

# **Interim on-line higher education sector conference, 15 December 2020**

## **Report on voting**

### **About the vote**

#### **The system used**

The vote was conducted using Alchemer. The system generated a uniquely identified link for each delegate. It was not possible for any delegate to cast more than one set of votes. Checks took place after the close of voting to confirm this.

Specific steps were taken to enable voting by anyone who had previously unsubscribed from Alchemer, and any bounce-back emails were followed up.

The emails containing voting links were issued at approximately 11:45 on Wednesday 16 December with a closing date/time of 10:00 on Friday 18 December.

#### **Number of votes received**

142 delegates were sent a unique voting link. 124 delegates voted. One of these did not progress through to the end of the voting pages. Not all delegates voted on every motion. Note that the 'registered abstention' figures in this report indicate only delegates who actively selected the option to abstain.

## Summary of voting

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Vote</b>
HE1	USS	CARRIED unopposed
HE2	Defend our USS pensions: put pressure on employers	REMITTED
HE2A.1	Amendment	FELL
HE2A.2	Composite amendment	FELL
L1	No solid basis for a resolution over USS	CARRIED
HE3	HE pay	CARRIED
HE4	Vulnerability of post-92 institutions	LOST
HE5	Multi-year pay bargaining	CARRIED
HE6	Local agreements	CARRIED
HE7	End use of short-haul/domestic flights for work-related activities	REMITTED
HE7A.1	Amendment	FELL
HE8	Ensuring ARPS staff representation in branches and local negotiations	CARRIED
HE9	Love Our ARPS, continued	CARRIED
HE10	Commission a UCU Research Concordat to increase security of employment	CARRIED
HE11	Covid-19 exposes the scandal of casualisation	CARRIED
HE12	Campaign against increased TPS contributions	CARRIED, unopposed
HE13	Black researchers	CARRIED
D43	USS: regaining control of our pensions and trustees	LOST
D44	USS: Separating DB and DC and ending mastertrust status	CARRIED

The number of votes cast for each motion and amendment, followed by the text of the motion (as amended, if the motion was carried as amended), is set out overleaf.

## **HE1 USS Higher education committee**

### **CARRIED unopposed**

Votes in favour: 109

Votes against 0

Registered abstentions: 8

HE sector conference notes the report and approves the recommendations of the Superannuation Working Group contained in [UCUBANHE74](#).

## **HE2 Defend our USS pensions: put pressure on employers Yorkshire and Humberside regional committee**

### **REMITTED**

Votes in favour of remitting HE2: 51

Votes against remitting HE2: 49

Registered abstentions: 15

Conference deplores:

1. An unnecessary valuation taking place during Covid and the proposed total contributions of 40-66%.
2. The flawed valuation approach.
3. The employers not (yet) standing up against USS to defend pensions.
4. The risk of scheme closure due to spiralling costs.

Conference instructs HEC to:

- a. campaign for employers to join UCU in pressing for changes in the valuation, including 30 years for 'deficit' recovery, at least 65% growth assets, a cash flow approach and reasonable prudence. Or alternatively, for employers to cover the increased costs.
- b. call a dispute with employers if they fail to deliver a) above
- c. organise a December/January Special HE Sector Conference to discuss the campaign. This should be fully accessible to disabled members and those with older browsers and computers, including phone dial in.
- d. initiate an industrial action ballot if employers fail to deliver on a) above.

## **HE2A.1 University College London**

### **FELL**

Under conference instructs, add new bullet point a. (renumber subsequent bullet points):

- a. campaign for employers to commit to not raising but instead reducing DB employee contributions to 8% while preserving existing benefits.

## **HE2A.2 Composite Lancaster University, University of Dundee**

### **FELL**

Add to 'Conference deplores', and renumber:

3. Requests by UUK to USS for benefit modelling, implying they will propose benefit reductions

Under conference instructs, replace a) with:

- a. campaign for employers to agree not to propose benefit reductions and require employers to join UCU in pressing for revisions to the proposed valuation. Potential ways currently include a) setting "the level of prudence" at 67% in the 2018 valuation, b) an increased e.g. 20-30 years 'deficit' recovery period, c) retaining the current investment plans of around 65% "growth assets", d) updating mortality assumptions in light of COVID-19, e) updating asset values in light of experience, and f) a higher discount rate.

