

**Surrey
Branch**

UCU
University and College Union

Newsletter



Joint Brexit Meeting

Many colleagues are feeling unease as the uncertainties surrounding Brexit continue. A recent Academics' survey highlighted the worrying impact of Brexit on universities, with 42% of academics - and three-quarters (76%) of non-UK EU academics - saying they were more likely to consider leaving UK higher education. A third (29%) of respondents said they already know of academics leaving the UK, and over two-fifths (44%) said they know of academics who have lost access to research funding as a direct result of the Brexit vote. An overwhelming majority (90%) said they think Brexit will have a negative impact on the UK higher education sector.

UCU has used this survey to repeat its call for the government to guarantee the right to remain of EU staff already working in the UK.

Surrey UCU Members also highlighted this as an area of concern in our AGM Branch Priorities Survey 2016-2017. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Surrey UCU Committee if you have any concerns or if you would like post-Brexit materials that display a message of support and solidarity. We are currently planning to organise a joint meeting for members on Brexit with the University of Surrey Senior Management, UCU, Unison and Unite.

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 and representatives of the three recognised Trade Unions: UCU, Unison and Unite. Here, we report on some important discussions affecting the UCU membership.

Evening Teaching

Evening Teaching was an issue raised at the last JNCC in November 2016. Due to increasing student numbers and limited teaching accommodation, some staff members have had their teaching scheduled up to 21:00 on occasion. In relation to this, UCU voiced concerns regarding the safety of staff and students moving around the campus late in the evenings. An additional concern was the provision of IT and catering support/facilities for lectures scheduled during these times.

The University responded with the view that the changes to the Time Tabling policy were minor and were a response to the centralisation of Timetabling. Evening Teaching still needs Dean approval but can now be UG as well as PGT teaching. Rolling lunch breaks are in operation, so lunch is no longer guaranteed between 12:00-14:00. Another issue UCU raised was the consequences that evening lectures may have on MEQ scores. Any staff member who believes evening

scheduling to have impacted on their MEQ scores should discuss this with their line manager.

Performance Related Pay

At the last JNCC, UCU also asked for clarification on PRP as the process may be unclear to members. The University responded that in 2014/15, the University allocated a proportion of the salary bill to each department, with a respective link as to whether departments were achieving their budgets and targets. It was confirmed that at the Spring JNCC there will be an update on the current PRP round, as currently the University are in the midst of the process. Each faculty will be considering proposals for staff at levels 1 to 6. Within the central Professional Services there is a central committee that will make decisions on PRPs. The review of level 7 reward is undertaken by a further committee

...The Voice of UCU

which includes the President and Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Chair of Council. Unison also asked for clarification on how NSS scores affect awards and how this then works for staff in central departments. The University confirmed that the central departments had not been assessed against NSS previously. For members who would like more information on PRP: https://www.surrey.ac.uk/policies/prp_award_policy.htm

All Staff Bonus

UCU and Unison asked for an update on the status of the All Staff Bonus. The scheme was introduced 3 years ago to give recognition as a cash lump sum and payments were based on the financial performance of the University alongside its scores in the NSS.

The University reported that last year, despite a very strong financial performance, the University's NSS score was both behind target and behind last year's result. Under the Scheme rules, the NSS score needed to meet or exceed our 2015 score of 92 per cent for the Scheme to share any financial outperformance. For 2016 the score dropped to 90 %.

The University also relayed that this year the scheme has been modified. Under the terms of the new Scheme, which will be trialled for the 2016-17 year, a broader range of measures have been included to determine the level of any payment,

up to a maximum of £250 per person. For a payment to arise from the Scheme, the University must over-achieve its target for surplus this year and create a bonus pot. The Scheme will allocate up to one third of any surplus over target to the bonus pot. If the financial performance target is exceeded, the University will then decide what proportion of the bonus pot will be shared with colleagues. The other metrics that will be assessed relate to performance in the key areas of student satisfaction and research.

Unite requested information as to how the scheme would be effected if students did not participate in the NSS, and advised that it would be preferable to include the PRP budget within the all-staff bonus. UCU added to this point that there is a concern that PRP is discretionary to managers within a faculty and therefore there is potential for favouritism.

In response to discussions surrounding the reward system as a whole, UCU also pressed the point that increments are a planned payment, part of attracting staff in terms of visualising pay progression, and should not be included as part of a reward based system.

