

## Newsletter 3 December 2025

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### **1. Update from LU Futures Collective Consultation meeting 2 December**

At the meeting yesterday we made it crystal clear to interim management and PoE that the collective consultation processes are not timely, meaningful, or legally compliant within the spirit of the S188 legislation. We have asked interim senior management for an additional meeting to be arranged without delay, before the term ends, to discuss the following items to which we are yet to see a satisfactory response.

1. Rationale for FHASS envision move.
2. KPMG presence on LU Futures board and concerns about potential breach of LU values.
3. Santander's RCF (revolving credit facility).
4. Attrition (we still need to understand the rationale for excluding attrition in the blueprint proposals).
5. Total number of academic redundancies proposed (this is a fundamental question which remains unanswered: why are academic jobs targeted when structurally academic payroll has declined in proportion to income).
6. Non-pay expenditure, i.e. management rationale for prioritisation of capital expenditure and their trophy projects: Ruskin, RoI (return on investment) on International Partnerships, RoI on LU Online, India campus plans, Digital strategy, UA92, and the recent announcement of a £2m nuclear facility control room simulator.
7. PS service design: why have management reversed their previous commitments for PS design to follow academic shape and size; and potential inequity if PS staff proposals for workforce reduction are different to academic processes.
8. Workload adjustments (this issue is now becoming particularly acute in FHASS with academic VRs now finalised and some arbitrary decisions being made in schools with regard to workload allocation in some disciplines).

In addition to the above, we raised the issue of the University appropriating our materials again for Navitas (notwithstanding that the University claims IP on the materials), which is upsetting for

our members, especially in LUMS, and is anyhow a deeply troubling ethical issue because this is potentially channelling our work for profits for private providers (Navitas in particular).

For PS staff:

The indication from management is that they will resume PS redesign next year. For PS staff who have received an offer of VS, unions have requested an extension to the deadline for PS staff to express their agreement to 9 January. We believe management is considering this request so please look out for an update on this. Members should note that there are no CRs on the table for PS staff. We have an ongoing mandate to take industrial action over CRs and we have demonstrated that we would not let it go to waste should management propose CRs for PS staff.

For Academic staff:

The withdrawal of CRs for academic staff means that if management want to introduce CRs next year then they have to start all over again in August 2026. Given that all the teaching and timetables would have been finalised with the first semester about to begin in September '26, it would be very ill-advised for management to introduce CRs at that point. Even if they do, they have to statutorily give 6- months' notice, which will take us to March 2027. The wording in the interim VC's email which suggested targeted voluntary redundancies for academic staff is not new. They had mentioned this in the June meeting. However, as the name suggests, it is voluntary. No one can be forced to take VR, and members should remain vigilant that they are not exposed to redundancies by stealth via laying down of programmes / modules – **we ask all members to make sure that all proposals to lay down or 'downgrade' parts of a programme or a module follow the correct MARP / CTP processes (or question your HoD / HoS if not).** This will put us in a stronger position next year.

