

IN THIS ISSUE OF HE NEWS:

- ❖ **National Disputes and Strike Action – Update**
- ❖ **USS dispute – latest developments**
- ❖ **TPS Update**
- ❖ **UCEA dispute 2010-11**
- ❖ **JNCHES working-groups**
- ❖ **National Claim 2011-12**
- ❖ **Professional Development Policies**
- ❖ **Professional Standards Framework in HE**
- ❖ **Public Information about HE**
- ❖ **Consultation on Postgraduate Research Funding**
- ❖ **Science Funding Inquiry**
- ❖ **External Examiners Review**
- ❖ **NHS Workforce consultation**
- ❖ **Overseas Working**
- ❖ **Employees Charter**
- ❖ **UCU-NUS joint post-graduate employment charter**
- ❖ **Working with Students**
- ❖ **Membership Records**

National Disputes and Strike Action – Update

Branches will have received a number of circulars providing updates on the three national disputes currently running in higher education.

USS Dispute – latest developments

As explained in UCUHE98 and the General Secretary's letter to members of 11 May, our representatives attended the USS Joint Negotiating Committee on 10 May under threat of legal action and the employers forced their draconian proposals to change USS through.

The union's Superannuation Working Group (SWG - the union body dealing with the conduct of this dispute in between meetings of the HEC) believes that we are now at the point where only sustained and seriously disruptive industrial action will achieve a fair settlement.

There is now a view that there is a need to escalate the dispute and refocus the dispute on the way the employers have hidden behind the legal threats made by USS to impose change. A special HEC has been convened for 23 May to consider next steps in the dispute. See UCUHE99 for further details:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE99.rtf

Branches/LAs will be informed of further developments after the special HEC on 23 May.

Teachers Pension Scheme

HEC agreed on 15 April to commit to joint actions with the teachers' unions in relation to TPS. Since the HEC meeting, three teachers' unions, ATL, NUT and NAHT (the schools' heads' union) have taken decisions at their annual conferences to ballot for

industrial action over the proposed changes to the TPS scheme.

For more information on latest developments and plans for action see UCUHE100:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE100.rtf

The joint action will involve members in post-92 institutions in England and Wales where ballots on the TPS dispute took place earlier this year (as well as colleagues in FE).

UCEA Dispute on Job Security and Pay

We remain in dispute with the employers over the 2010-11 National Claim. HEC agreed on 15 April that no further national strike action will be called in pursuance of this claim at this time. We continue to press for robust redundancy avoidance policies, based on the national claim, to be adopted locally, working through our regional structures.

JNCHES working-groups

Following on from the unsatisfactory conclusion of the 2009-10 New JNCHES national claim negotiations, UCEA and the national trade union side agreed to establish 3 working groups that would potentially enable a greater degree of joint working to take place on key elements of the joint trade union claim; job security, equality issues and fair pay.

The following groups were set up and involved both UCEA/employer representatives and representatives from the HE trade unions:

- Equality Working Group
- Pay Framework and Data Research Working Group

- Sustainability Issues Working Group

The work of these groups was undertaken during 2010 and the final reports for two of the groups, Equalities and Pay Framework and Data are now available. Further work however continues to be undertaken in respect of the Sustainability Issues group.

The UCU experience of participating in the groups varied. A UCU commentary on the work of the groups can be found in HE circular UCUHE101:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE101.rtf

Of the reports emanating from the 3 working-groups, we have only endorsed that coming out of the Equality Working Group. The report can be downloaded here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/f/1/JNCHES_equalityworkinggroupreport_jan11.pdf

In relation to the Pay Framework and Data Research Working Group, the UCU view is that the group was unable to fulfil its terms of reference mandate, and we were unable to endorse its work. A report has therefore been published without the UCU badge.

In relation to the Sustainability Issues Working Group, the UCU position is that the group has disappointingly failed to achieve key aspects of its terms of reference, specifically in the context of workforce planning and organisational change and shared values. We are unable to support the HE financial health and sustainability report that has emerged from the group as it is incomplete and has, from a UCU perspective, problematic financial data representation. This document has not therefore been circulated under the New JNCHES badge.

