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National Negotiations

The Higher Education Committee (HEC) met on 7 December and decided to inform the employers that UCU reluctantly accepts the 2012 final offer.

Branch/LAs and members opinions will be sought on the 2013-14 national claim prior to a special HE sector conference to be held next February to discuss the 2013 claim.

It was also agreed that further briefings for branches/LAs on the risks associated with Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) will be arranged. In future, where ASOS is considered, ballot inserts will specifically link the need for a positive vote for strike action to ensure the tactical deployment of ASOS. See HE circular UCUHE177:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE177.rtf

Inequality in the Professoriate

UCU has published a report: 'The position of women and BME staff in professorial roles in UK HEIs' highlighting gender and race inequalities amongst the professoriate in UK

HEIs. Among the data highlighted in the report are that:

- Women make up nearly half (46.8%) of non-professorial academic staff in UK HEIs yet they make up less than 20% (19.8%) of the professoriate;
- BME academic staff make up 13% of non-professorial academic posts, yet only 7.3% of professorial roles;
- On average, female professors earn 6.3% (£4828) less than their male counterparts;
- On average, Black professors earn 9.4% (£7147) less than their white counterparts.

See the full report here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/o/2/The_position_of_women_and_BME_staff_in_professorial_roles_in_UK_HEIs.pdf

All heads of institutions have been written to highlighting the report. Branches and LAs are encouraged to read the report and to engage with the employer locally to tackle the issues raised. Advice and guidance on how branches / LAs can challenge the under-representation of women and BME staff in the professoriate

and any pay gaps that exist locally has been sent to all branches in circular UCUHE/175. See: www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE175.rtf

Student Evaluation of Teaching

HE circular UCUHE174 provides an update on ongoing work with regard to the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET), and its use in Performance Management regimes. It also includes a short questionnaire regarding the local impact of SET, which branches/LAs are encouraged to complete. See: www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE174.rtf

Governance e-network

Are you:

- A staff governor or staff representative on Council?
- Concerned about the lack of democracy and transparency of governance in your institution?
- Interested in university governance as a field of study?

Then you should join other members who have signed up to get involved in a new governance e-network being set up to share information, experiences and promote debate about the governance of our institutions, such as the issues raised in the recent Scottish Governance Review Report. See UCU briefing on this here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/k/2/Governance_review.docx For further information please contact Barbara Beckles in the HE team bbeckles@ucu.org.uk

REF Codes of Practice on Selection

The REF Equality and Diversity Panel (EDAP) has produced a report on good practice in the codes of practice on REF selection submitted by HEIs to the funding councils' REF team. It

reports that nearly half of the codes sent in for review (from 159 HEIs in total) fell short of the requirements of the official guidance. Branches/LAs are advised to follow up with their own HEIs to request sight of the EDAP opinion and consultation on the implementation of required changes. See UCUHE176 for further details: www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE176.rtf

Branches/LAs are also reminded of previous UCU guidance on best practice in institutional codes of practice and seeking no-detriment statements where staff are not included in the REF submission. See: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/REF>

Extension of VAT exemption to private HE providers

UCU and NUS have called on the government to abandon plans to extend the VAT education exemption to for-profit providers of higher education. The joint statement points out that rather than benefiting either students or taxpayers, the proposal will rig the HE system in favour of those providers with access to private capital, ensuring that students' fees and public subsidies are used to create shareholder profit. It also questions the decision to grant tax relief to for-profit companies at a time when corporate tax avoidance is a potent public concern.

For the full UCU-NUS statement as well as our formal response to the HMRC consultation on VAT exemption see: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/6399>

BIS 'student number control' consultation

BIS are consulting on applying student number controls to alternative providers (those not in direct receipt of public funds) with designated courses. The consultation

document shows that the value of financial support to students studying at alternative providers has increased from £19m in 2006/07 to £100m in 2011/12. The consultation also asks whether designated courses at alternative providers should participate in the Key Information Set, involving completion of the National Student Survey. See the consultation document here: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/a/12-1292-applying-student-number-controls-consultation> If Branches/LAs have any views or comments they would like to be included in the UCU response please email Gila Tabrizi, UCU Policy Officer gtabrizi@ucu.org.uk by 14 January.

