

Congress 2013: Key issues bulletin

Notice for the attention of UCU members

Dear colleague,

UCU Congress 2013 - key issues

Updated bulletin

The National Executive Committee has agreed to provide a 'key issues bulletin' to aid branches in their deliberations in advance of Congress and its sector conferences.

While there are always many motions on the agenda of Congress, the aim of the bulletin is to advise members of "motions [to Congress] which call for industrial action or the settling of disputes and any other motions considered by a majority of the NEC to be major issues of principle."

The following motions (text set out in full as Appendix 1) were agreed by a majority of the NEC to be key issues about which members should be consulted by their branch officers. Amendments were included by the national officers, exercising delegated authority from the NEC:

Union wide Congress business

23 Budget

This motion is to ratify the financial budget for UCU for the next two years which seeks to reduce annual expenditure by £2m by 2015 in response to falling membership.

The budget had been issued as branch circular UCU/500,

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/UCU500.html>

23A.1

This amendment rejects the second year of the two year budget proposed by the NEC

23A.2

This amendment rejects the budget proposed by the NEC and delegates the approval of a revised budget by NEC after Congress in light of decisions made at Congress.

24 Subscription rates

This motion asks Congress to endorse the NEC's proposal to increase subscription rates

by 3.2% in 2013/14.

26 Finance and Strategy

This motion asks Congress to recognise the "potential seriousness" of UCU's financial position; oppose compulsory redundancies of staff, raise subscription levels "as necessary", review UCU's property portfolio and pursue an on-going recruitment campaign.

26A.1 Finance and strategy

This amendment instructs the NEC to raise subscriptions by up to 5% above inflation for the next two years and create a new subscription band for those on incomes of above £60k.

33 Union Democracy

This motion proposes a ballot of Congress delegates to determine one of seven options for the future size of the National Executive Committee (see <http://www.ucu.org.uk/commission> for the options).

33A.1

This amendment seeks to conduct a national ballot of all members to decide on the size and composition of the NEC

33A.2

This amendment seeks to clarify the electoral process for deciding the issue of the size of the NEC previously identified in the key issues bulletin.

33A.3

This amendment seeks to remove the two examples proposed by the NEC from consideration by Congress delegates

34 Democracy in UCU

This motion asks Congress to agree to a reduction in the size of the NEC to 63 members, in line with Option C of the report by the Commission elected by the 2012 Congress. Clause (i) of this motion conflicts with the proposal in motion SFC23 from the NEC to ballot Congress members on 7 options for an NEC structure.

Higher Education sector business

HE29 National claim/negotiations with UCEA

This motion proposes support for the recommendations of the National Negotiators with regard to the claim and potential industrial action.

HE31 Pay negotiations 2013, call for joint union action

This motion calls for joint industrial action with other unions where possible in support

of the 2013 claim.

HE32 2013 pay claim

This motion proposes that any UCU industrial action in support of the claim during the summer be limited to working to contract and that the summer be used to mobilise for a major campaign of industrial action in the autumn.

HE33 Industrial action

This motion proposes that a HEC working party be formed to come up a template of escalating industrial action to be reported to branch representatives in autumn 2013.

Further Education sector business

FE1 Pay

This motion proposes a ballot for national strike action in the event of an unsatisfactory pay offer from employers at the first negotiating meeting on 24 April.

FE22 Abolish Ofsted

This motion calls for a campaign aimed at the abolition of OFSTED.

Discussion of key issues in branches

The NEC asks that as a matter of good practice branch officers call meetings to discuss at least the key issues set out above, and would encourage members to get involved in this process either at meetings or by participating in a vote.

The NEC recommends that where meetings to decide policy on Congress business are attended by less than 20% of eligible members, a ballot of members on the key issues should take place.

The full list of Congress and sector conference motions submitted for debate can be found in the Congress Business Committee's first report, branch circular UCU/499,

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/ucu499.rtf> or

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/ucu499.html>.

Appendix 1 – text of motions

Congress motions

23 Budget 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 National Executive Committee

Congress endorses the budget for September 2013 – August 2014 and the indicative budget for 2014-2015 as set out in UCU/500.

