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National Dispute with Employers - update

At its meeting on 8 October 2010 the Higher Education Committee (HEC) agreed to call a special HE sector conference to debate the campaign and timing for action on pay, jobs and pensions.

This meeting has now been set for 25 November 2010 and will be held in Manchester. Conference business will take place from 12.30 to 16.30.

A number of consultation meetings were held around the UK in October in order to receive further input from branches/LAs on how to maximise support for the union's campaigns on pay, job security and pensions in a rapidly evolving political and industrial environment.

Views expressed at the October consultation meetings will feed into a special HEC on 29 October which will plan for the sector conference. Any motion or other statement agreed by HEC will be circulated to branches as soon as possible after this date.

Branches/LAs should convene meetings after 29 October and before 11 November (the deadline for motions) to elect delegates and discuss motions for the sector conference. Branches/LAs may also wish to arrange another meeting after 15 November to consider the first report of the Conference Business Committee (with the first list of submitted motions) and to consider amendments and inform delegates to the conference.

Further information on the HE Sector Conference, including the timetable for motions, amendments and circulation of papers and registration details can be found in UCU circular UCU293 and at www.ucu.org.uk/heconf_nov2010

USS Pension Review

Following the intransigence of the employers and their refusal thus far to consult all USS members via a referendum which would set out both the employers and UCU's proposals, the UCU launched its own referendum on 21 September. This is the only opportunity for scheme members and those eligible for USS membership to make their views count. It is open to members and non-members alike. UCU has established that there is overwhelming opposition from UCU USS members to the employers' proposals for reform and equally overwhelming support for our own proposals for cost-sharing with the employers to create a sustainable scheme in the future.

HE branches should send a message to all members about the USS campaign, and get friends and colleagues – whether UCU members or not – to vote in our referendum.

We have to persuade a critical mass of USS members to exercise their right to vote in the UCU referendum. Where LAs/branches have worked with us to send mailings to all staff whether via reps or directly, turnout has mushroomed. In some LAs/branches more than one-third of eligible USS active members have voted. Please do your bit and help us to show we speak for all. The UCU campaigns team are there to help you increase turnout, please contact jstephens@ucu.org.uk for advice and help with your local campaign.

Any branch officer who wants to know their local turnout should contact Matt Waddup directly at mwaddup@ucu.org.uk to be given a confidential update as to what proportion of active USS members have participated in their institution so far. Please

make sure that your branch is doing all it can to push the ballot locally. Turnout is critical.

We are asking all branches to continue to send regular messages to members AND non members with instructions on how to vote.

The employers' consultation opened on 20 October and closes on 22 December. Many members have complained about the one-sided nature of the covering letter that came with the employers' information pack. UCU has produced a response to each of the employers' points which can be found here: www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/q/9/USS_statement2_Oct10.pdf

Although the official consultation process is deeply flawed, our advice is for members to participate and use every avenue to make clear they do not agree with the proposed changes. The pack invites you to give the USS Board your views here www.ussconsultation.co.uk/

Our suggested response to the online survey is (see also UCU HE circular UCUHE72):

"This proposal is part of an overall package which is detrimental to both existing and future members of USS, and which creates a highly divisive and damaging two tier benefits system. The challenges facing USS could be dealt with without reducing benefits by adopting the UCU proposals. My clear view is that the USS Board should listen to fund members, and not implement the employers' detrimental package of proposals."

Regrettably the employers have now said that unlike a ballot they will not count the "votes" for and against each proposal, preferring what they call a "narrative" approach.

However, UCU will be submitting the results of its referendum in full to the USS Board. So far, more than 21,000 fund members have voted. If you are a USS eligible member and have not voted yet please do so using the unique link we have sent you.

Each institution is conducting a consultation of scheme members and is obliged to report back. The union argues that only a full referendum in every institution on the employers' proposals will give the consultation period legitimacy.

Accordingly, we have written to all VCs calling on them to hold a full referendum or ballot locally. In support of this call, we are also running a nationally coordinated campaign to increase pressure on employers to grant a referendum locally.

