

LUCU Members Newsletter 8 April 2026

Dear LUCU member

Welcome back – hope you had a relaxing Easter break and have come back refreshed and recharged!

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1. Decision to withdraw the rebalot

The Emergency General Meeting of LUCU members on Wednesday 1st April voted to withdraw the rebalot. This follows our request to senior management to withdraw CRs until July 2027, setting out a clear case that providing this assurance is in the best interests of the institution, its staff and students, and the wider community. We highlighted the need for stability, the importance of maintaining staff morale to support student outcomes, and questioning financial rationale for job losses in our letter. We also made it clear that such a commitment would restore trust and enable support for the wider cultural change agenda. The VC's subsequent response on 31st March did not go far enough to rule out CRs definitively but provided much needed assurances on job security for our members. Please see branch president's report sent on Tuesday 31st March explaining the context and outlining the rationale for the decision.

2. VC's UEB restructure, departmental autonomy and HoD agency

UCU was recently consulted by the VC on his proposals for UEB restructure which have now been approved by the Council and Senate. While the plans don't directly threaten our terms and conditions, the focus on providing departments with greater autonomy, agency, and independence is a move we welcome – after all, our members actually doing the teaching and research usually have a very good idea of how these things run best. We also welcome the promise to renew Lancaster's collegiate provision and structures – which has been a long-standing LU's USP valued equally by students and staff, but has been a target for the 'efficiency' seekers in senior echelons of management. Exactly like the CTP fiasco, the fact that it is the colleges which make Lancaster University distinctive has been completely overlooked – by those who know the cost of everything but the value of nothing. Our main concern with the proposals remains the Head of Department (HoD) appointment process. We've reminded the VC that HoDs were traditionally "first among equals" chosen from within the department to lead with the confidence of their peers. That changed in 2020 when the previous leadership, supported by PoE, unilaterally tore up the process agreed with UCU and decided to impose their nominees as HoDs on departments. As the total collapse of the PPR department (2019-2021) proved, imposing unpopular leadership is a recipe for disaster. If we are serious about departmental agency, we need to return to a process where staff actually have a say in who leads them. We'll be pushing to ensure that as these new Faculty PVC roles appear, the departmental agency we've been promised includes the right to a leader we actually trust. And

we sincerely hope that the new Faculty PVCs will take engagement with UCU seriously – it is part of their job description.

3. LUCU position on LU's finance strategy and governance of finance

Despite movements in the positive direction by new leadership, we remain deeply concerned about [financial decision-making and the governance of these decisions](#). We outlined our position to senior leadership clearly on 10 March 2026 (see attached), outlining our concerns around financial decision making and governance, prioritisation of capital expenditure, inconsistencies in expectations of financial returns from [private and overseas partners](#) vs. Bailrigg, the perception that public monies are being channelled for private profit, and the ongoing regulatory investigation around conflicts of interest in LU-[KPMG](#)-UPP relationships. Our paper demands a reply from management of equivalent rigour – however, we are yet to see a formal response to the matters we raise. Click on preceding links to read a few interesting articles on these issues.

4. H&S and FHASS Envision relocation update

While we have withdrawn the rebalot as an act of measured trust and good faith in new leadership, we would like to make clear that we are still in dispute over the other three other matters on which we had proposed to rebalot. These include the unilateral disestablishment of the redundancy committee, independence and accountability of H&S structures, and the FHASS Envision relocation. We have received assurances from the RSCOO on the latter two issues and requesting more time for a resolution, which we have agreed. We will keep you posted on the negotiations and any developments on these matters of dispute.

5. Workloads

We are actively engaging with the DVC, the interim Pro-VC for Academic Development, and the Head of Strategic Data Projects on excessive workloads across the institution which is causing increasing anxiety and stress. Unsurprisingly, the previous interim management who went aggressively for staff cuts did not foresee that there would still be the same amount of work to be done but by fewer people, potentially leading to a H&S crisis. Fewer students does not mean that workload has reduced – we still need to teach the same programmes and modules as before. On the contrary, providing support for student learning has increased workloads given the pressures on ensuring the same student experience. Ditto for admin and other tasks relating to student recruitment, admissions, and academic and student learning processes. We believe a meeting is being arranged towards April end to discuss these matters with UCU.

6. Fixed Term Contracts and 'Casual Work'

In our ongoing efforts to tackle the “indefinite with an end-date” contracts, we've been treated to a bit of PoE linguistic gymnastics. We are told that the delay in arranging a meeting to review FTCs and Casual Work is “not about priority” but rather a simple matter of “competing priorities”...It's a comforting thought that PoE remains “keen” to keep the conversation moving, although on a delayed timescale, even as the job security of our members on these “indefinite-but-ending” contracts is currently being held hostage by other, well, more prior priorities. On a serious note, if members have examples of how other institutions might have implemented 'bridge funding' for research associates on external grants then please do share it with Sunil, Laura or James Groves – it would be very helpful in our discussions with PoE (when it happens).

7. REF consultation

Members will have seen the invite to staff to provide input to the REF Code of Practice for REF2029 submission: <https://portal.lancaster.ac.uk/intranet/news/article/consultation-on-lancasters-ref2029-code-of-practice>. Similar to previous REF, LUCU is engaging directly with the REF COP team and we would be happy to feedback any proposals / suggestions on the specifics of REF2029 or the COP guidance. Please feedback your thoughts to Sunil, Laura or Patricia and we will pick it up. You can also send comments directly through to refcop@lancaster.ac.uk or via departmental / school research leadership.