23A.1 East Midlands regional committee

Delete 'and the indicative budget for 2014-2015'

23A.2 South East regional committee

delete 'endorses the' and insert 'notes the proposed'

Add at the end 'Congress instructs the Treasurer to revise the budget in the light of decisions made by Congress 2013 and bring that revision back to a subsequent NEC for discussion and approval'.

24 Subscription rates National Executive Committee

Congress endorses the subscription rates from 1 September 2013 set out in UCU/500.

26 Composite: Finance and strategy London regional committee, Southern regional committee, South East regional committee

Congress notes:

1. the 2011-12 membership decline of 5,500, and its financial consequences;
2. the cost of all regional meetings, committees and conferences was 5% of the annual budget.

Congress recognises that the financial issues facing the union are potentially serious and that the union must develop a coherent strategy to deal with this. Congress in considering the implications of a deficit budget, faced with difficult choices, agrees that:

- a. rebuilding membership and subscription income depends on having a campaigning union and success in struggles;
- b. a campaigning union requires adequate, committed and accountable staff nationally and regionally, and a democratic structure to ensure members' control of union policy, which it is vital to protect;
- c. staffing costs should not be counter-posed to union democracy; reorganizations must minimise damage to democratic representation
- d. measures which might undermine the union's ability to campaign in defence of members' interests, or undermine our Equality agenda, or robustly address the austerity measures which we face, or risk undermining member services or member representation and democracy, must be avoided.

Congress instructs the NEC to:

- i. reaffirm UCU's opposition to compulsory redundancies both as an employer and in negotiating with employers

- ii. safeguard democratic structures
- iii. review subscription levels and raise them across the board as necessary but on a progressive scale
- iv. review the UCU property portfolio
- v. pursue an on-going recruitment campaign, targeting recruitment at institutions and departments with below average density and raising the union's profile among post-16 staff.

26A.1 University of Brighton Grand Parade

Add new point 3. to 'notes'

- 3. current UCU subscriptions are amongst the lowest nationally and internationally.

Replace iii to v of 'instructs' with the following, and renumber:

- iii. seek cost reductions and income generation via rescheduling meetings, moderate reduction in NEC, reorganisation, and letting one floor of HQ;
- iv. mount recruitment campaigns focusing below average density institutions;
- v. raise subscriptions up to 5% above inflation, as necessary, in two annual increases (2013 & 2014), graduated by income, to eliminate any remaining deficit, and meet the 'coffee test';
- vi. create a new subscription band for £60k+ incomes.

33 Union democracy: size and structure of NEC

National Executive Committee

Congress receives the report of the Commission on Union Democracy, elected by Congress 2012, which includes five different models for an NEC, ranging from 30 to 72 members, including the status quo.

Congress also notes the report of the NEC's sub-committee on union structure and democracy, which contains a further two NEC models.

Congress agrees that, following debate, a decision in principle should be made by Congress between these 7 models, allowing rule changes to be brought to Congress 2014.

Congress agrees that arrangements will be made to conduct a ballot of Congress delegates.

Congress instructs the NEC to bring rule changes to Congress 2014 to implement whichever NEC structure Congress members vote in favour of in this ballot.

33A.1 Teeside University

In the sentence: 'Congress agrees that arrangements will be made to conduct a ballot of Congress delegates', delete: 'Congress delegates', replace with 'all members'.

33A.2 University of Cambridge

Add at the end of the fourth paragraph:

The ballot shall take place by the single transferable vote before the close of this Congress.

33A.3 North West Regional Committee

Delete paragraph two ["Congress also notes the report of the NEC's sub-committee on union structure and democracy, which contains a further two NEC models"]

In paragraph three delete "7" and insert "5"

34 UCU democracy and representation University of Brighton Grand Parade

Congress notes

4. financial difficulties may require alteration to the democratic structures of the UCU;
5. rebuilding the subscription-paying membership base depends on democratic representation that ensures members' control of the union, and that it remains a campaigning organisation;
6. proposals for the size of the NEC from the Congress Commission established in 2012.

Congress believes that

- a. committee reorganisation must minimise adverse effects on democratic accountability, and ensure viable sectoral representation if the union is to grow;
- b. reduction in NEC size is preferable to reduction in frequency of meetings that must implement policy between Congresses;
- c. there must be national and constituency representation;
- d. all equality strands must be properly represented on the NEC.