Summary of HE Branch Action Points:

- Have you written to your VC? Branches are encouraged to contact their vice-chancellor requesting a ballot be undertaken. We have provided some draft text for you to use at the bottom of this page:
www.ucu.org.uk/modelusmotion.
Again, **please** let us know when you have done this and copy any correspondence by emailing jstephens@ucu.org.uk
- Are you meeting with management? Here are 11 draft questions to put to them:
www.ucu.org.uk/defenduss
- Have you passed a motion at a branch/LA meeting calling for a local referendum. You can view the model motion here:
www.ucu.org.uk/modelusmotion.
Once you have passed the motion, **please** email jstephens@ucu.org.uk so that we know.
- New campaign materials: Campaign materials have now been dispatched to all appropriate branches. If you have NOT

received your materials please email: jstephens@ucu.org.uk You can view the materials here:
www.ucu.org.uk/defenduss

Browne Review of HE funding

The long-awaited Browne Review Report on Higher Education Funding and Student Finance was published on 12 October 2010. It represents a radical proposal to establish a genuine market in UK undergraduate education, with massive repercussions for the future of the HE sector. To download a copy of the report click here:

hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/

The report proposes the complete lifting of the cap on fees, and at the same time an 80% reduction in public funding for university teaching, with only a small number of 'priority subjects' to get any state funding at all. It is estimated that institutions would have to set fees at a level of at least £7,000 just to make up for the withdrawal of teaching funding. However, the more prestigious institutions are likely to set much higher fees, and this is likely to lead to a two-tier or multi-tier system whereby students from wealthier backgrounds go to the more costlier institutions, and students from lower-income backgrounds make decisions based on cost rather than academic suitability and opt for the cheapest institutions.

The impact on many Higher Education institutions is likely to be disastrous, with massive cuts in course provision and staffing levels and some institutions being driven to the wall. For UCU's press response to the report see: www.ucu.org.uk/5058

UCU's own summary of the report and initial observations can be found here:
www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/r/5/UCU_

[Browne_Review_summary_and_observations_211010.doc](#)

Prior to the report's publication, the HEC adopted a position paper on the future of student fees and HE funding which can be found here:

www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/r/d/HEC_Paper_Fees_Review_Group_approved_081010.doc

'Fund Our Future' UCU-NUS National Demonstration – 10 November 2010

The UCU and NUS (National Union of Students) are jointly organising a national demo, 'Fund Our Future: Stop Education Cuts' on Wednesday 10 November 2010, in central London. This is an opportunity to send a clear message to the Coalition government that the cuts to further and higher education must stop.

This is even more critical in the wake of the monumental changes proposed by the Browne review, and the funding cuts outlined in the Comprehensive Spending Review on 20 October. This confirmed that the budget for Higher Education (excluding research) will be reduced by 40% from £7.1 billion to £4.2 billion.

There has never been a more important time to stand up for education. Please let us know if you are coming: UCU is committed to ensuring that transport should not be a barrier to any member. You can tell us if you are coming and if you need help with transport here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/10novemberdemo>

Information on the demo and publicity material (which you can download and distribute) can be found here:

www.ucu.org.uk/fundourfuture

QAA Institutional Review

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is calling for views on a new method for reviewing higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland. The process is called 'Institutional review' and in September 2011 will replace the current method for reviewing academic quality and standards in higher education, which is called Institutional audit. UCU is planning to respond to the new proposals (although the QAA may be swallowed up by a new regulatory body under the Browne review proposals) and would welcome comments from members, particularly those with an active role in quality assurance processes. Please can you send in any comments to Rob Copeland, policy officer rcopeland@ucu.org.uk by no later than Friday 19 November?

The full QAA paper and summary document is available at:

www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation/reviewconsultation.asp

Performance Management

A number of institutions have introduced policies on Performance Management – particularly in relation to research performance – that we regard as unreasonable and detrimental. Following a previous request for information we have received a number of examples of such policies in relation to research performance. However, we would also be interested in examples of teaching performance management procedures. If you have any such examples, please send them to Stefano Fella; sfella@ucu.org.uk

Health Educators

Calling all health educators: Important date for your diaries!