## **L1 No solid basis for a resolution over USS University of Sheffield**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 83

Votes against 16

Registered abstentions: 12

Conference notes the consultation response from Universities UK published on 13 November which shows deep dissatisfaction among our employers for USS's approach to the 2020 valuation, with many criticisms echoing those made by UCU.

Conference believes that the dispute over the future of scheme will only be resolved through constructive negotiation over a valuation outcome that all parties can trust, and that the valuation that was sent for consultation with employers falls far short of this.

Conference calls on the General Secretary to write to Universities UK, USS and the Pensions Regulator articulating this point and making it clear that the pre-92 sector is heading towards a crisis caused by a failure by USS to deliver a valuation that commands trust and provides a sound basis for negotiation, and calls on the HEC to develop a pressure campaign to effect change.

### **HE3 HE Pay Higher education committee**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 116

Votes against: 2

Registered abstentions: 4

HE Sector conference notes the report and approves the recommendations of the national negotiators contained in [UCUBANHE75](#).

### **HE4 Vulnerability of post-92 institutions Queen Margaret University**

#### **LOST**

Votes in favour: 47

Votes against: 66

Registered abstentions: 9

Noting Audit Scotland's report on the relative fragility of the modern universities within the higher education sector in Scotland

Noting the value of a diverse higher education sector, and the respective Governments' responsibilities to ensure the survival of the smaller universities without jeopardising the larger universities,

Conference

1. notes that members in many post-92 institutions involved in the '4 fights' dispute (including both in Scotland), advocated that the collective bargaining strategy in this dispute should be clearly distinctive from that of the USS dispute
2. notes with concern that the HEC agreed a strategy of industrial action which does not recognise the distinctiveness of the two disputes.

Conference resolves to ensure that the diversity of contexts of HE governance across the nations of the UK are considered, and the distinctive interests of post-92 universities are protected in industrial disputes.

### **HE5 Multi-year pay bargaining University of Sheffield**

#### **CARRIED**

#### **Motion to remit motion HE5 was LOST:**

Votes in favour of remitting HE5: 49

Votes against remitting HE5: 62

Registered abstentions: 8

### **Vote on motion HE5 was CARRIED:**

Votes in favour: 72

Votes against: 43

Registered abstentions: 6

Conference notes:

1. the major successes of our Four Fights campaign in bringing together issues of pay and equality, and crossing the anti-union threshold in many branches
2. that, nevertheless, staff in HE have seen over a decade's decline in real-term pay
3. that timelines for annual pay negotiations mean that these almost inevitably extend into the next bargaining round, potentially limiting options and leverage.

Conference believes:

- a. that there is a continued need to demand better pay and conditions and confront inequalities through UK-wide negotiations
- b. that a medium-term strategy would allow for improved flexibility in our negotiating and bargaining response.

Conference resolves:

- i. that UCU should actively explore options around multi-year bargaining with the other New JNCHES trade unions, in advance of the 2021-22 bargaining round
- ii. that the baseline negotiating position should include sustained above-inflation pay rises and concrete benchmarks for addressing pay inequalities, workload and casualisation on a UK-wide basis.

### **HE6 Local agreements Higher education committee**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 115

Votes against: 1

Registered abstentions: 6

Conference notes:

1. UCU's strategy to prioritise issues relating to casualisation, intersectional inequality-driven pay gaps and workloads
2. resistance from employers towards progressing these issues in a consistent way at UK level
3. improvements achieved through local bargaining on some of these issues.

Conference reiterates the UK-wide priority status of these issues and calls on HEC to:

- a. work to support and empower our branches to implement any UK or sector level agreements
- b. pursue local claims in relation to casualisation, the gender and race pay gap and workloads
- c. ensure bargaining guidance and campaign packs are integrated into all appropriate training resources
- d. ensure the delivery of interactive branch briefings and training events tailored to these priority issues
- e. ensure that agreements and success stories are shared and publicised widely by the union
- f. ensure locally achieved gains on these priority areas are used as examples to strengthen negotiations in an appropriate way at sector level.

