

## LUCU Members Newsletter 4 February 2026

Dear LUCU Member

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### 1. Reballot

At the JNCC (Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee) meeting on 2 February, senior management suggested that cost-savings through payroll as part of LU Futures are no longer applicable, and that future decisions on the size and shape of academic and PS workforce will be brought for further consultation as and when determined. UCU queried that if sufficient 'cost-savings' have been made this year under LU Futures then why senior management are reticent to rule out CRs, for PS staff, and for academic staff post-31 July 2026. When pressed on this point, senior managers simply refused to rule out CRs. We have given them a deadline of 9 March to provide us with the full financial details of savings made so far and to provide the budget for 2026-27. It is quite concerning that capital spending continues unrestrained, even as income is under pressure from a challenging student recruitment environment (especially PGT). Given this backdrop there is a possibility that senior management will come back with CRs in August 2026. We need to make sure we are prepared to counter any CR proposals – and we believe that the next few months is a good opportunity for the reballot given that the new employment rights bill is due to be implemented in February which removes several constraints placed on the unions on taking industrial action (for e.g. industrial action mandates will now last for one year). We are in discussions with regional office to start the reballot process – and looking to expand the scope of the dispute to cover not just CRs but also the FHASS and H&S dispute in the reballot. We will work out the details to secure necessary permissions over the next few days and bring the proposals to you for your approval. Please note **Wednesday 18 February 1pm** in your diaries for the next GM.

### 2. UCU dispute over FHASS relocation and H&S

Members will know that we are now in a formal dispute with senior management over FHASS relocation and the failure of senior managers to fulfil their statutory H&S obligations. Please see our email dated 2 February with the FTA documents which provide further details (attached for reference). We must not allow the actions of a few individuals who have wreaked destruction on FHASS to set a dangerous precedent, as it might happen to any of us in any other faculty. We must stand united to demand transparency, dignity, and a safe and healthy workplace that complies with existing legislation.

### **3. Concerns about senior management's response to H&S inspections**

Following a two-month delay, we finally received a response from the FHASS Dean to our H&S inspections of County South, LICA, and Bowland Annexe. However, the response is a post-hoc justification and serious concerns remain unaddressed. While the Faculty now acknowledges that the move was "major", several issues remain unaddressed, including our exclusion from resolution groups. We remain deeply concerned by the lack of accountability for workplace stress, hindering open staff communication and damaging professional relationships. Consequently, UCU has withdrawn consent from the institutional Stress Risk Assessment until it properly accounts for the physical and emotional impact of workplace relocations. Please see attached document which outlines our concerns.

### **4. Safeguarding Health and Safety throughout the University: Structures diffuse Responsibilities and Accountability**

For several years now all campus trade unions have raised concerns with Management that the structures within which Health & Safety is carried out are woefully inadequate and diffuse responsibilities and therefore, accountability. At Lancaster, the health, safety and welfare of staff is not a core priority in most proposals; if anything, it is an afterthought, at great expense to staff. The FHASS relocation is a case in point. What we mean is: the University has a statutory duty to prevent; this duty is mostly – and often, only – carried out through Risk Assessments, with the risk factors and resulting control measures being interpreted in the narrowest and most abstract possible way and all other interpretations, or actions that go beyond that, considered unnecessary. Responsibilities for the Health, Safety and Welfare are diffused across Faculties and Committees in such a way that there are a) no clear pathways for recourse for staff or trade union; b) no clear pathways to hold anyone accountable. These structures allow for Health and Safety to be treated as an obstacle in the way of high-level reorganisation, rather than protecting and implementing it as a constitutive factor in employer-employee relations. We are hopeful that this might change with a new VC and RSCOO in place.

### **5. Concerns regarding scrutiny and transparency of senior manager's decisions**

While management has closed the LU Futures collective consultation unilaterally, several questions from the process remain unanswered. We have now been asked to redirect these queries to different forums (CCM, HSCC) which is stonewalling and an attempt to avoid scrutiny and transparency. This directly contradicts PoE's and senior management's claims that the recent collective consultation was "meaningful". The failure to provide substantive responses despite repeated requests during the consultation period, and the further delays since then, reinforces our view that the process did not meet the necessary standards of engagement.

