

Surrey Branch



University and College Union

Newsletter



NATIONAL BALLOT PLANS—AUTUMN 2022

You will have hopefully seen HQ comms at the start of July detailing that nationally elected reps have agreed a strategy for the USS and Four Fights campaigns for 2022/23.

UCU is calling on UUK to withdraw their imposed benefit cuts to the **USS pension** and to carry out a new evidence-based valuation.

UCU is rejecting the **3% pay offer** from the employers and is seeking a substantial (at least £2,500) pay increase alongside action to close equality pay

gaps, eliminate casualisation and precarious work and to address excessive workloads.

[We note that the gender pay gap at Surrey has increased this year: [Equality & diversity reports & policies | University of Surrey](#)]

If UCU claims are not met by the employers, it has been agreed nationally that all affected UCU branches will begin an aggregated ballot this Autumn. So please check your postal details are accurate on [UCU - 'My UCU'](#)!

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.

The summer JNCC took place on 5th July. UCU tabled the following agenda items:

1 Ongoing Appraisals Dispute

UCU has ongoing concerns as to the institutional unwillingness to negotiate in any meaningful way over Appraisal processes.

2 Outsourcing – request for update on any current and future UoS planning

UCU is concerned that UoS has previously stated, within all staff meetings, that the institution could in future look to outsource additional services. UCU—and the campus unions in general—are especially concerned that late Summer announcements could be scheduled whilst staff are taking holiday or when many are busy gearing up for the new academic term.

3 Current and future HR projects and working groups

Institutional planning is not released to unions in a timely way. If we are not aware, and/or do not categorically ask outright for details on any given topic, we are not supplied with institutional information.

4 Open Days

It is the right of employees to choose to not

volunteer to participate in open days despite the strong push to take part. This must be respected on Fridays and Saturdays in regard to equality diversity and inclusion, while on Sundays it must be absolutely respected regardless in regard to the law:

<https://www.gov.uk/sunday-working>

UCU also has concerns regarding TOIL and the lack of notice given to staff when scheduling these dates. Academics have to already spend several weekends working for free to complete grant applications, publications, marking or backlogs on administration, so additional weekends of Open Days is a workload issue.

5 Removal of Wardens

UCU is extremely concerned that the unions were bypassed during the planning and implementation stages of these changes.

6 Concerns with the use of MEQs in promotions processes

The UCU position is that MEQs should not be used as a deciding factor in the promotion of academic staff. This has clearly occurred in some cases where a proper evaluation of teaching should have been conducted.

We will be updating members further once the JNCC minutes have been released, with details on the outcomes of discussions.

Removal of Wardens

UCU stands in solidarity with our wardens over their removal and the abrupt way in which it was handled. We have also expressed our position with the University that unions should have been briefed and consulted on the matter, yet this did not happen. Our understanding of the changes indicate that cost saving measures are being undertaken to effectively replace the role of wardens partly with extra responsibilities from security while there will be new staff appointed to a residential life team, who will work with student ambassadors and peer mentors to reach out to and be a point of contact for students having difficulties in their accommodation. Our concerns are that this new model will not be sufficient with fewer staff covering residences that house over 6,000 students. Rather the more localised contact of a duty

warden is of paramount importance where they can readily come to know the dynamics of a cohort of students within a residence over the course of an academic year and be well in contact with peer mentors. While some other Universities in the sector no longer have wardens, they may on the other hand have 24 hour receptions and a regular point of call locally to the hall of residence. Surrey on the other hand has no halls of residence but self catering court residences and we believe that a warden is the only means to provide a comparable level of service, and therefore these changes are hugely detrimental to students as well as the wardens.

If you are affected by these changes, please get in touch:

cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

Appraisals Dispute: Update

It has come to our attention that recent internal comms have outlined the new Appraisal process for 2022 as having been 'reviewed' by UCU. This language implies agreement or consent from UCU.

