Autistic Society, and MIND. [3]
9. ATOS have been coming onto campuses to recruit students to work for them. This could be the same possibility with MAXIMUS.

Union Believes:

1. That the unreliable methods ATOS/MAXIMUS use are not acceptable for the welfare of disabled people, as well as the DWP using third party contractors and unqualified civil servants.
2. That ATOS, MAXIMUS and the DWP's conduct and role in disability assessment is concerning, and that it has an impact on the lives of disabled students.
3. That the recent shakeup of disability benefit will have a real impact on the lives of current and future disabled students.

4. As a union, we do not condone attacks to other liberation groups (LGBT+, BME Students, Women) and Disabled People are no exception. We should not support companies or groups that have the real potential to cause physical or mental harm to our students or alumni, whether presently or in the future.

Union Resolves:

1. That the union should work with NUS Disabled Students Campaign to campaign against ATOS/MAXIMUS, and the DWP where relevant.
2. That the union should not enter into any partnership with ATOS/MAXIMUS whether that be them delivering accredited courses or recruiting employers at our University, in such a case the Students' Union will encourage and lobby the university to not invite them onto campus.
3. That the union should encourage the University to condemn ATOS/MAXIMUS and the DWP for their harmful role in disability assessment.
4. That the union should stand in solidarity with local groups that oppose the DWP/ATOS/MAXIMUS for their continual harm of using benefit sanctions for minor reasons, and forcing at risk groups of people, whether disabled or non-disabled, to rely on hardship payments or food banks.

[1] <http://bma.org.uk/news-views-analysis/news/2012/june/scrap-work-capability-assessment-doctors-demand>

[2] <http://blacktrianglecampaign.org/2014/10/21/uk-welfare-reform-deaths-updated-list-october-21st-2014/>

[3] <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/may/22/fitness-work-tests-mental-health-unfair>

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