**HE7 End the use of short-haul/domestic flights for work-related activities  
Manchester Metropolitan University**

**REMITTED**

Votes in favour of remitting HE5: 72

Votes against remitting HE5: 41

Registered abstentions: 8

Conference notes:

1. that in a time of climate crisis, there is no justification for taking domestic or short haul flights for worked related activities to anywhere in the UK or Europe that can be arrived within 24 hours using alternative modes of transport
2. that University sustainability/environmental rankings do not include the environmental impact of the carbon emissions produced by air travel.

Conference resolves:

- a. to campaign for sector wide ban on the use of short haul/domestic flight for any trip that can be made within 24 hours by alternative modes of transport.
- b. that any employee travelling within Europe for work-related reasons should be given appropriate, work-loaded time to make their trip using alternative modes of transport
- c. to lobby employers to record and monitor the environmental impact of staff air travel and to offset their flight carbon footprint.

**HE7A.1 University of Sheffield**

**FELL**

Replace '24 hours' with '8 hours'.

Add to notes:

3. that one outcome of the COVID-19 crisis is greater familiarity with digital solutions to meeting and conferencing.

Replace resolves a. with:

to campaign for a sector wide ban on the use of short haul/domestic flight for any trip that can be made within 8 hours by alternative modes of transport, except for staff with disabilities or other circumstances that make alternative transport impractical.

## **HE8 Ensuring ARPS staff representation in branches and local negotiations Academic related, professional staff committee**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 113

Votes against: 7

Registered abstentions: 3

This HESC recognises:

1. the hard work of ARPS members in committee roles and local negotiations across the sector
2. the wide range of local agreements on a variety of issues such as intersectional pay gaps and workload models
3. the need for consistency in ensuring ARPS staff are fully represented in all local agreements.

The HESC instructs the HEC to:

- a. set policy which calls for national oversight of all local agreements to ensure all staff groups are equally represented
- b. develop guidance on how to include ARPS staff in negotiations on local issues.
- c. continue to raise the profile of ARPS staff at all levels within UCU.
- d. amend the model branch rules to require branches, where applicable, to elect an academic-related and professional services staff representative to their branch committee.

## **HE9 Love Our ARPS, continued Academic related, professional staff committee**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 114

Votes against: 3

Registered abstentions: 6

This HESC notes:

1. the vital contribution made by academic related and professional services (ARPS) staff to Higher Education, and to UCU
2. that ARPS staff still often feel 'erased' from the profile of HE and the union
3. that UCU is the stronger for the active participation of ARPS staff.

This HESC agrees that UCU should hold a UK-wide week of coordinated action, focused on academic related and professional services staff. This HESC resolves that Love Our ARPS Week will:

- a. highlight the demands in the ARPS Manifesto
- b. boost recruitment of ARPS staff to UCU
- c. launch and lodge local model branch claims to bargain and negotiate for improved working conditions and opportunities for career progression and CPD for ARPS staff
- d. require the production and distribution of ARPS resources to branches
- e. require to be highlighted as a significant campaign by union officers and activists.

**HE10 Commission a UCU Research Concordat to increase security of employment      Anti-casualisation committee**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour:                      120

Votes against                              1

Registered abstentions:      2

HESC notes:

1. the revised Research Concordat was published in 2019 partly in response to concerns related to increased precarity in the sector.
2. the poor treatment of Research staff, often facing years of short-term contracts with no career development in HE is becoming more recognized
3. that HESA data on HEIs 'open-ended/indefinite' contracts are misleading because many contracts have the clause 'subject to funding'.

HESC believes that the 2019 Concordat is superficial and does not sufficiently address the issues facing research staff offering no concrete proposals

HESC resolves to

- a. commission its own Research Concordat reflecting the experiences of research staff

- b. highlight the issue of research staff in the current dispute with specific reference to UCU's model policy on research staff management and avoidance of redundancy
- c. demand accurate figures on numbers of FTCs from HEIs, including those styled as 'open-ended'.

