

University of Bath UCU

Notes of branch meeting Wednesday 6th July 1.15 pm 1W3.30

- 1 Update on national dispute on pay, casualization and gender inequality

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/he2016>

The current round of local strikes is about to end. Bath Spa University were on strike on July 5th, and several of our members visited their picket. We have asked the national campaign co-ordinators to invite branches to submit proposals for a further round of strikes in September, and there will be a further branch meeting if this happens.

There is a briefing on gender inequality in Bristol on October 3rd. Branch members are invited to put their names forward to branch sec. We will support any member who wants to go to this.

- 2 **Foreign Languages Centre cuts and redundancies**

UCU has requested a 12 month deferral of proposals for change (20% cut in provision and 18 redundancies) to allow for consultation with students, staff and the local community about the kind of Foreign Languages Centre the University should have. (see p3 for extract from UCU response to the FLC proposals)

Over 2500 people have now signed a petition calling on the University not to implement these cuts. The petition will be presented to Thomas Sheppard, Chair of University Council, on Thursday 7th July 4 pm outside the Council Chamber. Join us there or in 8W2.30 from 3.30 pm.

See p for extracts from UCU response to management proposals for cuts and redundancies in FLC. See also link to comments from people who have signed the petition

<http://bath.web.ucu.org.uk/2016/06/03/university-of-bath-should-celebrate-its-50th-with-more-language-teaching-not-less/>

In the meeting many members supported the view that there is an opportunity for the university to publicly oppose the narratives that are feeding a rise in xenophobia and racism, by cancelling the cuts and announcing expanded language provision.

Agreed to raise this matter with new SU President when we meet her later in July.

3 **University of Bath response to EU referendum vote**

Members commented on the VC's response to the EU referendum vote, comparing her messages to staff unfavourably with those from other VCs, such as Bristol and Sheffield, which had sought to provide more reassurance to people faced with uncertainty about their status in the UK.

Agreed to write to VC asking for her to support a joint public statement, from the University as an employer and its trade unions, to the effect that University of Bath staff who are EU/EEA citizens should have Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK. Agreed to ask Unison and Unite for support on this. (see p 4 for draft letter)

Other suggestions for further action include:

- A blog for staff to report examples of the impact of referendum vote on staff and students at the University
- An invitation to the VC to hold a joint 'Let's Talk' style meeting for staff on the implications of the referendum vote for staff at the University.
- A party, probably in September, to celebrate internationalism

4 **Higher Education Bill**

Meeting considered a letter from University of Bristol UCU (see p5) to their VC calling on him to make a public statement highlighting the inappropriateness of rushing through such a controversial and far-reaching piece of legislation as the Higher Education Bill in these current post-Referendum circumstances.

Agreed to draft a similar letter to Bath VC, and to copy this to local MPs.

Extracts from UCU response to the proposals for cuts and redundancies in Foreign Languages Centre

We have been invited to respond to proposals for changes to Foreign Language Centre posts in line with changes to the provision of FLC language teaching as part of the skills development offer to students at the University of Bath and members of the Bath community.

The proposals represent a significant number of redundancies and a 20% reduction in the level of provision, yet the organisational and economic reasons cited for the changes have not been explained. The need to make these posts redundant has not been demonstrated.

We have serious concerns that the proposals will lead to a loss of posts that will undermine the quality of FLC provision. We maintain that the University can achieve any changes it wishes to make to the FLC without making any staff redundant, but to do so it will need to spend more time consulting with staff, students and members of the local community about how this should be done.

The University enjoys a privileged status as a tenant of the local authority, paying only a single peppercorn in rent each year. The provision of a wide range of high quality foreign language teaching is one of the ways in which the University can repay the debt it owes to local people.

We call on the University to defer these proposed changes for 12 months to allow time to consult all stakeholders in the Foreign Languages Centre in a meaningful way, and in a way that will restate the University's commitment to the provision of foreign language teaching in its 50th anniversary year.

We are perplexed that the University is proposing to downgrade the role of its Foreign Languages Centre at the same time as it is attempting to become more internationally engaged.

The University's moves to become more internationally engaged suggest an enhanced role for its Foreign Languages Centre, rather than the reduced role which these proposed changes would produce.

Through its extensive community course language provision, it also represents a vital link between the university and the local community.

The proposals were made before the referendum on membership of the EU, If the UK leaves the European Union, English will no longer be one of the official languages of the EU. The implications of this are that the expectation that UK citizens to speak languages other than English will grow. There are also many UK citizens whose first language is not English, and it would be a mark of the University's commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity to offer teaching in some of the languages spoken in the UK other than English.

Draft letter to University of Bath VC

Dear Vice-Chancellor,

We are writing with some urgency following the EU referendum result. The referendum result places University of Bath staff who are EU/EEA citizens but who do not have Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK in a specifically vulnerable position.

Some staff have begun looking for work elsewhere in the EU. Others may have to apply for the right to continue working while in employment here. The Government has made no guarantees that when negotiations conclude current EU citizens residing in the UK will be permitted to stay. However, during the campaign, both official 'Leave' campaigns¹ pledged that such citizens would 'automatically' be given this right, i.e. be given ILR. It is possible, but by no means certain, that the UK would remain inside the EEA and commit itself to the free movement of people despite leaving the EU. This uncertainty helps no-one.

We believe it is time for the university sector to demand that the Government confirm the commitment made by the 'Leave' campaigns, and protect EU citizens living and working in the UK with a long-term guarantee of their right to stay. We hope you would support a joint public statement, from the University as an employer and its trade unions, to that effect.

For politicians, there are good grounds for acceding to this call. The UK can ill-afford to lose EU/EEA workers. Processing three million individual ILR applications is not feasible in the time available. Making this pledge would reduce the threat of a reciprocal deportation of 1.3 million UK citizens from Europe. Finally, in the current febrile atmosphere, it would represent a positive statement against those who blame migration for economic ills.

We are open to discussing the wording of a joint statement. For example, it could be extended to include demands for guarantees regarding the position of EU students and EU research funding. However, the most immediate call, which would address the fears of our EU/EEA colleagues, would be a Government guarantee of ILR within the next two years, independent of the outcome of any exit negotiations. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

UCU
Unison
Unite

Draft message from University of Bristol UCU to their VC

In his recent statement at the Wellcome Trust, the Minister of State for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson, [confirmed the Government's commitment to press on with the legislative passage of the Higher Education Bill in the next parliamentary session.](#)

We are writing to you as University of Bristol academics and members of staff to express our concern with such undue legislative haste in light of the uncertainty in Higher Education policy caused by the Referendum result and a possible Brexit scenario.

We would ask you to make a public statement highlighting the inappropriateness of rushing through such a controversial and far-reaching piece of legislation as the Higher Education Bill in these current post-Referendum circumstances.

The statement should ~~would~~ also stress the need for further consultation with Universities, national HE bodies and other stakeholders such as the University and College Union and the National Union of Students before the Bill receives its second reading in parliament.

With the current uncertainty around student recruitment, European Union research funding and University finances more generally, now is the moment to take stock, not rush into the most significant set of HE reforms in generations. Warwick University, for example, has made this case. Warwick Vice-Chancellor Stuart Croft has pledged to write to the Government, describing the bill as an 'intolerable burden for universities'. He ['...will be writing to them \[the Government\] to call for a delay in the Higher Education Bill while this work is carried through'](#).

Even in the Bill's own terms, [as set out in the White Paper](#), it cannot be sensible or responsible to issue in what is effectively a HE 'big bang' - the consolidation of research funding; fee volatility; a number of new HE for profit providers - at a time of already existing market volatility.

Yours,