QAA consultation on 'complaints and appeals on academic matters'

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is consulting institutions and staff on a revised section of their Quality Code on complaints and appeals on academic matters. The document outlines a general expectation about complaints and appeals on academic matters which higher education institutions are required to meet. It then proposes a series of 'indicators of sound practice', such as conducting procedures in a timely, fair and reasonable manner. UCU will be responding to the consultation and would welcome any comments on the draft code. Please can you send in any comments to Rob Copeland, policy officer rcopeland@ucu.org.uk by no later than Thursday 17 January.

Open Access Publishing

The government, Research Councils and HEFCE have accepted the main recommendations of the Finch review report, that policy be established to support the publication of research results in open access or hybrid journals funded by an article

processing or publishing charge. See <http://www.researchinfonet.org/publications/finch/> Implementation of this recommendation would require financial support from institutions or research funders to enable publication and would have significant implications for academic staff.

HEC agreed at its meeting of 7 December that HE members should be consulted on this issue with a view to taking a policy proposal to Congress 2013. Details on how branches/LAs can engage in the consultation will be circulated in the New Year.

Student-Staff Ratios

UCU research into the student:staff ratio (SSR) was recently reported in the Times Higher. See: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=422042> The SSR has been used as a key measure in the provision of higher education in the UK for more than half a century. However, the SSR as calculated by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) may give a false impression because HESA counts all the time of the standard 'teaching-and-research' academic as spent on teaching, rather than on research and other activities, as well as teaching. Data on time allocation by academics, produced by institutions for the Transparent Approach to Costing initiative (TRAC) and gathered by UCU, showed a wide range in the proportion of time spent on teaching. For the full report and press release on this see: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/6393>

Academic-Related reps network

The Academic Related Committee is seeking to establish a network of Academic-Related reps or branch contacts for Academic-Related members in order to exchange campaign ideas and gather and disseminate information

about issues affecting AR staff. All pre-92 branches are asked to identify an officer with responsibility for Academic Related issues or someone who can act as a point of contact between the Committee and their local branch members. If you are an Academic-Related rep or are willing to act as a contact for Academic-Related matters for your branch/HEI please contact Dan Arthur, Chair of the Committee,

Dan.Arthur@lshtm.ac.uk, or Stefano Fella (Committee Secretary) **sfella@ucu.org.uk**.

Dates for you diaries: Annual Meetings

Annual meeting for staff on casual contracts: Friday 15 February 2013.

Deadline for motions – 25th January.
Deadline for registrations/ nominations - Friday 1st February. See the calling notice with further details and links to the relevant forms here:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/ucu477.rtf

Formal calling notices for the annual meetings of other specialist group committees will be circulated early in the new year. However, branches/LAs are requested to note these dates in advance and ensure that their own meetings' calendar allows time for the branch to seek and elect delegates and nominations and approve motions.

MRC, NIBSC and GE Healthcare (Imanet) annual meeting : Friday 1 March 2013

Deadline for motions: 8 February; Deadline for registrations/nominations: 15 February

Annual meeting for academic-related staff: Wednesday 6 March 2013

Deadline for motions: 13 February; Deadline for registrations/nominations: 20 February

Post-92 members annual meeting: Friday 5 April 2013

Deadline for motions: 15 March; Deadline for registrations: 22 March. See the early notification of this meeting at UCU453: **www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/ucu453.rtf**

Branches/LAs are reminded that the election of delegates to annual meetings, submission of motions and nominations for Committees, require approval by a quorate branch meeting, or a quorate branch committee meeting or a properly constituted meeting of relevant members (e.g. staff on casual contracts or academic related staff).

National Day of Action to Recruit Staff on Casualised Contracts

Wednesday 6 March 2013

The build-up starts soon. Be part of it! To be updated on how you can be involved, contact Ronnie Kershaw **rkershaw@ucu.org.uk**