## **2. VNC against Council chair**

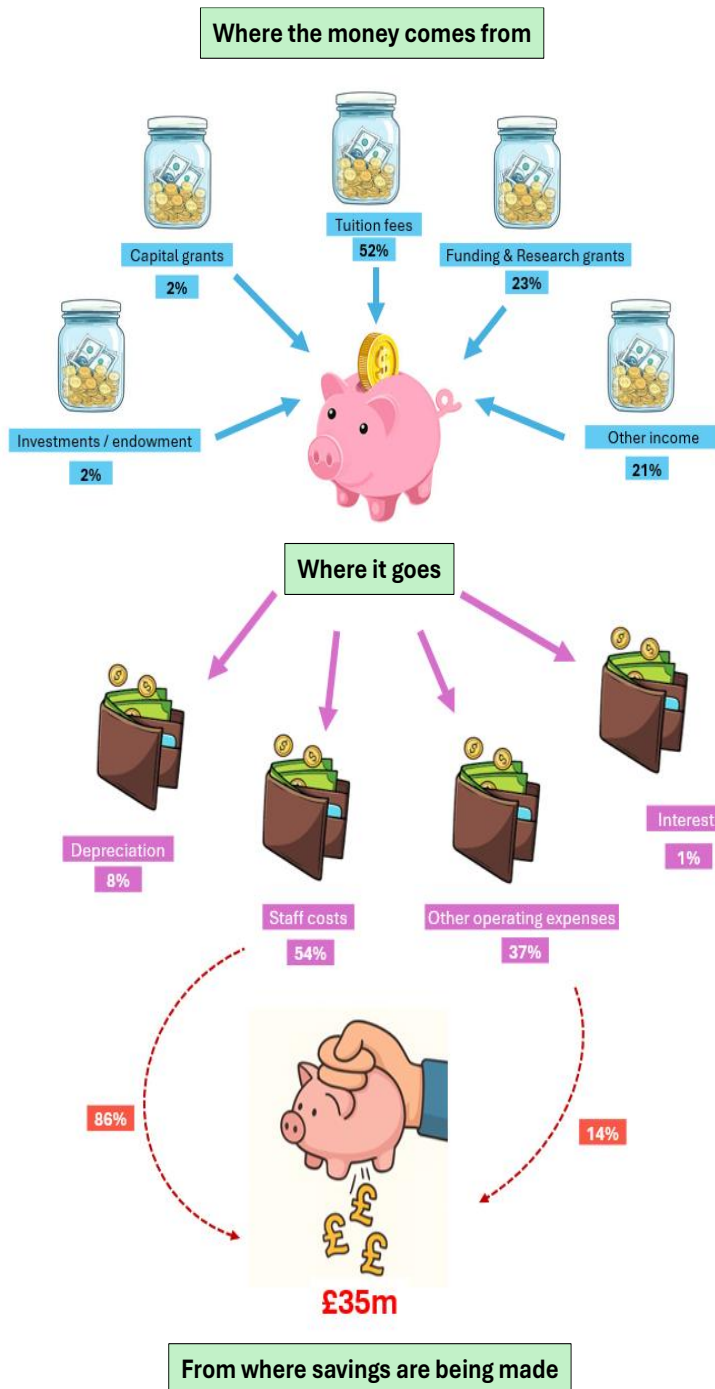
Thank you to every member who attended the EGM and voted in the no-confidence motion against the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of University Council Alistair Burt. The motion was carried *nem. con.* (no one voting against) by an overwhelming majority of 92.3%, and was sent to the Chair of Council and the University Executive the same day. The vote of no confidence in the Chair of the Council reasserts that we hold the high moral ground – committed to uphold transparency, giving voice to staff, and standing up for the wellbeing and health of our members. **We sent a clear message – we deserve safety, dignity, and respect.**

## **3. FHASS Envision move**

We have asked questions about the rationale for the FHASS envision move at several meetings, but we have not received any satisfactory answers. The fundamental question which has not been answered is what is the purpose of the move? Is it financial, or are there other reasons? Who approved it? What process did it follow? Why are we cramming people in shared spaces when empty buildings are gathering damp and depreciating? Why are our PGR student members going through the trauma of working in Bowland Annex when H&S issues have been evidenced and documented. We have put management on notice again to say if we don't get answers by 10 December then we are heading for another dispute. **We have also stated, very clearly, that if no satisfactory rationale is forthcoming, then we would expect the University to move staff back to their own offices.**

#### 4. Milestones: reflections on LU Futures so far

The withdrawal of the threat of compulsory redundancies marks a milestone. We have asserted that our jobs are not just pawns; jobs are livelihoods and therefore, decisions over them should not be in the hands of people who look at them only as numbers on a spreadsheet. **We have set a boundary that must not be tampered with.**



During our campaign against compulsory redundancies, we found ourselves in the situation of having to fight for the transparency of the university's finances. As we were looking at the university's finances with the intention of doing exactly what we should be doing in a negotiation – make a counterproposal to the proposed job losses – we were confronted with opacity and a lack of transparency. We found 'piggy banks': how staff are being squeezed instead of finding savings from the many projects of Senior Management. It is starting to become apparent that we will be doing more work under worsening conditions: more coordination, less time with students and for research; more generalist teaching, less specialist teaching; more hours, less satisfaction.

We want a university that is a democratic institution and that offers public education and that serves the common good, not the interest of Lancaster University's external partners and the CVs and personal forthcoming of a discrete group of people.