- Health Educators' Summit , Tuesday 30 November 2010, 1000 -1630, UCU Head Office, London.

UCU is organising the event in conjunction with the Royal College of Nurses, Royal College of Midwives, Chartered Institute of Physiotherapists and British Association of Occupational Therapists, with whom we have joint membership arrangements. Health educators working in higher education health faculties throughout the UK face a period of unprecedented turmoil and uncertainty as a result of healthcare workforce changes, NHS reforms including £20 billion in NHS cuts dressed up as 'efficiency' savings, and the looming prospect of huge higher education sector funding cuts.

The Summit is your opportunity to get the latest information and authoritative insights on the future delivery of healthcare and the potential implications for health professionals. Find out what the government's NHS reforms could mean for your institution and how we can work together to defend health education provision in higher education.

Places are limited so register now at:

www.ucu.org.uk/healthsummit

Teacher Education in a time of austerity - seminar, 2 November 2010

On Tuesday 2 November 2010 there will be a half day (afternoon) seminar entitled *Teacher Education in a time of austerity: what is at stake for UCU members?* at UCU for HE and college based teacher educators training primary and secondary school teachers. The seminar has been organised in response to

current government initiatives on teacher education to shift training from universities to schools. For further details see:

www.ucu.org.uk/5020

If you would like further details on the seminar or to apply to attend please contact Diana Hendry at dhendry@ucu.org.uk

UCU Environmental Conference 2010 - 'Sustainable development - Making our voice heard'

The UCU Environment Conference 2010: will take place at UCU Head Office on 18 November 2010, 10.30am – 4.30pm

This conference provides union activists with the opportunity to develop their capacity to act at the sector, national and international level. The conference will be addressed by UCU General Secretary Sally Hunt and Frances O'Grady, TUC deputy general secretary, and includes a panel discussion on greening the campus, community and curriculum and a number of workshops. For details and registration see:

www.ucu.org.uk/5026

Equality Conferences

Registrations are now open for UCU members to attend this year's Annual Equality Conferences which will be held at UCU Head Office in London from 10:00am to 4:30pm on the following dates:

- Disabled Members: 5 November
- Black Members: 12 November
- LGBT Members: 20 November
- Women Members: 26 November

For more information and to register go to:

www.ucu.org.uk/2669 or email eqadmin@ucu.org.uk

Annual Meetings – Specialist Employment Groups

It is also time to start planning for the annual meetings of the specialist employment groups in HE. Put the following dates in your diaries:

- Academic Related staff annual meeting, 16 March 2011
- Annual meeting for staff on casual contracts, 11 March 2011
- Annual meeting for UCU members employed by MRC/NIBSC and GE Healthcare (Imanet), 4 March 2011

All meetings take place at UCU Head Office, London. Calling notices – with details on registration - will be sent out in due course. For more details of annual members meetings see: www.ucu.org.uk/2669

Membership Records

We would like to thank all branches/LAs and Head Office and regional staff who have co-operated in updating our membership records over the last few months. Your assistance is critical in ensuring the smooth running of our communications, democratic structures and ability to run industrial action ballots.

Any branches/LAs which have not done so already need to send amendments to their membership department contact as a matter of the utmost urgency.

UCU Fighting Fund

Although taking strike action is a last resort, sometimes it is necessary to do so in order to combat intransigent managements. It's always tough to lose a day's pay, and so UCU has set up a fighting fund to support members facing difficulties as a consequence of supporting the union's actions.

HOW TO DONATE

Make a direct bank transfer, or set up a regular standing order, to:

Account name: UCU Fighting Fund

Sort code: 08-60-01

Account no: 20179432

Reference: 'Fighting Fund 2010'

or send a cheque (payable to 'University and College Union') to:

Fighting Fund 2010
Finance Dept
University and College Union
Carlow Street
London NW1 7LH