

Surrey
Branch

UCU
University and College Union

Newsletter

YOUR PENSION. AXED.



We are very happy to report that Surrey UCU reached the 50% turn out in the recent UCU Ballot. This threshold is a requirement of the new TU legislation in order for Industrial Action to take place, and 61 out of the 68 HE Institutions which balloted met and exceeded this requirement. Of those that voted here, 79.9% voted for strike action, and 89.5% voted for action short of a strike. Nationally, it was the highest mandate for action that UCU has ever

achieved, and UCU is having to plan the largest strike action yet to protest against the USS pension changes.

We are doing all that we can, alongside other UCU Branches, to call for further negotiations to take place so that disruption need not occur. Please see our open letters within this newsletter for reference and get in contact if you have any questions: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk.

UCU represents academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, administrators, managers, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates.

JNCC Meetings...

The Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee meetings are a platform for directly influencing University policies and procedures in order to make a positive difference for staff and UCU members. The UCU Branch at Surrey puts forward its position, concerns and recommendations on a wide variety of issues, looking to improve the long term welfare of those affected by proposed changes, and acting as the voice of UCU members. The JNCC consists of the University Senior Management Team, HR, and representatives of the three recognised Trade Unions: UCU, Unison and Unite. Here, we report on some important discussions affecting the UCU membership.

Reporting back on the winter JNCC.

Changes to MEQ System

Surrey UCU raised the recent proposed changes to the MEQ system as an agenda item at the winter JNCC in December. In particular, the committee requested clarification on how staff will be affected if they have signed appraisals against MEQ targets based on the existing MEQ, now that a new questionnaire will be used? In addition, a Surrey UCU committee member raised concerns within the meeting, about continuity of measurement of performance .

In response, the University stated that if there are issues that are raised, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but there was no foreseeable problem as the new questions are similar to those previously in use.

Surrey UCU still consider this to be an area of concern, and encourage members to get in contact if they experience any difficulties: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

Casualised Contracts

Surrey UCU, alongside the UCU Regional Office, has been pursuing discussions with Senior Management on casualised contracts (staff members on hourly paid and fixed-term contracts). Our Regional Official noted at the JNCC that there had been a useful meeting in March but UCU now wish to progress further. In particular, the University of Surrey is the only University without a multiplier for casualised contracts, meaning the hourly rate here is not standardised with a set time for paid prep and marking. UCU have spoken to the Students' Union about this and they are keen to progress: UCU requested a further meeting with Senior Management to discuss an Hourly-Paid Academic Policy. Unfortunately, the University reported that due to HR workload and plans for the Medical School they could not presently commit to a meeting...

...The Voice of UCU

PRP/Saying Thanks

The Surrey UCU Committee continues to be concerned as to the fairness of the PRP scheme and submitted the following questions prior to the JNCC:

The committee requests statistics on how payments were allocated this year according to grade, job family, and faculty. The committee would like to discuss the recent PRP policy consultation process and subsequent policy implementation. The committee would like clarification on how the policy affects grade 7 (senior management) payments.

The unions felt that there was no full genuine consultation with the current PRP changes. Unions were given short notice to attend a meeting and had had no written proposals shared prior to the meeting. Concerns were raised over the levels of PRPs across grades e.g. a level 2B receiving an appraisal rating of 1 receives less than a level 3 staff member who received an appraisal rating of 2. The University apologised if the consultation was not handled well and reported that this will be reviewed in the year ahead.

All Staff Bonus Scheme

UCU requested clarification on the all-staff email communication that the assessment will be based on staff feedback via the annual staff survey. It was reported that assessment was reviewed for 2017/18 year to add in a link to the University values at the VC's discretion. Surrey UCU we will seek further clarification about the meaning and implication of this statement.

Workload Planning Model

In response to UCU requesting an update, the University reported that the rollout of the Workload Planning Model commenced in June 2017. The aim was for all Schools/Departments to complete a model by mid-September to reflect their workload plans for teaching, research and administration for the academic year 2017/18.

The model has been presented to each Faculty Executive Board. This was complemented by significant dedicated sessions (in person and virtually). All Schools and Departments (including sub-Departments/units) have completed a model which can be used for analysis. Prior to this year, only two departments had fully completed a model so this marks significant progress for the project.

Heads of School/Department were requested to complete a purposely designed Excel model. This model was always expected to need further development and there has been considerable feedback provided to enable this to happen. It was also reported that Staff are able to access their own data.

