

UCU COMMITTEE MEETING Agenda and briefing notes

6 August 2014

1 USS Pension scheme

A message has gone out to all local members of USS from HR, as follows:

The University of Bath has recently been issued with a briefing note (attached) from Universities UK outlining the financial challenges facing the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). Universities UK has been acting as the employers' representative in a dialogue with the USS Board of Trustees and the University and College Union (UCU) on how to respond to the large, and potentially growing, deficit in the scheme's funding.

Universities UK will be consulting with employers from July to September 2014 on a number of proposals designed to make the scheme sustainable and affordable for both employers and employees. This will be followed by further discussions with UCU before proposals are taken to the USS Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC). If the JNC determine that changes to benefits are required, there will be a statutory consultation with employees which is likely to take place early in 2015. As highlighted in the briefing note, there is still a long way to go before the detail is available for a wider employee consultation but we wish to ensure that all affected colleagues are kept informed about the developments. If you have any questions about the sequence of events outlined in the attached briefing note, please contact me.

UCU has written to employers demanding that no changes be made to the scheme without agreement from UCU. There will be a decision making delegate conference (2 delegates required) in Manchester on Thursday 18 September.

I have sent a message out to all members with a link to the national briefing <http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUHE225.pdf>

and a national decision making conference on 18 September <https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/126164/13747391/1364/0/>

We need to:

- hold a branch meeting
- appoint 2 delegates

2 Meeting with HR on the assimilation of part time hourly paid staff

At the May meeting of the JACNC we agreed to meet with HR to discuss the assimilation of part-time hourly paid staff at the university. We have a local agreement with the university, signed in 2009, which created the category of Variable Hours Teaching Fellow. The agreement states that anyone who works <322 hours a year for two years can be offered a fractional post. There are 2 main problems with the agreement:

- it only covers teaching work
- very few people have been assimilated to fractional posts through this route, and we have casework evidence that it is in any case not being used. HR does not routinely monitor or transfer people who reach the threshold.

We have approached the negotiations with the following aims:

- An opt-out, rather than an opt-in, system (automatically triggered when a PTHP member of staff's hours meet the 'threshold');
- A procedure that aggregates multiple PTHP contracts that an individual may have when calculating whether or not they reach the threshold;
- A procedure that covers all staff within UCU's bargaining sphere.

The first meeting on July 29th was productive and we hope to be able to return to the October meeting of the JACNC with a draft agreement.

3 Changes to SDPR process

We have been involved, along with UNISON and Unite, in the steering group looking at SDPR, and the principle that the SDPR should be mandatory has been conceded. SDPR is now mandatory, and new guidance has been issued to line managers on the SDPR process.

The guidance states clearly:

the SDPR should not be a disciplinary experience. Performance issues will be dealt with, but the SDPR shouldn't be the first time they are discussed; any concerns should be dealt with during the year as they arise.

The change has, however, been embedded in the Capability Policy.

On 2 June 2014 the Vice-Chancellor agreed to update the Capability Policy to mandate an annual SDPR for all staff (including academic) rather than just a performance review.

This raises a question for us. Does the embedding of mandatory SDPR in the Capability Policy contradict the claim in the guidance that *the SDPR should not be a disciplinary experience* ?

The aim of the Capability Policy is set out as

It is the aim of this policy that the University is a place where all staff are enabled to work and perform to the best of their ability to meet the needs of the University.

What happens when the 'needs of the university' are in conflict with principle of academic freedom ?

The change is therefore probably more significant for academic staff than for other staff.

One further point: the guidance to line managers contains the following statement:

Reviewers or reviewees who consistently fail to fulfil their responsibilities will be held to account by their heads of department.

All three unions have written to Kevin Edge to say that we should have been consulted about the guidance before it was issued to line managers, and to ask what this particular statement means. What sanctions will be used against those who do not participate in the SDPR process ?

4 Job descriptions for Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader, Professor

Draft generic job descriptions have finally been produced and we have been asked to submit comments by August 29th. I will bring copies to the meeting.

5 Proposed North Car Park

See the blog post for details of this issue.

<http://bath.web.ucu.org.uk/2014/07/30/concerns-over-proposed-north-car-park/>

Any thoughts ?

6 Disabled Students Allowance

We have asked Bath Spa, Bristol, UWE, Exeter and Plymouth to join us in lobbying VCs over proposed cuts to DSA from September 2015.

7 Reports

If anybody wants to make a report ...

Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Membership / recruitment

Student Liaison

Campaigns

Other

8 Other business

TU office - we have been told we have to get out by the end of August and the alternative offered (Eastwood) is inadequate.

Date for branch meeting

Newsletter

TUC rally 18 October

Anti-casualisation day of action 5th November

UCU training for reps

Rep 1: Induction 10th, 11th and 12th November 2014 - Exeter Regional Office

Rep 2: Representing UCU members
2nd, 3rd and 4th February 2015 - Exeter Regional Office

Effective Negotiating & Bargaining
Days 1 and 2 - 1st and 2nd June, day 3 - 19th June 2015 - Exeter Regional Office

Equality 4th and 24th November 2014 or 6th and 27th May 2015, London.
This course is aimed at UCU Equality Officers, Equality Reps, and other Branch Officers, who want to learn more about how to use equality legislation to tackle discrimination at work and how to develop and promote a branch based equality agenda.

H & S 1: Induction: Health and Safety Reps role and functions
17th-19th September 2014