### **6. Workplace stress and workloads**

Senior managers are closing their eyes to unmanageable workloads and workplace stress which is a crisis in the making. Staff in almost all departments are overloaded with work, and this situation is set to exacerbate post 31 July when those who have taken VS/VR leave. We believe there are just not enough staff in some departments to even mark student dissertations in summer. Apparently senior managers are claiming that those who have left via VS/VR cannot be replaced – but then who is going to fulfil the commitments made to students for teaching on their programmes in 2026/27 when staff leave? We are raising workload as an issue at every possible opportunity, and we sincerely hope that senior managers listen – before this University collapses. Staff mood is extremely low – and absence levels due to workplace stress remain extremely high. We asked the HSCC (Health and Safety Consultation Committee) if we could share the absence report with our members in aggregate to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. Senior managers have agreed to this UCU demand and are considering publishing

the data from the absence report in aggregate for all staff as a matter of transparency. We have a separate meeting scheduled with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to discuss issues related to Simitive and workloads and we will update members soon on the outcomes after our meeting. Given the concerns we all share about workload, we encourage all UCU Reps to attend UCU training so that we have well-trained reps who can deal with workload issues at the departmental level too: [UCU - 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](#)

## 7. Ruskin

In a stunning display of financial manoeuvring, senior management have clarified that spending **£14.4 million on the Ruskin project** has absolutely nothing to do with the **£35 million** projected black hole currently swallowing the rest of the institution. While we live under a cloud of job insecurity and decimation of our research and teaching capacity, it appears that senior managers have spent **£2 million** on storage, insurance, and payroll for a building that has been effectively invisible for five years. We have been told not to worry about frequent rebrands, they're reportedly "*trivial*", much like the available data on them. As for the new '**Theme Lead**' roles, senior managers are generously offering academics the "*opportunity*" to squeeze a 0.2 FTE Ruskin commitment into their existing, already-stretched research time. Essentially, it seems to be a 'volunteer your time' scheme designed to advance interdisciplinary research on zero additional funding or workload.

## 8. USS

Members should know that UCU has been engaging with USS to improve stability by making changes to the valuation methodology, and for increased transparency. Good news is that USS have confirmed that they are looking to adopt a number of UCU proposals. [You can find more information on the changes here](#). Thanks to all those who sacrificed their time and salaries during USS strikes – **we took 69 days of strike action between 2018 and 2023!** This massive win could not have been achieved without our action and solidarity. Please let Sunil know if you have any questions about the changes.

## 9. VSS: Annual leave, bank holidays & university closure days

UCU members expressed anger and frustration over the proposed imposition of previously undisclosed terms to their VSS (Voluntary Severance Scheme) agreements. Specifically, it seems to be the case that the University proposed deducting additional leave which has been purchased (and actually benefits the university) from final salary payments. In addition, the guidance / instructions for academic staff taking VR are also incorrect with regard to leave. Under pressure from UCU, PoE have now assured us that each individual affected has been contacted with a solution to offset the missed deductions, and that there are no plans to claw back Bank Holidays and Closure Days.

## 10. Photos from gig

Our fundraising gig was an excellent way to fight the January drag with solidarity, joy, and groovy moves! Thanks to you all for making this a great success. We raised £800 for our hardship fund!!! Special thanks to [@rice\\_band](#), [@bandcalledpersimmon](#), and [@bopgunjazz](#) for the tunes, and to [@jake.lange.art](#) for the pics. You can see them on any of our [Instagram](#) and [bluesky](#) profiles. If you wish to donate to our hardship fund, [click here](#).

## **11. Book launch**

Lancaster UCU, Lancaster & Morecambe TUC, and the NEU are co-hosting this book launch: [A Peoples History of the Anti Nazi League](#) on **Thursday 5th Feb. 7 pm at The Cornerstone Dalton SQ LA1 1PX**. We will be joined by the Author and former Anti-Nazi League  
Organiser **Geoff Brown**.