

University of Bath report for Regional Committee 19 Oct 2013

A busy time since our last report so here are the headlines;

Our biggest campaign has been to save the PGCE course at Bath. This has gone national and was magnificently supported by Regional and HO who organised a petition which collected over 1200 signatures. This was presented to the VC and Senate on 16 Oct asking Senate to reverse the decision to close the programme. The original decision had been taken by the Academic Programme Committee during the summer under delegated vacation powers. It's a long and sordid story but basically the APC were not given all the information about the course. They were not given access to an important departmental review which certainly did not recommend closure of the PGCE. With Catriona's support we managed to get the Deputy VC not to exercise Chair's decision and to agree to take it back to a full AP Committee, which we lobbied. However, they would not change their minds, despite all the evidence UCU provided and letters from Heads of affected partner schools. Additionally questions about this were raised on 11th September during a House of Commons Select Committee on Education. Schools Minister David Laws said, "I would rather keep providers like Bath in the system." and several other MP's questioned the decision. The academic who wrote the departmental review (who is a former director of the Institute of Education and is a specialist advisor to the House of Commons Select Committee for Education and a member of the General Teaching Council for England and the Board of Ofsted) is not having his contract renewed.

Similarly we were unsuccessful in our representations and challenging the UKOLN redundancies at Bath (due to the cessation of JISC core funding). 16 staff were made redundant. Five UCU members appealed their redundancy but none of the appeals were upheld.

We came first in the NSS student satisfaction table and second in the league table for zero-hour contracts. Edinburgh came first and as a result of the bad publicity agreed to stop using such contracts. We approached the Director of HR asking him to do likewise and he said no. So we are officially top of that league too. A Unison FOI request found that we also have the largest number of staff paid at NMW and a formal request to negotiate on the introduction of the living wage at Bath was turned down flat by our Director of HR. Additionally we only pay statutory redundancy and despite our continued efforts have been unable to get Management to negotiate more favourable Redundancy terms.

The University's Remuneration committee met on 27 June. We held a joint campus TU meeting in the hour prior to this and at the end of the meeting 'marched' to the University's board room just before the committee was due to

start its deliberations. We presented a petition of 322 signatories calling on the Committee to pay the SMT what we were being offered (i.e 1%) and asking them to make representations to UCEA on awarding staff in HE a fair pay increase. This obviously had the desired effect as the Committee decided on an average increase of 9.59%. That is not a typo! We wait to see the exact figure that our VC is now being paid.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, given previous eye-wateringly large pay awards at the top, one of the main outcomes of our Staff Survey was that there was a notable increase in staff reporting that they were dissatisfied with pay; more so than our benchmarked institutions.

We are still fighting for Teaching Fellows to be given decent contracts (i.e. not 10 month contracts) at the appropriate grade (i.e. not G6). However, we are making little progress and are now seriously considering going to dispute on this and taking out an Equal Pay claim, as most of those employed as G6 TF's are female.

All this seems to suggest that the Management at Bath are hardening their position and are not willing to negotiate with us on anything of substance.

There has been a large change management programme in our IT department (called the Bath University Computing Services [BUCS] Transformation Programme). This has been a big issue affecting 108 staff. It resulted in a number of individual members requesting support at consultation meetings and seeking advice. We joined forces with our sister campus TUs and organised a joint meeting for staff which had 80 odd attendees. This was to provide information on the process, consultation rights, right to be accompanied and to suggest questions staff should be asking. We also advised staff on how to work under protest given that many were still unhappy with their job descriptions, grading and T & Cs after the consultation period.

Our Branch motion was supported at Congress (space for rest breaks).

With the other campus trade unions we have successfully negotiated a Disability Leave policy. We are now pushing for a Carer's Leave policy.

Michael MacNeil spoke at an extremely well attended Branch Meeting in September which was beautifully timed (by mere luck) to coincide with the ballot.

All in all, a rather depressing picture at Bath.