## **5. Health, Safety and Welfare; Workloads**

At Lancaster University – in contradistinction to many other Universities – the Health & Safety (H&S) Office sits within PoE. The H&S Office is advisory; it is not independent, and it is not directive. We want this to change. We want an independent and strengthened H&S Office which reports directly to the VC, not to PoE. When Health and Safety issues are at stake anywhere in this university – including in the areas now covered by Facilities – the H&S Office needs to have the final say over them, This is why we have been asking the University to separate the H&S Office from PoE, to strengthen its portfolio and assure its independence. While the interim VC assures that the Health and Safety of workers are very important to them, they have not responded to our demand for an independent Health & Safety office.

Alarm bells are being sounded that the Simitive workload model is not fit for purpose, that it does not accurately represent the time associated with different tasks and that as a result, we will have to work more and suffer more stress. A health and safety crisis is in the making, and we need to stop it before it hits.

*“The worker needs bread, and she needs roses too”* ([Rose Schneiderman](#))

Our jobs give us bread, our welfare gives us roses. When we are overworked and strung out, our senses shut down; in that state, one can do nothing with a rose, let alone take pleasure in it. But we are human beings, and so we will fight for bread and roses, as workers have done with this slogan for over a hundred years. We need members to go into this fight well informed, trained, with a good sense of what dignity at the workplace means and how we will assert it. UCU offers CPD training on Challenging Excessive workloads, with [one session on 15<sup>th</sup> December](#). We also need trained workload Reps. Please consider signing up to the next half-day workload Rep I course: [Workload rep training 1 – introduction to the workload campaign and the role of the workload rep: 13, February, 2026, Online, Half day, UK wide course](#)

## **6. LUCU hardship fundraising gig**

Your branch committee requests your support for our [hardship fundraising gig on Jan 9](#). Please attend! This is a fun way to make a donation to our hardship fund. Please contact Jeff Whyte if you can help with 1) making a poster and 2) with sound on the night.

## **7. Lancaster student solidarity**

A new group called Lancaster Student Solidarity called a rally in support of UCU last Friday (the day of the Council meeting) in Alex Square. Several students gave speeches holding banners in solidarity with staff with plenty of people observing under the covered areas around the square. LUCU was represented by Vincent Gaine (School of Arts) who gave an impassioned speech! It is clear that we have strong support from student groups.

## **8. Northumbria University pensions dispute**

Northumbria university has declared a dispute with the University over management’s plans for staff pensions. Management is proposing that colleagues who are in Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS) move to USS, but if colleagues want to stay in TPS then their pay will be frozen because the employer contributions in TPS are higher than USS. This is a dangerous proposal which we must oppose – [please consider signing their petition](#).

## 9. Pensions article by UCU Pension Official

We have thanked the national UCU Pension Official Dooley Hart for putting together this [very good article and particularly for highlighting the double standards of USS](#) re: genocide. Tens of thousands of people displaced, maimed, starved, imprisoned or dead; reports of systematic torture and mistreatment; a campaign that serves to bolster the power of far-right parties and of anti-democratic tech companies, that props up a government that undermines the judiciary, international law, and any checks and balances that could keep it in check – and yet, USS seems unwilling to reconsider its investments.

## 10. Budget impact on universities

### *Tax burden:*

The percentage rate of employer NICs remains static (currently 15% on earnings above the secondary threshold of £5,000 annually as of April 2025), and the frozen thresholds mean that while a larger portion of the total payroll for the workforce becomes subject to these contributions over time we believe this will have minimal impact on LU finances.

### *Salary sacrifice and pensions:*

The measures under these heads do not come into play until 2029, so no impact on LU until then. In any case, our pay and pensions are nationally negotiated, so unilateral changes would be very difficult to introduce by LU.

### *Minimum wage:*

A boost for low paid workers is welcome and it will have no or very little impact on LU finances given the composition of our workforce payroll.

### *Tuition fees and maintenance loans:*

Even though we disagree with the current tuition fee funding model which penalises students for aspiring to have university education, tuition fees rising with inflation will help LU finances and will provide a buffer against inflation. From 2025-26 the fee cap for full-time undergraduate courses increases to £9,535 (from £9,250) and will probably cross £10k in a couple of years' time. Maintenance loans go up which will offer extra help to students from lower-income households.

