

UCU's comments on USS

UCU's fundamental concern over USS is the valuation methodology.

Richard Brooks asked specifically for comments on the following.

- the extent to which employees value the pension schemes we currently provide

Employees certainly still value the pension schemes, though less than before due to the cuts in benefits and increases in contributions, which UCU is not convinced are justified by the realities of USS.

- employees' views on the level of contribution in relation to the benefits

As above, UCU does not believe that the recent decrease in benefit/cost ratio is justified by the facts of the case: USS was forecast to have positive cash flow across the foreseeable period before the latest changes, and these changes have increased the cash surplus that USS is sitting on.

- what flexibility staff might wish to see in terms of future pension provision

The 'flexible retirement' option is welcomed, despite the poorly-managed introduction at Bath, and the lack of attention drawn to it by the HR Department. UCU believes that the requirement for line management approval, and the fact that it may be arbitrarily withheld, is a weakness in the scheme. There is a concern nationally that people with multiple employment contracts are bizarrely affected by the 'all employment ceases' rule: we have not seen this problem locally (yet!).

- what other options staff may wish to consider for retirement investment

In view of the reductions in allowed pension "pots", UCU believes that all staff should have opportunity to make alternative pension arrangements, not just the Vice-Chancellor (both current and previous).