Congress resolves that

- vi. only option C from the Commission, reducing NEC size to 63, fully satisfies these requirements, and should be framed as a rules revision for Congress 2014;
- vii. NEC and sub-committees should, where possible, be scheduled for the same day.

Higher education sector conference motions

HE29 National claim/negotiations with UCEA Higher Education Committee

Conference notes the report and approves the recommendations from the national negotiators contained in UCUHE/xxx.

HE31 Pay negotiations 2013, call for joint union action Teesside University

This Conference calls upon HEC to plan for joint political and industrial action where at all possible with other educational unions and with unions representing other

workers on campus in HE in support of the current pay claim. We believe that calls for solitary action in summer 2013 consisting of UCU alone engaging in ASOS and follow up strike action triggered by pay deductions will be unsuccessful and that joint and coordinated action with the other trade unions mentioned is necessary to ensure the success of any pay campaign.

HE32 2013 Pay claim Northumbria University

Conference recognises that the increases in TPS contributions give added weight to the pay claim decided at February's Special Conference.

However, we are concerned that, with fewer than 60 branches/LAs registered, the Special Conference decided to seek and develop industrial action "commencing in the summer term". For such action to be effective, it has to win widespread support amongst our members, be clearly targeted, and coordinated as much as possible with action taken by other unions. In the summer term, such action would be premature.

Conference therefore resolves that, in the absence of either (a) punitive sanctions by the employers, or (b) strike dates before the end of June set by the other unions, UCU's current action, if any, will be limited to working to contract, and that the HEC should use the summer period to mobilise members for a major campaign of industrial action in the autumn.

HE33 Industrial action University of Brighton Grand Parade and University of Brighton Moulsecoomb

HESC believes

1. all forms of industrial action should be considered in the defence of jobs, pay, conditions and the quality and breadth of HE provision;
2. in particular, details of a 'work to contract' should be elaborated for branches and members, and each branch encouraged to hold preparatory meetings.

HESC resolves that

- a. a sub-committee of the HEC will consider how all aspects of ASOS could be implemented in the current campaign, and devise a template of escalating action in response to aggressive responses from employers;
- b. a national meeting of branch representatives will consider detailed recommendations in the autumn;
- c. national one-day strikes are important in launching campaigns for symbolic and mobilising effects but are insufficient to secure agreement;
- d. rolling regional strikes, a judicious escalation to two-day and three-day strikes at appropriate times, and ASOS have all to be part of any programme of industrial action.

Further education sector conference motions

FE1 Pay Westminster Kingsway College

Conference notes:

1. Over the last 4 years the value of FE lecturers pay has been cut by 13.7% and the gap between our pay and that of school teachers is increasing once again
2. Funding cuts are resulting in unprecedented job losses; workloads are increasing; our professionalism is under attack from hostile observation and inspection regime; pensions are being undermined; the demands on FE are rising as young people and workers feel the effects of the austerity policies
3. College employers are making a historic bid to drive down the value of our pay and erode our terms and conditions of service.

Conference believes UCU members are willing to fight to defend our pay, conditions and post 16 education.

Conference resolves to ballot for national strike action in the event of an unsatisfactory pay offer from employers at the first negotiating meeting on 24 April.

FE22 Abolish Ofsted Liverpool Community College Arts and Mulberry

Ofsted's annual report and accounts for 2011-12 reveal that it anticipates receiving a budget of £142 million in 2014-15. Even a genuinely effective and developmental measurement system this costly cannot be justified in an age of austerity, when resources could be better utilised at the chalk face.

But we do not have a genuinely developmental system. According to Sir Michael Wilshaw, HM Chief Inspector, if anyone says to you that staff morale is at an all time low, you know you are doing something right. As educators we know that a precondition of learning is that it is consensual not coercive. The prevailing reductive and data driven inspection regime may generate compliance, but a system built on fear cannot promote dignity, creativity or genuine learning in students or teachers.

Conference calls on UCU's leadership to lobby across the political spectrum in concert with sister trade unions for Ofsted's abolition.