An "Insider's Guide to Finance and Accounting in HE" was also produced to aid negotiators from the employer and employees side. This is a useful tool, which we have therefore endorsed. We recommend that local negotiators refer to this guide in preparation for all local negotiations. The guide can be downloaded here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/f/9/JNCHES_insiderguidefinance_jan11.pdf

Joint Union National Claim 2011-12

While the dispute on the 2010-11 national claim remains unresolved, we have also begun to discuss our national claim for 2011-12. On 30 March the 5 HE trade unions met and agreed the principles of this year's national claim. See full claim attached to UCU HE/96:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE96.rtf>

The claim for 2011 includes elements for a cost of living pay rise for all staff, embedding and extending the equality agenda and reform and updating of the framework agreement.

The joint union claim was presented to the UCEA employer's representatives on 19 April. The trade union side pressed UCEA on the fact that HE staff had had a real term pay cut in 2009 and 2010, and also that significant numbers of jobs had been lost, or were under threat of being lost, yet at a national level job security was not being meaningfully discussed.

It is disappointing to report that the UCEA team did not make an offer in response to the claim.

The trade unions were provided with a list of all the institutions covered by the New JNCHES bargaining arrangements. Branches are asked to review this list (see UCU HE/96) and contact their Regional official with any issues.

The next scheduled New JNCHES pay negotiating meeting is on 26 May. The trade union side have stressed to the employer's side that we are expecting an offer on the claim before the next pay meeting.

Branches/LAs will be kept informed of developments.

Professional Development Policies Not Performance Management

On the back of concerns raised by a number of HE branches/LAs regarding the increasing tendency of HEIs to introduce detrimental performance management regimes, negotiating guidance has been adopted by the HEC to counter such proposals and to put forward alternative procedures focused on improving professional development policies.

The guidance has been circulated as HE circular UCUHE97. See:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE97.rtf

Tabling counter-proposals based on the principles contained in these guidelines may prove to be an effective means of inducing management to withdraw heavy-handed, unacceptable and detrimental proposals for performance management.

UK Professional Standards framework in Higher Education

Earlier this year UCU responded to the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) review of the UK

professional standards framework. The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning, launched in February 2006, is a framework which uses a descriptor-based approach to professional standards. It is used primarily by institutions in designing their professional development programmes for staff.

The HEA review proposes a number of changes to the current framework. While UCU shares the HEA's desire to improve the recognition of teaching, the new framework risks moving into areas which are essentially matters for employer-union negotiations (for example, on promotion criteria). We also believe that many of the recommendations are unrealistic in the current funding environment: Details of the HEA review and consultation can be found here:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/universitiesandcolleges/accreditation/ukpsf-consultation>

The UCU submission to the review can be found here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/m/s/profstandardsrev_ucusubmission_jan11.doc

Public information about HE

UCU has recently responded to a new consultation on public information in higher education. The HEFCE/Universities UK consultation recommends the establishment of a Key Information Set (KIS) for prospective students. New sources of information will include the cost of tuition fees, an overall total of weekly expected study hours and an average salary in the first year after completing the course.

While students should have straightforward access to good, relevant information about HE courses and institutions, we are sceptical that the KIS will fulfil the objective of 'informing people about the quality of higher education'. UCU is also concerned that the KIS, particularly new employability data, reinforces a consumerist agenda in higher education.

The UCU submission to the consultation can be found here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/c/9/keyinfofet_ucuconsultresponse_mar11.pdf

Consultation on postgraduate research funding

HEFCE are conducting a review of funding for postgraduate research programmes. The main proposal is to link the allocation of the research degree programme (RDP) supervision fund more closely with RAE scores (in particular 3* and 4* quality). In essence, this is likely to result in a greater concentration of doctoral funding in a smaller number of universities. Similar trends are apparent in the allocation of research council funding, e.g. doctoral training centres. The consultation document is available here:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_09/11_09.pdf

Please can you send in any comments to Rob Copeland rcopeland@ucu.org.uk by no later than Friday 10 June

Science funding inquiry

The Science and Technology Select Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the impact of the science and research budget allocations for 2011/12 to 2014/15. The

UCU's response focuses on huge cuts to the capital budget as well on real terms cuts to recurrent funding. It also addresses the increased concentration of research funding, growing government interference in the research policy process and the reduction in funding for equality and diversity projects in science, engineering and technology. See the UCU submission here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/h/e/ucu_sub_sciencefunding_may11.rtf

New review on external examiners is 'missed opportunity'

One element of the 2010-11 joint union national claim with the employers was the request for jointly-agreed proposals to develop a national system for remuneration of external examiners.