Surrey UCU believes that individual academic roles are so varied and unique that no model attempting to capture what people do hour-by-hour is going to be reliable. We do not have an issue with the models being used as a rough guide, but will raise concerns if they are used punitively against staff. We encourage feedback from members, and will monitor how the model is used very closely.

Open letter to *University of Surrey Students Union*

Dear **University of Surrey Students Union**

You may not be aware that there is a formal UCU Ballot taking place at the moment, UCU members are voting on whether to take strike action, or action short of a strike. This ballot runs until 19th January and is a response to the drastic proposal that the employers (UUK) have made on staff pensions (USS).

UUK are proposing to change the pension from a guaranteed return (defined benefits scheme) to a gamble on the stock market at the point of retirement (defined contribution scheme), and this is especially concerning for early career academics who have not accrued defined benefits over a long career. If UCU allow this to happen, university graduates also entering academia as employees will inherit a very poor deal. UCU members also have significant concerns over the claim that the current scheme is in deficit, a claim only generated by a valuation which assumes that the entire HE sector will end on an unspecified date, and that no new University staff will therefore be paying in to the USS scheme.

We are aware that the employers are divided on this proposal, and that the VCs at Warwick and Glasgow are supporting guaranteed pensions and UCU:

The VC at Warwick states that he is 'mystified' at the stance taken by UUK:

http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/execteam/entry/which_way_forward

The University of Glasgow has stated that it would prefer to keep a Defined Benefits Scheme and 'The University believes that its interests are aligned with those of the UCU and that all parties should work together constructively to identify a solution. It is, of course, for members of UCU to decide how they vote in the ballot.'

https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/news/headline_561539_en.html

As the University of Surrey Member of UUK, the VC here has not revealed his stance. If you would like more clarification on this issue, do please take the time to support your lecturers and write to him requesting this information. Your support would be much appreciated and it may help turn the tide on this dispute. UCU are of course hoping that negotiations will become more productive and no action will therefore be necessary. Your support could make all the difference. Thank you.

The Surrey UCU Committee



USSU PRESIDENT OPEN LETTER TO SURREY VICE-CHANCELLOR, MAX LU

Dear Vice Chancellor,

Following our last Union Executive Committee meeting (9th January 2018), I am writing on behalf of the Students' Union in relation to the current dispute over USS pensions, which risks a considerable reduction in the retirement benefits staff may receive.

As a union, we believe that all academic staff have a right to job security, and that fair pensions are a part of this security. Whilst we do not wish at this time to take a position in relation to the University or local branch of UCU on this dispute, we strongly feel that it is in the best interests of students at the University to minimise the disruption which would result from sustained strike action.

As the Executive Committee discussed, the current pensions dispute stands to

significantly disadvantage current students who may pursue a career in higher education. Furthermore, academic staff at the University are vital to not only the growth and wellbeing of our students, but are fundamental to their time here at Surrey.

With these thoughts in mind, we would like to ask that you, in your position as one of the most prominent Vice Chancellors in the UK, publically outline the position that you have taken within UUK regarding the pensions dispute. Further to this, we call upon you to use your role within UUK to support a swift, mutually-agreeable outcome from the dispute.

Yours sincerely,

Saskia Cochrane, President of USSU

On behalf of the USSU Executive Committee



Introduction to UCU Casework training

Date: Thursday 15 February 2017

Venue: UCU HQ, Carlow Street, London

Times: 9:30—16:30 (lunch provided)

This course is designed for new reps who are thinking about taking on individual casework or those who are currently involved in casework but feel they need more knowledge and confidence.

Reps who consider themselves to have a good degree of experience in case work may find this day useful in updating their skills but should bear in mind that the course is aimed at new reps or those with relatively little experience in individual representation.

UCU is keen to attract reps from our equality strands (black, women, disabled and LGBT) and welcome applicants who self-identify in any of these areas.

To apply for this course please get in touch with Surrey UCU:

cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

before completing the following online application form on the UCU website:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8427/Representing-individual-members-an-introduction-to-casework-15-February-2018-London>

Thank you!

www.surrey-ucu.org.uk

Join UCU today!

Join UCU now, it takes only 10 minutes online: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

Alternatively you can ring the Membership Team: 0333 207 0719

Non academic staff at University of Surrey could choose to join our sister union UNISON. Academic-related staff may consider joining UCU or Unite – contact a representative to discuss which is most suitable for you.



Unions are effective through the strength of their membership. Members can contribute in ways that suit their personalities, spare time, skills and capabilities. All queries on this subject will be warmly welcomed:
cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk