



USS CEO BILL GALVIN AND MERCER RESIST JEP PROPOSALS



CAMPAIGN SUCCESS FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS



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UCU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

USS Update – The News Is Not Good

The Joint Expert Panel (JEP) set up by UCU and UUK completely vindicated last year's strikes and the criticisms levelled against USS's flawed valuation methodology by UCU and many others. JEP came to the unanimous conclusion that the current level of benefits could be maintained with manageable increases in contributions - 1.1% by members and 2.1% by employers. This finding has now been endorsed not only by UCU's advisors First Actuarial, but also by UUK's actuarial advisors, Aon.

It is clear that the majority, if not all employers, are also in favour of implementing the JEP recommendations. Even The University of Manchester, one of the more hardline employers, is now taking this view, as can be seen from its submission posted on Staffnet on January 25th [HERE](#)

However, **despite this widespread support for a sensible settlement, it looks like the dispute may be about to flare up again.** The CEO of USS, Bill Galvin, and USS's actuary, Mercer, continue to resist the wealth of expert opinion recommending implementation of the JEP proposals.

If they get their way, the current USS member contributions of 8% for members and 18% for employers would have to increase to as much as 11.7% for members and 24.9% for employers by April 2020, or benefits (i.e. pensions) would have to be reduced.

This could wreck the USS pension scheme and we must not let it happen. We have to be ready, however reluctantly, to mobilise again - as we did so wonderfully last year - to defend guaranteed/defined benefit pensions.

Good News for Graduate Teaching Assistants

Since passing a motion at our general meeting in September, our campaign for fair treatment of TAs has gone from strength to strength. We now have a network of TA contacts in almost every area of the university; we have launched a very successful petition, and conducted a survey providing useful information to back up our case; there are new active TA groups in several areas and the existing groups have been doing some great work to build the pressure for change.

As a result, at our second negotiating meeting, the University accepted that it should pay for all mandatory training. Positive comments were also received in relation to: ensuring TAs are paid on time by making processes more transparent and efficient; that the work being paid for is made transparent in all cases; that TAs are not asked to work (for free) outside of these arrangements. There is still work to do in terms of implementing these intentions, and we also want to develop collective processes across the University to ensure rates of pay are fair and equitable. Negotiations will continue later this month.

Pay and Equality: Last few days to get the vote out for the ballot

The last ballot had the highest turnout ever for a pay ballot by UCU. We didn't quite reach the new, unfair, 50% turnout threshold, however, so given the importance of these issues, we are going to try again. Our pay has radically declined over the last 10 years, while casualisation and workload are out of control, and the gender pay gap (17.1% at UoM) is still huge.

We can campaign on these issues locally, and we are, but we need national movement if things are to change more substantially. Our intention is to get in ahead of next year's pay claim, so that we won't be trying to campaign over an already imposed pay offer during the busy start of the academic year. Again, this may be earlier than we would have liked, but we want to be able to take action before some universities finish teaching for the year. We are not intending action of the intensity we saw around the USS dispute.

What has changed from last time? We have cleaned up our membership lists; we have developed a network responsible for getting the vote out in every division and sub-division; we are more pro-actively recording our cumulative turn-out; results will be aggregated nationally instead of by individual institution; and we are putting the key issues such as casualisation more up front in the campaign. This may or may not be enough - we are aware some members may be feeling ballot-fatigue, but we also owe it to our members who are suffering the inequalities the most in HE to do everything we can. And we can do it.

Ending the scandal of casualisation is a key priority for UCU. Locally we are also developing a campaign around fixed-term staff issues. But there are limits on what we can do on our own. We also need movement nationally on these issues, so please encourage everyone you know to vote in the current pay and equality ballot.

We know that around 30% of members will vote in ballots no matter what we do, whereas around 20-25% will rarely vote. Between these two groups are those who just need reminding and encouraging to vote. If around half of those in this middle group were to vote this time, we would easily reach the 50% turnout we need. When talking to your colleagues (UCU members) please ask if they have voted, and encourage them to do so if they have not. These extra votes may make a vital difference. Every vote counts, so please encourage everyone.

Mental Health Network

In October we held our first meeting to explore how UMUCU can better support colleagues experiencing emotional distress or who have a mental health problem.



Adam Lincoln from UCU highlighted the potential to secure changes in workplace support for mental health by campaigning under a health & safety at work agenda. Excessive workloads and poor working conditions are exacerbating mental health conditions and are contributing to increased stress among workers. UCU have put together a campaign strategy to tackle workload and workplace safety that we will be using to develop our work on mental health. If you would like more information and/or would like to join the network please contact us.