As already communicated to members, in 'reviewing' the documentation, UCU raised concerns **that have not been subsequently addressed**. To confirm our position, UCU has the following concerns:

1 Recent changes in process were not negotiated with UCU - and UCU is not in agreement with them. (Note, this reflects the concerns that caused the current dispute, which began in August 2021, about attempts to add compulsory targets to staff appraisals)

2 That the appraiser is being asked to rate the appraisee before meeting, nullifying the idea that this is meant to be a two-way exchange

3 Lack of transparency as to next steps if the appraisee is in disagreement with the rating/appraisal content and does not wish to formally 'sign off'

4 The pressure placed on line managers to rate appraisees before appraisees have had a chance to discuss their efforts and successes since the last Appraisal round

5 Lack of transparency as to the EDI 'calibration' process/es



What happened to the summer holidays?

The days where staff could, without worry, head off for their summer holidays as soon as graduation ceremonies had completed are long gone. For many staff with teaching and other student-facing roles leave may not be granted during semester time, and there are diminishing windows for a proper block of leave to be taken outside of semester time between July graduation and August late summer assessments. Though the campus might appear quiet on the outside in summer, other than seeing a few summer language school students or conference delegates in some spots of campus, there's stress and sweat from many staff going on inside.

There are many reasons why this is true, notably the introduction of late summer assessments; The increased key performance indicators on academics to write publications and proposals; the only time to get serious research work in the lab or elsewhere completed; the growing number of PGT students needing dissertation supervision; proposal deadlines actually in the summer period (totally unfair!); admissions clearing for some and to completely ruin one's summer there may be a requirement to have the oh so unpopular appraisal! These are matters inflicted by the University but there does come the problem that some less considerate

line managers may impose some work on staff during summer unfairly and there's little that can be done to protect the employee's interests both for their own wellbeing and any childcare that they may be taking care of.

It is actually possible that we could do something to persuade the University they could improve working conditions for staff in the summer. Here are some ideas:

- 1) Form a summer recess policy – In the school holidays, no formal school/department/team wide meetings should take place. Any meetings should be by mutual agreement of those concerned and never unfairly imposed to inhibit opportunities for using up holiday entitlements. Line managers should follow a protocol when assigning work during the period in order to determine thorough negotiation with the employee whether unfair workload is being imposed or not.

- 2) Contain the late summer assessments – Running late summer assessments, both exams and coursework, are extremely stressful both for academics and the exams office. New procedures could be followed to improve this. Ways of enabling the more rapid and easy setting of coursework re-assessments to students need to be found that will alleviate the pains

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of doing so in the summer period. For the examinations, temporary staff should be hired by the University to manage and invigilate all late summer examinations, whereby any marking can be undertaken after the school holidays.

3) Question whether the holiday year ending 31st July is tenable – As many struggle to use up holiday dates in July, while furthermore there would be better benefit of more flexible holiday opportunity during August, it is questionable if the holiday year would better end on 31st August. As only five days can be carried over, many staff have more days than this left over and struggle to use them up, let alone begin to take substantial holiday until late in July. Such flexibility could be a welcome move, while maintaining the right to carry over five days to the next year.

While holiday time is an obvious problem for Academics for the

reasons listed, we are also interested to know how this is affecting Professional Services.

-are you able to use up your full allowance,?

-do you have issues getting permission to carry forward unused holiday time?

-have you had difficulty booking time off in July if your holiday dates clash with other people?

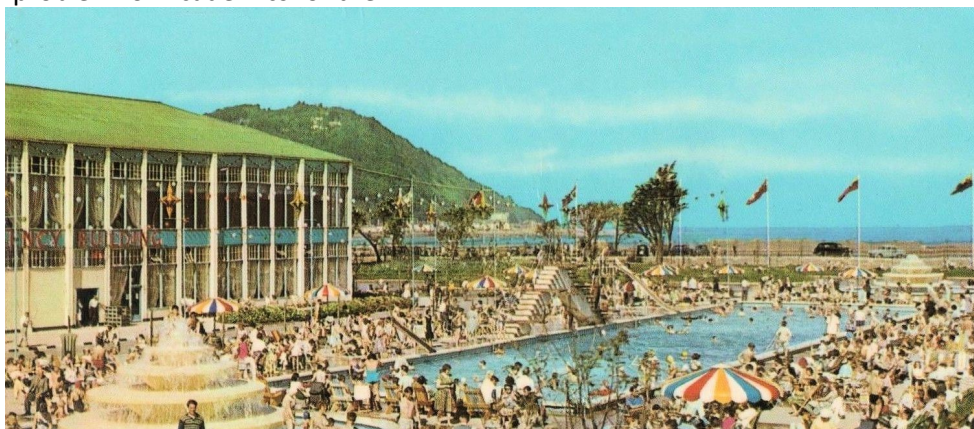
Is the decision process by your Line Manager fair?