If you have any questions regarding JNCC meetings, please contact us:
cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

Members in difficulty and Surrey UCU support

I have worked with the UCU for just under a year as the Surrey UCU Casework Coordinator. In that time I have learnt a lot about how the University works, the conflicts that arise and how UCU can help. I have learnt that it is not “all about striking and pay” and that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes helping individual members with issues they have.

In the last 18 months alone the Surrey UCU Committee have covered 38 cases.

The cases vary and can cover:

Appraisal issues and advising on whether an Appraisal should be signed if the Appraisee disagrees with the Appraiser.

Capability: whether an issue with MEQs or Research outputs.

Advising on acting as a **witness** and what to expect.

Promotion: how to respond to a rejection and appealing, the responsibility of HR, timescales, outcome and follow up.

Restructuring and potential job re-grading.

Harassment.

Grievance cases: either being brought against a member or by a member.

Leaving the University and negotiating a settlement.

Problems with **flexible working requests.**

So why do things go wrong?

Mistakes can be made.

For example, if a member is called into an “informal” meeting re Capability, Sickness etc it must take place in a private neutral environment – and not in the middle of a busy coffee shop!

There is an obligation on the Line Manager to follow the meeting up with notes that are then agreed by the person called to the meeting. If any action or supervision period is required this must be made clear.

In a Stage 1 meeting the member has a right of representation. This will usually be at local level – although we may be contacting Regional Branch officers for advice if needed. However if things progress to a Stage 2/3 we can involve the Regional officers in the meeting if necessary. The aim however is to stop it going that far!

So, you have a problem – what do you do?

As a Case Coordinator I or Colette Maxfield, Branch Administrator, will send out a Casework form so that the member can give brief details of what the issue is and what category it falls into.

The member will also be asked if they would prefer to be contacted on a private email address.

The case is assigned a number and it is suggested that this is used in the subject title of an email. This enables retrieving paperwork relating to specific cases easier and filing.

After the casework form has been filled in I will often have an initial private meeting with the member. Sometimes I can advise myself but more often I refer the case to one of our committee members who is knowledgeable on employment law, pensions etc.

If a member needs a UCU rep. to come to them to a meeting I can find someone suitable to the case and brief the UCU rep. on the situation. Often the rep will have a meeting with the member prior to the meeting. This does depend on the timescale which is often quite short. The rep will type up their own notes of the meeting and agree their accuracy with the member. This is very useful when comparing the notes with that of HRs.

In more difficult cases we can use the experience and advice of the Regional Branch officers. We do have access to Legal advice although often the problem is stopped before it gets that far.

Important – please note that you do have to be a paid-up UCU member for 3 months before we can get you Legal advice if it is found to be necessary.



Recent Successes

In the past year we have been successful in getting a grievance dropped against a senior member of staff, helped with a potential regrading situation resulting in the person affected not being downgraded, and supported several requests where flexible working was refused. In one case there were no grounds being given by HR and little time was given for appeal. We got the appeal time extended and agreed by HR and then advised the employee who subsequently negotiated a flexible working solution satisfactory to employee and Line Manager.

We have also negotiated Settlement Agreements or got a better agreement than was originally offered by the University where an employee decided to or was invited to leave.

Please contact Colette Maxfield, UCU Branch Administrator, for information on becoming a caseworker or to express an initial interest: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

Insecure Contracts

Surrey UCU, with the assistance of the UCU Regional Office, is currently focussing on the conditions at University of Surrey for those on Hourly Paid and Fixed Term Contracts. Nationally, UCU takes the issue of insecure contracts very seriously, as it is a growing trend that increasingly more University staff members do not have the opportunity of permanent employment with guaranteed hours.

Staff members may also not be aware of their rights, for instance, employees can request that their Fixed Term contract is moved to permanent status following four years continuous employment with the same employer. For more information: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/3567/Fixed-term-regulations-requesting-confirmation-of-permanence>

Surrey UCU is currently in talks with Senior Management with the goal to establish a route for staff who are hourly paid to fractional contracts, and to ensure that all staff receive a guaranteed minimum number of hours. It is also the goal that all staff should receive the same protection and rights (for example, redundancy rights or a similar compensatory element).

If anyone would like more information on this topic, contact: cmaxfield@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