As with other elements of the national claim, there has been no progress in addressing this demand. A recent review from Universities UK has also failed to recommend better pay and service conditions. We believe the continuing failure to address this issue will lead to academics being deterred from becoming external examiners. Our response to the review outcome in April stressed that this was a 'missed opportunity' to offer external examiners decent support and recognition. Read more here:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5465> and in the Times Higher:

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=415745&c=1>

UCU's response to the original consultation paper is available here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/2/f/ucu_extexaminers_nov10.pdf

Overseas Working

Following on from HE circular UCUHE42 circulated in January 2010 which provided a guide to HE members working overseas, the HEC has now approved guidance for the negotiation of local agreements covering members posted or travelling overseas. See HE circular UCUHE103:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE103.rtf

Liberating the NHS: Developing the Healthcare workforce

As the largest recognised trade union with collective bargaining rights for health educators in the UK higher education sector, UCU has submitted a response to the Department of Health consultation document, *Liberating the NHS: developing the healthcare workforce*.

While we found the consultation document contained some laudable sentiments about achieving high educational standards for healthcare professionals, the reality of the proposals if implemented would, in our view, result in quite the opposite. For a copy of UCU's response and for information about UCU's Health Educators' Advisory Group please contact: Barbara Beckles, bbeckles@ucu.org.uk.

Employers' Charter

Not satisfied with a cuts and privatisation sector which is set to have a debilitating effect on educational provision and across the public sector as a whole, the UK government is also encouraging employers to take a more assertive line towards employees' rights. This was the aim behind its Employer's charter, launched in January

2011, which highlights their 'rights' vis-a-vis their employees, including the right to ask their workers to take a pay cut. See <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/to-pstorynews/2011/01/government-sets-out-employment-law-reforms-59508>

A useful critique of this by Professor Keith Ewing was published in The Guardian on 31 January, See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jan/31/cable-abuse-vulnerable-workers>

As Professor Ewing points out, the Council of Europe's Social Rights Committee report on compliance with the European Social Charter of 1961 found the UK to be in breach of 13 out of 16 obligations to which it had previously consented.

NUS and UCU launch joint Postgraduate Employment Charter

A new joint NUS/UCU Postgraduate Employment Charter was launched this month at the NUS Postgraduate Conference at Yarnfield. The charter describes good practice for the employment of postgraduate students in teaching roles and is a tool for student unions and UCU branches to work together to lobby their institutions for improved policies and working conditions. It was produced jointly by the NUS and UCU in response to the unique set of circumstances that students who take on paid roles with a higher education institution often experience. UCU believes that postgraduates who are employed at their place of study, even for only a few hours a week, are members of staff and should be integrated into the social and academic life of departments as education professionals and valued colleagues.

Download a copy of the charter here <http://www.ucu.org.uk/postgradcharter> and find out what else UCU is doing to support younger members and academic staff at the start of their careers here <http://www.ucu.org.uk/youngmembers>

Working with Students

The success of our days of action in March derived not only from the efforts of our members but also from the solidarity displayed by student organisations across a swathe of institutions. Where we work with student groups our campaigns are stronger and more effective.

Branches/LAs are urged to maximise efforts to develop joint campaigns at the local level with student groups to fight education cuts and job losses and maintain course provision. This should involve joint campaigning and co-ordinated actions with the NUS, and local student anti-cuts campaigns, as and where possible and appropriate.

Membership Records

Branches/LAs are reminded of the need to keep their membership records up to date as the academic year ends.

Your assistance is critical in ensuring the smooth running of our communications, democratic structures and ability to run industrial action ballots.