Environment

The University is a huge organisation that could make a big difference to the problems we face with climate change right now. We launched our environment survey at the end of last year and have now established a branch working group. We will be working with Unite and UNISON members to press for more action and to strengthen existing activities.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester wants everybody to play their part and a new five year Plan will be discussed at the second Green Summit on 25th March. Tickets are still available, FREE, from <https://www.quaytickets.com/gmca/Online/default.asp>

If you would like more information about how to get involved, please contact us.

Personal casework - considering a change of direction and gaining new skills ?

As you know, UCU works collectively on the behalf of our members to improve our working conditions and pay and to ensure that the employer treats staff fairly. We also assist our members on an individual basis, from general advice and guidance through to representation and legal support. If you have received help from UMUCU, then you know how important it is for us to provide individual support for our members.

At present casework is dealt with by a small team of people and we need to expand the team in order to help our growing membership. Are you able to help? Personal casework is extremely rewarding; supporting one another is what we do as a trade union and we need your help. UCU will offer training and support and we will buddy you up with an experienced case rep. We have organised a taster session on Thursday 14th March, here on campus. Lunch will be provided.

Personal Case Work - helping and supporting one another taster session, Thursday 14th March, committee room A (Knowles), Whitworth Corridor.

Please come along and find out how you can help - you can use the following link to register: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/introtocaseworkmanchester>

UCU on campus

Since October 2018, several UCU colleagues in IT Services (ITS) have been running a weekly lunch-time 'stall' in the area between our Kilburn ground floor offices. They sit in front of a large UCU 'Rosie the Riveter' roller banner and attract the attention of passing colleagues by offering them a leaflet or one of those little "Join UCU" cards. They are surprised by how many people are happy to stop and chat with them. Since they started, seven ITS colleagues have joined UCU some others are close to joining. As one of the organisers comments: *It seems to be raising the profile of UCU within ITS and encouraging members to be more open about being a member. I think it's also good to regularly remind ITS management that we're here – and growing.*

If you would like to set up a lunchtime stall in your area and would like some help, please contact us.

Or, why not become a Local Contact for your work area? Local contacts signpost colleagues to the UMUCU office if they need us, speak to colleagues about how important it is to join UCU, pass on information and keep the branch informed of any local issues. If you would like more information, please contact by phone on 0161 275 3080 or e-mail ucu@manchester.ac.uk

UMUCU Executive Committee Members

Officers: President – *Gregory Lane-Serff*; Vice President – *Philippa Browning*; Secretary – *Adam Ozanne*; Treasurer – *Kamie Kitmitto*; Equalities Officer – *Wendy Olsen*; Membership and Organising Secretary – *David Swanson*; Assistant Secretary Health & Safety – *Tanya Aspinall*; Assistant Secretary Personal Cases – *Vacant*; Assistant Secretary Newsletter/Website – *Janice Ellis*; Assistant Secretary Retired Members – *Paul Bennett*; Learning Rep – *Blaise Nkwenti-Azeh*

Ordinary Executive Members: *Louise Carney, Lawrence Benson, Alex Gunz, Alexia Yates, Anh le, Caroline Martin, Eleanor Davey, Kirsty Keywood, Linda Davies, Lydia Meryll, Mike Sanders, Pierre Fuller, Sarah Darley, David Scott*

Meetings and Events

Day of Action Against Workplace Racism

Wednesday 27th February 2019, teach in, more details to follow

General Meeting

Wednesday 6th March, 12.30-1.30pm, Mosley Lecture Theatre, Schuster Building

The John Stachniewski Memorial Lecture

Wednesday 20th March, 5pm, A7 Samuel Alexander Building

LGBT+ research conference

'I want to be me: contextualising self-identities'

Friday 17 May 2019, 10.00am - 4.00pm, University of Manchester

The aim of this conference is to explore how LGBT+ people have experienced and/or are experiencing actions and discourse around their self-identities. This may include gender and sexual identity, intersectionality, desire, relationships, experience across the lifespan, politics, and solidarity.

This conference is open to all (you don't have to be a UCU member) and is free to attend. Registration closes on the 1st May.

For more information and to register:

<https://ucu.org.uk/article/9827/LGBT-research-conference>

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 5th June, 12.30-1.30pm, theatre A, Zochonis Building

The University and College Union (UCU) represents over 120,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations across the UK.



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