

Lancaster UCU e-Bulletin (November 2015)

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Joining The Union

This week is national UCU Recruitment Week and we would like to urge all members to ask a colleague to join. Why join UCU? UCU is the nationally recognised trade union representing professionals in Higher and Further Education. Education is crucial for a civilised and prosperous society, and increasing numbers are going to university to educate themselves and improve their chances in the labour market. Yet, those of us working in higher education are getting a poorer deal with working conditions, pay and workplace culture becoming decidedly unfavourable. Over the last decade our pay, in real terms, has shrunk significantly and our - once attractive - pension scheme has been substantially diminished. Job security is being eroded with the use of short term contracts, and there is an ever-growing set of hoops to jump through to fulfil employment contracts. Employers demonstrate less trust with more monitoring of our activities and achievements. This impacts on our workplace culture with less collegiality and more self-centric behaviours. Ultimately, it shapes the way we, as individuals, think about our work, ourselves and our colleagues.

In this context, and, particularly in the light of the recent HE Green Paper, trade unions play a crucial role (<http://www.ucu.org.uk/hegreenpaper>). These are the activities we have planned for UCU Recruitment Week. The aim is to increase both our visibility on campus and our membership.

Monday - focus on LUMS with stalls (12-2pm) in Charles Carter Foyer booked and LUMS Foyer near Hub Cafe

Tuesday - focus on Computing and Comms with stall in Infolab Foyer (12-2pm)

Wednesday - focus on LEC with stall in LEC Foyer (12-2pm)

Thursday - Anticasualisation Day - focus on graduate teaching assistants and our colleagues on fixed term contracts with stall in Faraday Foyer (12-2pm) combined with one to one drop-in clinic

Friday - focus on School of Health and Medicine with stall in Furness Foyer (12-2pm)

Friday afternoon social: 3pm in Fylde Bar for all UCU members

As a UCU member, please:

- talk to a colleague who has not yet joined and invite them to join here <http://www.ucu.org.uk/whyjoin>
- help your department rep(s) to promote the union in your department
- come to one of the lunchtime stalls and give out information, including our new, collectively written, Lancaster UCU leaflet
- participate in a 'write it on whiteboard' campaign - if you're in a teaching space, write 'Join UCU - see: www.ucu.org.uk/whyjoin' on the whiteboard to help raise the visibility of UCU Recruitment Week.

Our banner will be in Alexander Square all week.

If each of us recruited one colleague this week, our branch would double in size overnight... imagine what we could change, what we could achieve!

CAMPUS NEWS: Anti-casualisation; Pensions; Partnership Agreement; Members' Issues **Casualisation – the Scourge of Our Time! National Day of Action: Thursday 19 Nov 2015**

We have identified the continuing unnecessary use of fixed term and 'flexible' contracts, and the poor rewards offered our teaching post-graduate members, as urgent issues to be addressed. The shift in employment practices from mainly full-time to part-time or 'casual' work has picked up a pace over recent years as the country has moved from an industrial to a service based economy. This trend has seen an increase of women in the workforce, many of whom are employed on casual contracts – a gender bias which is seen across all sectors, particularly in higher education.

Casual contracts take multiple forms, be they zero-hour, temporary or fixed term, but they all have a few aspects in common. They all impact across the full grade spectrum at Lancaster, are all motivated by profit and each and every one of them clearly indicates the total and absolute lack of loyalty by the employer toward staff - yet they demand so much!

Check your membership details online at: <https://members.ucu.org.uk/>

The financial implications of these contracts needs more research, but it is already known they are far reaching. For example, being on a casual contract (or in many cases, numerous such contracts), makes it almost impossible to raise a mortgage or other type of loan. Job security is non-existent. Shockingly, 21% of people on such contracts have reported they struggle to put food on the table <http://www.ucu.org.uk/7527>.

UCU is fighting to remove such contracts from the workplace and has an active and on-going 'Stamp Out Casual Contracts' campaign. To find out more and get involved visit here <http://www.ucu.org.uk/stampout>

On **Thursday 19 November** we will have a stall in Faraday Foyer (12-2pm) combined with a one to one drop-in clinic.

Pensions Motion at the General Meeting with UCU President

Thank you to everyone who came to the General Meeting. We had a very good discussion with Liz Lawrence, UCU President. We also voted in favour of the following motion:

This branch believes that the USS Board adopted a recklessly prudent approach to scheme funding in the lead-up to the 2014 triennial valuation and that this was the driving force behind increases to employer and employee contributions and cuts to members' pension benefits. This branch notes that UCU commissioned expert advice and used this to suggest an alternative approach to that adopted by the USS Board. Adopting UCU's alternative approach could have reduced the deficit in the 2014 valuation by around £8.6bn. It is also noted that some universities also questioned the valuation methodology.