### *Government funding:*

Some targeted government funding remains for high-cost / priority subject areas, student access / participation, and degree apprenticeships, which should be a positive for LU. While UUK analysis suggests a net funding reduction overall of around £2.5 billion, members should note that this potentially impacts Russell group far more than LU. However, there is a risk that LU becomes more selective about the courses it offers, i.e. move towards 'market-safe' courses at the cost of humanities and arts. **We advise members to remain vigilant and ensure that any proposals to lay down modules and / or programmes follow the MARP processes, and report any failures in this regard to your rep or to a committee member.**

### *International student fee levy:*

This is probably the biggest factor which management might try to spin. However, the impact of the new levy on international student income is not significant for LU, and in any case, the decision on the details of the levy is not expected before February 2026. There is a suggestion in

the proposals that the flat-fee levy of £925 will not apply to the first 220 international students. We recruit around 1200 international students, and around 1800 students are currently enrolled, which equates to roughly £2.7m adverse impact which should go down over the next two years as our recruitment numbers have dropped. This will be more than offset by the inflation-linked tuition fees increases.

**In sum, we believe the budget is not adverse to Lancaster.**

There is something very simple which senior management can do which will put LU on sound footing over the next two years – **stop spending on capital and trophy projects**. The credit card has been maxed out – now start recovering and consolidating the academic base which has brought LU into top 10 and the OfS cluster Two (Research intensive universities).

### **11. A daily question in the last week of this term**

During ASOS we sent one question every day; more will follow next week. For now, we end with a small challenge: adapt each of the below questions to your current situation and send us what you have come up with.

#### **Questions from a Worker who Reads**

**By Bertolt Brecht**

Who built Thebes of the seven gates?

In the books you will read the names of kings.

Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?

And Babylon, many times demolished,

Who raised it up so many times?

In what houses of gold glittering Lima did its builders live?

Where, the evening that the Great Wall of China was finished, did the masons go?

Great Rome is full of triumphal arches.

Who erected them?

Over whom did the Caesars triumph?

Had Byzantium, much praised in song, only palaces for its inhabitants?

Even in fabled Atlantis, the night that the ocean engulfed it,

The drowning still cried out for their slaves.

The young Alexander conquered India.

Was he alone?

Caesar defeated the Gauls.

Did he not even have a cook with him?

Philip of Spain wept when his armada went down.

Was he the only one to weep?

Frederick the 2nd won the Seven Years War.

Who else won it?

Every page a victory.

Who cooked the feast for the victors?

Every ten years a great man.

Who paid the bill?

So many reports.

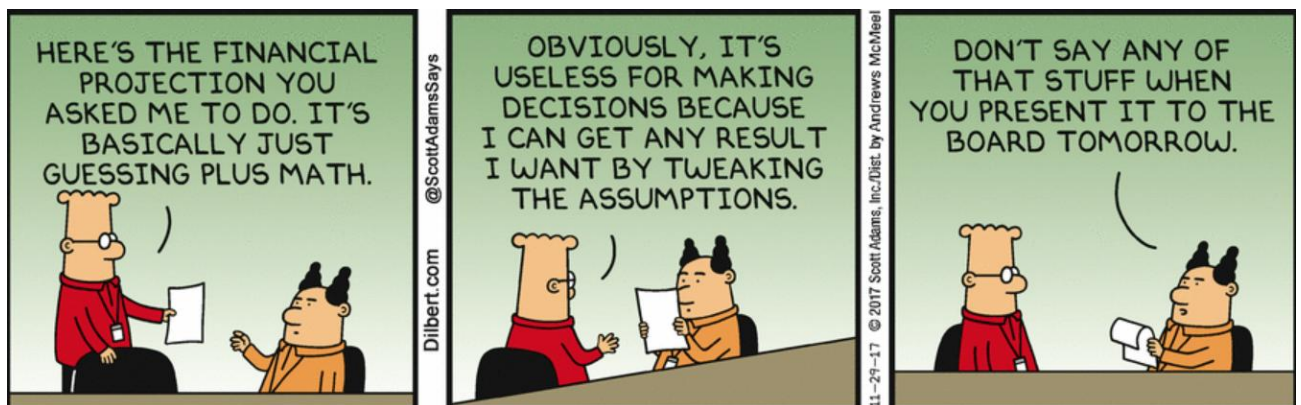
So many questions.

*From "Bad Time For Poetry: 152 Poems and Songs" by Bertolt Brecht (London: Methuen, 1995)*

## 12. On a lighter note

*Financial projections techniques*

Note: Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons is unintentional and purely coincidental



@Scott Adams, 2017