

## LUCU Members Newsletter 4 March 2026

Dear LUCU members

We try to keep the updates brief, but if you need more information on any of the topics below then please do not hesitate to contact your department or discipline Rep, or a LUCU Officer / Executive Committee member.

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### **1. Reballot**

Following our newsletter of 24 February (see attached), we would like to advise members that discussions regarding our dispute are progressing. Since that update, we have engaged in several constructive meetings with the new leadership team. We remain committed to a productive working relationship with Steve and Susan.

However, our position remains firm on CRs. Following the conclusion of the LU Future and CTP initiatives, we cannot, and will not, accept the imposition of CRs now under any alternative branding or guise. While we acknowledge that the current leadership has been in post for less than eight weeks, and is therefore exempt from this critique, the University's wider senior management must take responsibility. The Executive Deans, senior divisional Directors, and previous leadership have all been aware of declining student recruitment since the 2022-23 academic year. Rather than implementing strategic corrections to bolster our market position, management priority was directed toward capital expenditure, and their own trophy projects, followed by the extremely aggressive attempts to cut jobs to reduce payroll costs. LU's, and particularly LUMS, declining position in rankings, reputation and recruitment follows years of inaction by those in senior, high-salaried positions. While our leadership focused on spending, or became complacent in their roles, peer institutions consolidated their recruitment strategies. Consequently, our decline cannot be attributed solely to external factors; it is symptomatic of internal malaise and a lack of strategic direction.

At the General Meeting held on Wednesday 18 February, 93.2% of members voted in favour of a re-ballot regarding our ongoing dispute. This process has now commenced and we will be in touch with more details soon. Maintaining our collective leverage is vital to moving management from their current stance of "no current plans for compulsory redundancies" to a definitive, binding commitment to "no compulsory redundancies", **at least until July 2027**. Regarding the Health & Safety (H&S) dispute, we are currently engaged in active and constructive dialogue with the new RSCOO, Susan Mitchell. We are hopeful of a resolution and intend to withdraw this portion of the dispute should a satisfactory agreement be reached.

## **2. LU's financial position**

We are in the process of framing our position on the University's finances. We have made it abundantly clear to the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) that we do not have any confidence in the Chair of the Council to robustly interrogate and evaluate financial decisions, and we have asked for a seat on the Council so that proper and effective scrutiny of financial decisions can be made. Transparency in financial decision making is absolutely key, and given the variation between projections and actuals in finances we will not accept CRs on the basis of projections which can vary by as much as 40% (in 2024-25) and by as much as 100% in some other numbers we have seen. We have asked for CRs to be withdrawn at least until July 2027 based upon figures we have seen, but this has been refused by management. We will continue to challenge their perspective on the financial position.

## **3. Workloads**

We have been pushing management to meaningfully consult and negotiate with us on workloads. Following a discussion at the last CCM with the DVC, the Pro-VC for Academic Development, and Head of Strategic Data Projects, management's response has been that a University wide academic workload framework is being developed and will be brought to the unions for consultation soon. We have made it clear that the arbitrary decisions on workload allocations being made by some Schools / HoDs, hiding behind Simitive, must be addressed. An informal meeting has been arranged on March 20 with the same group as above to continue the conversation, and to consult with UCU on the University academic workload framework.

## **4. USS**

UCEA is consulting with its members on the employers' initial views on the 2026 USS valuation including stability, surplus and contribution rates (deadline 27 March). We believe that the 2026 USS valuation is likely to report a surplus of at least £10bn. USS is also likely to adopt most of [UCU's proposals for the 2026 valuation methodology](#) to improve long term stability, although how that plays out will need careful attention. We asked the University leadership to - reestablish the pensions working group, so that we can engage on LU's position before management submit their response. Members will recall that the University management disestablished this group after the 2018 USS strikes. Our request for the working group has been rejected – but we do have a meeting with the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) on Monday to discuss our respective positions. Please send your thoughts to Sunil – as ever, your views are very much appreciated and inform our position on this key issue which has seen several rounds of national strike action in previous years.

## **5. Senate composition**

Following the restructuring of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHASS) from nine departments to four schools that has resulted in the loss of five elected Senate positions, we have proposed increasing the number of directly elected lecturers from one to two per faculty to the Senate. This will restore representative balance and ensure diverse perspectives, avoiding reliance solely on management-appointed roles. A broader membership also enhances institutional accountability, transparency, and democratic decision-making which will enable trust in Senate decisions.

## **6. India campus**

Members might be interested in the following two articles in the Times Higher, which suggest that [UK universities' plans to open campuses in India are 'deluded'](#) and urging UK universities to approach Indian campuses '[with sceptic's hat on](#)'. We wonder what makes LU senior managers think that they can compete in the same location in India that already has a University of Liverpool campus when there isn't even a clearly articulated marketing and recruitment

strategy for Bailrigg? Members will recall the previous ill-fated India venture; and will be aware of the serious conflicts of interest in how contracts to run overseas campuses keep getting awarded to Navitas who are appropriating all our materials and assessments for their profits via a direct access to Moodle.

#### **7. Disestablishment of programme consultant roles**

LUCU is concerned that the senior management's recent decision to stand down Lancaster University-based Programme Consultants for our partner colleges in the Northwest (Blackpool, Blackburn, and Furness) presents significant quality assurance risks and reputational threats to Lancaster University, as these partner colleges offer LU-branded courses and material that will now lack any LU oversight. This also directly affects some LUCU members whose consultancy contracts are not being renewed. We believe the decision was taken by senior managers but it did not go to the Senate. We have asked the University Academic Dean for a response.

#### **8. Duty of care and safeguarding for staff traveling overseas**

We have formally requested details regarding the University's policies and procedures governing its legal duty of care to provide a safe working environment for staff during international travel. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the University has a statutory obligation to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of its employees. In particular, we would like to understand the University provision in place to identify and mitigate risks such as physical violence, harassment, and sexual assault occurring overseas. We will inform members of the provision in place when we get this information from relevant departments – as currently it seems there is a paucity of information and communication with staff on this extremely important issue.

#### **9. Health & Safety Posters**

We have the below Health & Safety posters from the Hazards Campaign in the Union Room, in A3 and A4 formats. Please collect some and put them up in your workplace. Email a keyholder (Sunil, Patricia, Cornelia) to get access to the union room.