This branch calls on the branch committee to:

1. Raise the USS scheme funding approach through the relevant joint negotiating/consultative machinery, highlight the problems with the current approach; asking for the employer to agree that USS should adopt a reasonable interpretation of the available evidence when setting the approach to scheme funding;
2. Write to the VC asking for the University to join with UCU in reviewing the USS funding methodology;
3. Encourage members to raise the USS scheme funding approach at other institutional bodies (i.e. Senate, Assemblies, and Faculty meetings);
4. Keep the UCU's head office informed of developments

Partnership Agreement

The campus unions are close to finalising a Partnership Agreement with the University. The agreement details the principles, procedures, governance and working practices whereby the Trade Unions and the University will work together. It covers issues such as time off for union activities, disputes procedures and the terms of reference for our joint meetings along with the formal Recognition Agreement.

Members' Issues

Members have asked us to raise the following specific issues with management: new REF 'monitoring'; changes to sabbatical policy; changes to PDR policy; transparent, accountable and fair allocation of teaching to GTAs; an international institution's non-payment of visa costs and NHS surcharges for its staff coming from outside of the EU; academic freedom and lecture capture; staff appeals process. If you would like to work on any of these concerns, please let us know.

REGIONAL SOLIDARITY: University of Manchester; Regional Networking Strike Ballot at University of Manchester

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/7632>

Regional Networking

Lancaster UCU was represented at both the NW regional committee meeting on Saturday 17 October and at the NW Activists Equality Network Day Saturday 24 October. Please see the report from the latter here <http://uculeft.org/2015/10/report-from-ucu-north-west-region-equality-network-activists-dayschool-24-10-15/>

UCU Regional Committee Meeting 16 January 2016, Manchester

Invite a colleague to join UCU online today at: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

NATIONAL NEWS: Trade Unions Bill; Pay; Strike at the Open University

Trade Unions Bill Passes Third Reading

The bill was passed last week in the House of Commons by a majority of 34. It now goes to the House of Lords ...
<http://strongerunions.org/2015/11/10/tubill-surprise/>

Pay

FE Pay – National Strike Day

On the same day that parliament voted to make it harder to withdraw your labour legally, FE colleagues went on strike to demand a pay increase after 6 years of real terms cuts and a 0% pay offer this year. They are told pay cuts are a necessary consequence of funding cuts to the sector. Cuts that have seen adult education decimated, 1.4m adult places lost and hundreds of thousands of young people facing years of joblessness. This is a scandal. Now the whole of FE is in jeopardy as a programme of area reviews and mergers are planned to reduce the 300 colleges to as few as 70.

<http://fewweek.co.uk/2015/11/13/colleges-face-threat-of-further-strike-action-as-ucu-looks-to-next-steps-in-aoc-pay-row/>

HE Pay

UCU Higher Education Committee decided that UCU will not accept the 1% final pay offer but neither will it be taking any action in connection with it this year. Instead, it will focus on building a sustained campaign on pay for next year and here are some of the reasons why (credit and thanks to University of Leeds UCU branch).

You are paid less: <http://www.leedsucu.org.uk/archives/1632>

University cash reserves grow by 58%: <http://www.leedsucu.org.uk/archives/1696>

Your employer assumes your pay will grow by up to 4.5% but gives you

1%: <http://www.leedsucu.org.uk/archives/1716>

1% and future inflation: <http://www.leedsucu.org.uk/archives/1721>

Historic Vote to Strike at the Open University

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/open-university-staff-to-go-on-strike-over-job-losses-and-closures-of-regional-offices-a6722606.html>

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY: Student Protests in South Africa, India and the UK against Marketization

A million South African students claimed a victory last month when the government was forced to climb down from its initial declaration of a 12% annual fee increase and announced instead there would be no fee increase, whatsoever, next year, after nationwide student protests. The 'Fees Must Fall' movement was the biggest student rebellion since the end of apartheid in 1994.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-34615004>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/23/south-african-students-protest-pretoria-tuition-fees-rise>

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/student-protests-trigger-u-turn-india-over-scholarships>

<http://anticuts.com/2015/11/06/government-plans-full-marketisation-time-to-fight/>

We will be back with the next e-Bulletin in January 2016. Many thanks to members who contributed to this issue. In the meantime, we wish you a very happy festive break and keep up to date on <https://twitter.com/lancasterucu> and <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/ucu/>