**HE11 COVID-19 exposes the scandal of casualisation  
Cambridge**

**University of**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 121

Votes against 1

Registered abstentions: 1

Congress notes:

1. COVID-19 exposes the scandal of casualisation: those who are less financially secure will be discouraged from self-reporting or self-isolating
2. people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease) are more likely to become severely ill with the virus
3. the alarming rise in racist abuse and attacks on East Asian people, including university students and staff, since the outbreak of COVID-19.

Congress resolves:

- a. to demand that employers ensure that there is no detriment, e.g. in terms of lost pay, to any member of staff, regardless of contract type or visa status, as a result of virus-related closures, cancellations, or isolation
- b. to demand that staff who are at higher risk of contracting the virus suffer no detriment for taking extra precautions
- c. to stand in solidarity with all staff and academics facing escalating racial discrimination following the outbreak of COVID-19.

**HE12 Campaign against increased TPS contributions  
Winchester**

**University of**

**CARRIED unopposed**

Votes in favour: 97

Votes against: 0

Registered abstentions: 25

In light of the financial damage that the increased employer contribution to TPS has inflicted upon post-92 institutions, which has been used a pretext for redundancies and other attacks on working conditions, conference:

1. condemns the government's continued refusal to fund HEIs to mitigate the impact of increased employer contributions
2. calls on the government to reverse its decision
3. regards any refusal to reverse this decision as a direct attack on the long-term viability of post-92 HEIs.

While government refuses to reconsider, conference instructs HEC to:

- a. support action, up to and including strike action, in any HEI threatening attacks on pensions, jobs or working conditions under the guise of savings demanded by pension contribution rises
- b. organise a high-profile national campaign to demand the government funds HEIs to meet the increased employer contributions

### **HE13 Black researchers**

### **Black members standing committee**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 115

Votes against: 1

Registered abstentions: 7

Black researchers are under immense pressure to do work outside of their remit and are expected to do work for free without any pay compared to white colleagues. They do not receive recognition for the work that they have produced.

1. call on UCU to produce the data on the number of Black researchers in HE institutions
2. data on those doing paid and unpaid work
3. more formalisation of the type of work they are doing and ensure that they are paid for such work on a par with work of similar grade
4. UCU to push that HE institutions provide Black researchers with mentorship/sponsorship to ensure progression and recognition for work done and develop avenues to ensure that Black researchers gain permanent contracts within their HE institutions
5. UCU to hold universities responsible for producing annual report tracking the number of Black researchers and their progression showing explicit commitment to equal opportunities.

**D43 USS: Regaining control of our pensions and trustees education committee**

**Higher**

**LOST**

Votes in favour: 43

Votes against: 49

Registered abstentions: 20

HESC notes:

1. establishment of hybrid DB/DC scheme in 2016 with DC covered by disadvantageous mastertrust legislation
2. UCU (and UUK) have lost the right to dismiss and replace their nominated trustees.

HESC instructs negotiators and HEC:

- a. obtain advice from First Actuarial to show that DB is cost competitive with DC
- b. draw on financial and legal advice to determine the best means to separate USS DB and DC components and withdraw main DB scheme from mastertrust legislation.
- c. put pressure on USS and employers to ensure point 2 is implemented
- d. campaign to move all pension to DB (possibly initially at a lower accrual rate) with members having the choice about legacy DC and able to opt up to 7% of their pensions into and out of DC scheme.
- e. campaign for an option similar to the previous Prudential additional voluntary contributions (AVC) scheme for additional pension years.

**D44 USS: Separating DB and DC and ending mastertrust status Higher education committee**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour: 84

Votes against: 7

Registered abstentions: 23

HESC notes:

1. USS scheme changes in 2016 which led to the establishment of a hybrid scheme with a DC component above a salary threshold
2. hybrid schemes are covered by the master trust legislation which is disadvantageous
3. the recent changes in scheme governance leading to USS becoming a mastertrust and UCU (and UUK) losing the right to dismiss and replace their nominated trustees.

HESC recognises the advantages in ending mastertrust status and that this will require separating the DB and DC components of the scheme.

HESC agrees:

- a. to obtain legal, actuarial and other relevant advice on separation of the DB and DC components of the scheme, ending the mastertrust status for the DB scheme avoiding any negative consequences of doing this
- b. to obtain modelling and actuarial advice on options for bringing benefits above the threshold into the DB scheme in a cost-neutral way.