

University of Bath UCU Branch Meeting Minutes

Thursday 11th September 2014 12.30 1E2.4

1 30 members in attendance. Tim Barrett in the Chair.

Apologies for absence: Marie Morley, Michael Carley, Hartmut Logemann, Katy Jordan, Caron Staley, James Davenport, Elke Pawlowski, Cynthia Spencer.

2 **USS**

Tim Barrett and Hedley Bashforth outlined what is known about proposed changes to the USS pension scheme, and UCU's response to this. The meeting considered points from recent UCU documents:

USS Branch Briefing (July 2014)

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUHE225.pdf>

Report of the Superannuation Working Group (UCU negotiators) to a special conference of delegates to be held in Manchester on September 19th (September 2014)

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUHE228.pdf

The second of these documents sets out a timetable for both negotiations on the future of USS and a ballot of members on the proposal to take strike action and action short of a strike in defence of the USS pension scheme.

There was a wide ranging discussion which led to consideration of a motion from the Branch Committee moved by Tim Barrett.

"This decision-making meeting of pre-92 branches as mandated by 2014 Sector Conference notes that:

* the current two-tier arrangements are unfair and unsustainable

* the employers have indicated their desire to close the final salary scheme entirely

and considers that a properly-configured CRB scheme is the fairest type of defined benefits pension.

The meeting therefore mandates the negotiators to seek a settlement in which all active USS members are transferred to a CRB scheme with benefits broadly comparable to TPS, as defined in UCUHE/225."

After some discussion the motion was rejected because members thought that it did not give expression to the strength of feeling about the nature of the threat to the USS as a defined benefits pension scheme, and could be read as meaning that members were prepared to make further concessions after the changes imposed on us in 2011, when the Final Salary scheme was closed to new members. UCU has always opposed a two-tier pension scheme, and is not opposed in principle to a pension scheme which provides benefits based on career average earnings rather than final salary. Our main aim should now be to protect the scheme as a defined benefit scheme.

The meeting considered the report referred to above in UCUHE 228 and agreed to amend paragraph 3.2 of the report as follows

Original text of para 3.2 of report:

3.2 The following guiding principles are suggested and have been informed by responses to member surveys and comments made at the branch consultation meetings:

- a. Recognises that the funding situation will require an increase in employer contributions and that pension provision should be set at a level which is affordable for the institutions in the long term;
- b. Considers it vital to maintain a defined benefit scheme;
- c. Acceptance that there could be a limited increase in employee contributions in return for benefit improvements to the CRB section;
- d. Considers that any changes to the benefit structure should provide for inter-generational fairness and benefit the vast majority of members in the future;
- e. Requires any improvements in the funding position to be used to improve defined benefits.

Amendment agreed by meeting:

- Change 'will require' to 'may require' in guiding principle a.
- Add new guiding principle (a) as follows:

...recognises that the attack on our pension scheme by employers is part of a politically motivated attack, not only on the fundamental contract of defined benefits pension schemes, but also on the future of HE.

- Re-letter subsequent guiding principles accordingly

The purpose of the amendment is to draw attention to the fact that USS is one of the last remaining defined benefits schemes, and its loss would be significant not only for us, but for the pensions system more generally and for the quality of higher education. The other point made is that no concessions should be made at this stage.

The branch is entitled to send two delegates. Tim Barret was nominated to attend and there is a place for one other delegate which branch officers were authorised to approve if anybody volunteers before the deadline of Monday 15th September. If you are interested contact Hedley Bashforth as soon as possible.

3 Report from JACNC on local negotiations over terms and conditions for part-time hourly paid staff.

Secretary reported that at the May meeting of the JACNC with the Vice Chancellor and her deputies it was agreed to review the current agreement between UCU and the University on Variable Hours Teaching Contracts. Under this agreement anybody working more than 322 hours a year for two years on a teaching contract will be offered a fraction contract. UCU expressed concerns that the agreement was not operating effectively and could in any case be extended to cover staff in other types of work represented by UCU, including research staff and academic related staff.

A negotiating meeting was held in July, with UCU Regional Officer in attendance, and a further meeting is scheduled for October. The terms of any proposed new agreement will be brought back to the branch for consideration before it is signed off.

4 Proposed Grade 6 Teaching Fellow job description.

The meeting noted the following letter was sent on August 27th by UCU to HR about a proposed new Grade 6 Teaching Fellow job description in the Academic Skills Centre.

I am writing with our comments on the proposed new job description for Teaching Fellow (Grade 6) in the Academic Skills Centre. These comments are made with reference to the National Framework Agreement and to the National Academic Role Profiles (NARPS) which form part of that agreement. The University accepted a commitment to implement the National Framework Agreement in our local agreement.

Within the National Framework Agreement, there are three pathways for academic staff:

Teaching & Scholarship
Teaching & Research
Research

The NARPS relate to these three pathways, and there is no provision for any teaching or academic staff to be placed anywhere other than on one of these pathways. We would expect that Language Teachers might be placed on the Teaching & Scholarship pathway as the National Framework Agreement does not allow for teaching without scholarship roles.

Our local agreement identifies 3 groups of staff:

Research Staff
Academic Staff
Academic-Related Staff

The language teachers covered by this job description must be defined as Academic Staff, as they are neither Research nor Academic-Related Staff. The local agreement stipulates that Point 34 will be the minimum entry point for lecturers with no previous experience. This lies within the Grade 7 band. We would therefore claim that this job description should be graded at Grade 7 under the terms of our local agreement.

In the absence of locally agreed role profiles we can only refer to the NARPS for the Teaching and Scholarship pathway to make an assessment of the proposed job description, and in our view what is being proposed in the job description goes well beyond what it is reasonable to expect of a Grade 6/AC1. Any HERA job evaluation you may have carried out has no relevance as it bears no relation to the National Agreement or the commitments made in Bath's own Agreement on its implementation.

I am attaching a copy of the NARPS for your reference, but would give notice that the University is in danger of breaching the National Framework Agreement and our own local agreement.

UCU Branch Officers would very much welcome an opportunity to work with HR in a joint exercise that reviews the mapping roles against the corresponding National Academic Role Profiles, as these should form the basis for the development of job descriptions. In this way both the union

and the University can have confidence that the Framework Agreement is not being undermined,

No reply has yet been received.

5 Report from JUCNC

There has been a meeting between HR and UCU, UNISON and Unite to review the Trade Union Facilities and recognition agreement with the University. Any changes will be reported to the branch.

The Tus have been given notice to quit the office we have occupied in 1W2.4b for the past three years. No suitable alternative has been offered. The three unions are continuing to press the case for a suitable alternative, but we may be left without an office from September 19th.

6 Rep Training and Branch Committee membership

There is a programme of training for new and existing UCU reps: health and safety, mental health, negotiation, branch rep. and caseworker. For details check here:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4799>

Please consider putting your name forward. Talk with any of the branch officers for more details.

7 Any other business

University Open Day UCU has produced a national leaflet based on one used here in Bath. Please download and use from

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/5/m/ucu_whichuniversity_opendayflyer_jul14.pdf

Britain Needs a Pay Rise TUC March and Rally, London, Saturday 18th October 2014

The meeting agreed to sponsor a coach to this event.