

UMUCU Update

May 2020



We would usually distribute a paper UMUCU newsletter round campus at this time of year but, since that is not possible, are sharing this online version. As well as providing details on headline issues and events to watch out for, future newsletters will include an opportunity for members' voices to be heard in the new "Members Speak" section. We hope to make this a regular occurrence and that you will read and share the PDF version on the UMUCU website with non-UMUCU colleagues

UMUCU's membership has gone up by 10% this year and the equation here is really simple: more members + more active members = greater bargaining power. UMUCU always needs local reps and health & safety reps. If you don't want to become a rep, but would like to help our work you can always become involved in one of campaigning networks. If you'd like to get involved contact us at: <https://manchester.web.ucu.org.uk/contact/>

Update on Union and Management Meetings:

Since the pandemic, the University has begun a series of consultation meetings with the Union. An initial meeting was convened on March 18th, and now the Senior Leadership Team are having weekly Zoom meetings with the UMUCU Branch officers. This is a significant development; previously, University leadership had no open dialogue with branch officers beyond limited negotiating meetings. We welcome this initial willingness to engage, something which is now common in HE following the Covid-19 outbreak. It is hoped this step toward ongoing consultation with the unions will continue and become increasingly fruitful in the future.

The current weekly meetings are attended by members of the University senior leadership as well as branch officers from the university's three trade unions (UCU, Unite, and Unison). Senior management attendance has included Nancy Rothwell, Patrick Hackett, Karen Heaton, Andrew Mullen and Graham Smith. These are consultation meetings, not negotiations, and we are pushing to move the outcomes of these meetings in increasingly meaningful directions.

Discussions to date have covered:

- Furloughing –
 - the possibility of expanding eligibility for this scheme while maintaining UoM support
 - UoM support for furloughed agency staff (UoM will top their salary up to 100%)
 - Extent to which the furlough scheme affects staff terms and conditions of employment: while UCU believe this to be the case, leadership dispute that position
- SLT considerations of how the University might save money by staff willingness to take unpaid leave or to take a reduction in working hours (either permanent or temporary).
- SLT update on UCEA consulting employers about any possibility of freezing pay awards for this year.
- Limitations in the data and narrative comprising the Vice Chancellor's Financial Briefing May 2020 document (sent to all staff, and available on staffnet)
- Areas where UoM expects to lose money, as well as areas where UoM expects to make savings
- The University's engagement with outside parties (such as government) in order to advocate for universities
- The urgent situation confronting for Fixed-term contract colleagues and PGRs
- Changes, risks, and potentials for research funding
- Health and Safety issues for staff working from home

The most recent meeting was Wed 13th May. UCU raised the issues of non-renewal of fixed-term contracts leading to redundancies, as well as health and safety priorities in any return to work, crucial issues for unionised staff. There was a clear push from the unions to ensure the priority of any changes is protecting jobs, and for transparency on any potential voluntary measures/voluntary redundancy schemes. UCU is keen to ensure that the pandemic does not impact on voluntary severance commitments from previous schemes and raised this as an area of potential concern. The management response was open to suggestions and the consultation process is bringing important considerations to light for both sides.

We are keen to hear from members and ensure that these consultations can bring the staff voice through the union to management decisions. Whilst we always advocate communicating your concerns directly to management, we are pleased to be copied into these concerns

Manifesto of principles SLT must adopt:

UMUCU are developing a document with other unions and staff groups which summarise our many concerns about the SLT approach to the current crisis. This 'manifesto' will define our agenda in our meetings with management, and help our members to raise concerns with line managers where necessary. The manifesto identifies a set of principles which we believe should direct the SLT's response to the crisis. Those principles are: community responsibility, and to place public pressure on the SLT to change course to committing to prioritise our jobs and working conditions, among other issues. The principles we will outline are: community responsibility (the University's responsibility to Greater Manchester and beyond); full transparency; urgent appraisal of our current funding model; prioritising people not buildings; tackling inequality and insecurity; no return until it is safe; exceptional circumstances meaning exceptional (temporary) measures; and sustainability.

Members Speak:

Dear UCU,

I should like the SLT to be asked why, if they are intent on shedding fixed-term staff, they are also forging ahead with the ongoing outsourcing of IT Services?

In other words, could they please explain how their strategy of effectively replacing ITS staff from the UK with low-paid offshore roles is consistent with their trumpeted statements concerning 'working with the local community' and 'supporting the UK economy' at this difficult time?

The eventual social costs of this strategy to Manchester, and to the UK, will in my opinion be ruinous.

So could the SLT kindly explain why they have been pioneering this route, long before the COVID-19 crisis supervened, seemingly alone among the UK's Russell Group HE Institutions?

From UMUCU Member

Notifications/Requests:

To help represent member's voices there are currently some petitions circulating asking for support for job security at the university:

In SALC: https://www.change.org/p/university-manchester-stop-job-cuts-at-uom-and-cap-senior-management-pay?recruiter=521923400&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=tap_basic_share

In HCRI: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QsyY2kOVBJLqObwBg0ul6_cuclubtWxjL-EzB5Dhtqs/edit

You can claim tax relief on your UCU subscriptions!

You can claim for the current tax year (April 20 to March 21) and for the four previous tax years if you've not already done so.

To make a claim follow these two key steps:

1. Go to https://ucu.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/469/~-/tax-relief-on-subscriptions
 - a. Use the spreadsheets provided (under file attachments) to find out how much you have paid in subscriptions for the years you want to claim. You will need to include both the national and local subscriptions, rounded to the nearest pound.
 - b. It is not necessary to complete the P87 form, as the government gateway, step 2, calculates total amounts you are eligible for from overall yearly subscriptions.
 - c. By calculating your total subscriptions at this stage you will be ready to fill in the government gateway without being timed out.

Please note that:

- The national rates are split into two for each tax year (April to August and September to March). Ignore the 67% totals – you will need to calculate the full amount you have paid in subscriptions for each year for the claim form.
 - Local rates are per month, so you need to multiply by 12.
2. Go to <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/professional-fees-and-subscriptions>
 - a. Answer a few questions to check your eligibility, and select professional fees and subscriptions.
 - b. At this stage you will need your Government Gateway ID and password, but you can set this up online if you do not already have one. You will need your NI number and a payslip or P60 or your passport to set up your government gateway account.

Members can expect to receive between £40-£60 per year based on other members' experiences of claiming.

You can also claim for other professional subscriptions that you personally pay, if they are listed in professional fees and subscriptions on government gateway.

Completing this should also update your tax code so future years' subscriptions will be automatically tax deductible.

In solidarity UMUCU Executive Committee