

Branch Meeting 11 August 2020

45 attended.

Chair Frances Amery

Brief Update

Meeting about 4 proposal and Updates

Overview:

FA: There has been no feedback from HR about the full proposals being put to all UCU members for consideration. It seems there are different conflicting calculations in different University budgets and no clear picture on how much savings (i.e. £30M) are required. We do not have the number of students UG and PG that will actually enrol this academic year, however the VC has mentioned the admissions is predicted to be good. Therefore, SW region UCU suggests the savings management claims are needed may not be necessary. We should wait until September 2020 for a clearer University financial position before any properly informed negotiations can take place.

So, without UCU members access to the full proposal here is the current feedback on the four proposals so far.

The initial four areas the University allows branch UCU members to discuss:

Voluntary severance scheme (VSS)

FA explained, following certain feedback to the consultation, that this is not the same as the recent Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES); rather it is a less generous scheme that will still offer better terms than statutory redundancy.¹ The university has mentioned the recent Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) will not happen again. The VES documentation mentioned VES was a one off chance and other future schemes would be less generous.

Member A raised concern about management applying potential coercion in order to persuade staff to take VSS. If anyone feels they are being unduly persuaded to take VSS they should inform the union/s.

Academic promotions.

FA outlined a series of suggestions put by members in the feedback [based upon members' decision not to release consultation feedback without the release of the full proposals the minutes will be altered to include these when circumstances allow]. **Member B** requested information on how much saving would increment freeze for everyone create; UCU negotiators stated that figures had been placed before them, however these remained confidential.

Regarding gender pay gap, **FA** has issued a draft joint statement to HR about proposals to reduce the gender pay gap but no response from HR has materialised.

¹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/calculate-your-redundancy-pay>

0.5 week's pay for each full year worked when you're under 22

1 week's pay for each full year worked when you're between 22 and 41

1.5 week's pay for each full year worked when you're 41 or older

Local government pension scheme

FA: There are few UCU members of the Local Government pensions Scheme (LGPS). Negotiations are a real concern for Unite and Unison members who have more members in the LGPS. Note that attacking pensions is one area Universities may look to in the future, re USS, though our successful strike action has so far curtailed universities attempting to claw back the pension contributions universities make and increase ours. UCU will support Unite and Unison and follow their lead in any negotiations, as they will in areas such as academic promotions, which primarily/exclusively impact UCU members.

Senior staff pay

Member A asked about savings made by freezing senior pay. **FA** explained that this was a misnomer. The senior pay freeze has been in place for the last few years and therefore no actual future financial saving is gained at all. Negotiators have the option of demanding pay cuts for senior staff. However, senior staff pay may be included in the proposals as a 'fish hook' to encourage us to enter negotiations on the other proposals. [members voiced views on senior staff pay – to be included in due course]

Member C observed that Senior Management are increasing in numbers if not in pay, an increase in expenditure at a time of cutbacks.

Member B asked about financial data, as the current University accounts will not be available publicly for a couple of months. They emphasised that proof is required over the £30m cuts management claims are needed and noted that the VC in Town Hall meetings has implied that undergraduate/postgraduate admissions overall are good.

David Moon (DM) confirmed that the three local unions and their regional offices have serious concerns over what appear to be contradictions in financial documents provided and have requested further information. Negotiators position is that for discussions of proposals to start more concrete financial figures and student intake numbers are needed. This is likely to be in September 2020.

Members voiced a need to push back the narrative that cuts are needed until the finance and student intake positions are clearer.

Member D raised a question around whether the University could use its reserves rather than getting at our pay and jobs. **DM** confirmed that there are considerable reserves but also there are enormous debts related to loans.²

Member E questioned recruitment of new staff taking place if savings were needed. **DM** explained this was attributed to backfill related to the VES scheme and a general need to have staff in place to perform essential services. The alternative is increasing workload on existing staff. A **member** noted that saving money with a hiring freeze is regressive and has the most impact on post-docs looking for a permanent position.

DM noted that Bath UCU we were in a better position in terms of negotiation than other universities in the South West. Bristol and Exeter UCU talks with their respective University management have broken down. **FA** noted that these universities had started negotiating with their management earlier

² Although we do not have the financial figures for this current year yet, viewing <https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/financial-statements-and-annual-reports/attachments/annual-report-and-accounts-2018-19.pdf> is helpful as a guide. - Keir

than us. The negotiators expressed their hope that here at Bath we will not end up in a similar breakdown during negotiations; negotiators believe that a breakdown would be detrimental to all concerned.

AOB

DM noted that he had received a document that included timetabled slots for face-to-face teaching at 7-8pm. Teaching must end at 7pm so let the UCU branch know if you have been asked to teach after 7pm. *[update: following correspondence with HR this appears to have been a mistake on behalf of the unit coordinator in the timetable presentation]*

DM updated members to inform them that discussions with Senior Management regarding the rebalancing of research/teaching workloads are still in consultation. Following a series of email exchanges, a series of assurances, commitments and guidelines have been promised, however the committee still has concerns it would like addressed. These have been passed onto the DVC who has responded that his focus is currently focusing on admissions but has promised a response, these issues being worked upon. The importance of this issue to staff in the immediate term has been emphasised.

DM summarised a meeting that morning to discuss alteration documents that set out changes in how particular university policies operate to accommodate changed circumstances related to increase homeworking and the need for flexibility. The unions have asked for minor changes which are being put into place but the documents are welcomed.

A member noted in the chat that there will also be a new Intellectual Properties Policy soon so is the University is still keen to implement Tech Transfer activities. It was noted that due to the increase in blended teaching more clarification is needed on coherent Intellectual Properties Policies.

DM confirmed that conversations regarding lecture capture policy was ongoing following the submission of UCU's consultation feedback. Concerns remain about elements of the policy however are positive protections to members rights within the documents that it would be valuable to have in place with the shift to online teaching. The unions have been informed that this may be raised in a Friday meeting with the VC although the exact nature is unclear. Members will be updated when further information is available.

Meeting ended.