-Would an extension of the holiday year to end of August be beneficial to you?

Have you any further ideas on this article in general? We would be keen to open further discussion and see how this could form some policy recommendations:

cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

[Article: Tim Brown]



It's your weekend

You may be aware that the University is making a head on push to hold more weekend open days during the Autumn, which in the past two years have been damped down by covid-19. With one weekend open day just happened in June, there is the intention at the present time to hold three weekend Open Days, two of which are scheduled to take place on a Sunday only two weeks apart, in October, with a further Saturday in November (excluding the Vet School who have other scheduled Open Days earlier on). These will be followed by weekend applicant days going into 2023.

October and November are the most intensive time of year in the academic calendar and staff will not want to be spending their weekend volunteering to take part in Open Days when they are needing their weekends to sleep in, take care of personal and/or family matters, which is already disrupted by the demands of academic or professional services work reaching up to 60 hours a week. Open Days are very hard works, they are tiring and anyone who has taken part will know how worn out they get and need an extra day to recover. Should you be expected to give up many weekends, or indeed your Sunday, only to have to enter a very burdensome and intensive week on the Monday?



Absolutely not and it is important for you to know that it is your weekend and we are keen to hear from members concerning any undue pressure they experience to participate in Open Days.

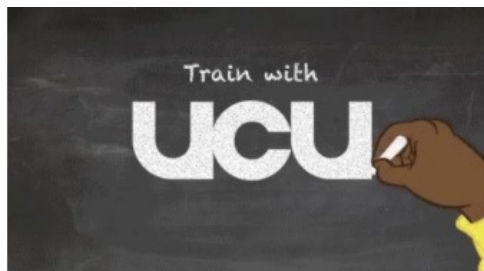
UCU Surrey is not happy with the University's rejection of our [Charter for the Staffing and Delivery of Open Days](#), where imposing weekend Open Days is not acceptable, especially on a Sunday where the Law requires that an employer [cannot force staff to work on a Sunday unless it is agreed in writing](#). Therefore, it is right that the University should only run Open Days on a Sunday with the annual consent and commitment of a sufficient number and demography of staff. Imposition of the Open Days on staff is not acceptable and weekend Open Days need to be actively negotiated with the recognised unions with regard to equality and diversity of staff.

Aside from this, it is clear that covid-19 variants will escalate in some form in the coming Autumn and we are also very concerned about the expectations the University will impose on staff in that regard.

The University runs Open Days to get students to apply and then accept the offers given to them, but for such a vital source of income to have to depend on the volunteering of so many staff is clearly not a sustainable model.

The clear message from UCU Surrey is that no member of staff should be under any pressure or obligation to do a weekend Open Day, and be aware of their legal rights with regard to Sundays. If you experience any pressure in this regard, please do get in touch with us as the University has to respect the right of anyone who does not wish to work on a Sunday, as well as when it is difficult to give up any other part of their weekend.

Upcoming UCU Events



Register your interest: workload rep training 1: introduction to the workload campaign and the role of the workload rep



The UCU workload campaign gives us the tools to tackle increasing workloads and working hours. The failure of employers to protect staff from excessive workloads and stress is damaging our health, our students' education, and our ability to organise to defend ourselves and our sector. This course will give you a generic overview of workload campaign and the role of the workload rep. [Autumn : TBC]

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/4797/Courses-in-the-London-South-East--Eastern-region>

<http://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