

Branch Meeting 14 December 2020 (on-line)

Chair: Dai Moon

50 members in attendance

1) Welcome and update

Chair welcomed new members and gave an update on the following items:

a) Anticasualisation

Since the last branch meeting, UCU reps have had two meetings with negotiators from the University. Progress is good in some areas while slower than desirable in others. Arising from the strike action Bath UCU have collective bargaining agreements, one on anti-casualisation and one on equality and pay conditions. The aim is to have these in place by the end of the Academic Year and this is still on target. Details will be put forward to members as soon as they are finalised. UCU negotiating position throughout has been aimed towards a reduction of the use of short-term contracts.

b) JACNAC

Since the last branch meeting there has been a meeting of Joint Academic Consultation and Negotiation Committee, comprising UCU Reps, the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Chief Operating Officer and the Head of HR. Items discussed include workload, health and safety but the major discussion point has been around professorial pay. About a year ago Bath UCU was the first branch nationally to win recognition of the professoriate through an election. Now the University is putting in place a new pay spine and promotion criteria. UCU have had preview of this and will be consulting with Professor members shortly.

c) Managing attendance policy

UCU Reps are taking part in consultations with HR, alongside with Reps from other unions on campus. The current proposals have been criticised by the unions due to the inclusion of some punitive elements, HR are reconsidering the paperwork and Reps will be reporting back to members as soon as feasible.

d) Joint Union Consultation and Negotiating Committee

The UCU Professional Services Rep attended a meeting of JUCNC, alongside Reps from other trade unions on campus, and raised issues surrounding professional staff pay, progression and promotion criteria.

e) Refugee scholarship

The recipient of the Marie Morley scholarship, a postgraduate student co-funded by UCU and the University, wishes to pass on their gratitude and enthusiasm for the opportunities offered to them.

f) Asylum seekers and refugees support

UCU has been involved in meetings of this group - chaired by Professor Lambert - alongside with student groups. There is some discussion about the University of Bath

becoming a sanctuary university and about extra support the university community could provide to refugees in Bath, including non-university student refugees.

g) Equality pay gap

Negotiations are finally back on track and two UCU Reps are involved alongside colleagues from the other unions on campus. UCU Reps are pleased to report that there is recognition that pay gap issues are intersectional and other factors, such as race and disability need to be considered too. The University and Reps from the various unions are in the process of drafting a joint statement setting out the intention of reaching a collective agreement.

h) Postgraduate researchers who are teaching

A UCU Rep attended a meeting of the doctoral college, it emerged that what had been reported to UCU is widespread: roll out of fractional contracts appears to not have been done consistently across the University. This issue was taken back to HR and there is a commitment they will into it to identify the root cause of such discrepancies. UCU President explained that UCU is the trade union representative of all postgraduate students who teach and Bath Reps are working closely with the SU on these issues.

i) Special conference of Higher Education sector

This is taking place this week and two Bath delegates are in attendance.

j) Covid-19 meetings

These continue on a biweekly basis. Recently, UCU was able to feedback on the plans for the rolling out of the lateral flow testing regime.

k) Cost savings

Discussions are taking place, with UCU and other unions on campus, on a voluntary severance scheme.

2) Members feedback from IPT and control measures

Members highlighted that IPT and Bath Blend have resulted in significantly increased workloads from every member of staff, not just academic members, and there does not seem to be an understanding from senior management on how much work this has caused at every level. The effort staff have invested in ensuring the University continues to deliver its services at the highest quality level are not reflected in the Workload Model (WLM). UCU have brought this up with JACNC and were told that WLM is a management tool, with HoDs being ultimately responsible. UCU recognises is that this achieves nothing except pushing the blame onto HoDs and line managers who, by necessity, have to work with allocated resources without the ability to exercise any leeway.

Members raised the point that IPT seems at odds with the current climate of efficiency and cost savings, and it is unclear how Senior Management can justify their insistence on IPT on these grounds. Departments do not seem to have any discretion on the matter with diktats being imposed from the top with little understanding of the situation at the coal face where student attendance has been extremely variable.

Members are unclear which form bath blend will take in the future, but it seems that some form will be retained.

IPT move is towards more flexibility for S2.

3) Assessment via Inspira

Members note that it seems that Senior Management are in constant crisis mode and many decisions are delayed until the last minute, the ultimate result is that staff are put under pressure to deliver at short notice. The roll-out of Inspira is a point in case where the decision should have been made much earlier in the semester (or, even better, during the summer) in order to clearly outline the process and responsibilities. Our administrator colleagues have found out only last week of the significant additional requirements placed on them to set up every exam.

4) Semester 2 arrangements

The testing regime seems to be working well at the moment and feedback received so far is positive.

Members raised that there is significant confusion as to what the University position will be after Xmas, while it is recognised that, to a large extent some decisions are directly linked and influenced by Government announcements, the situation is not much better when considering issues which are completely within the discretion of the University. For example: what are the plans for staff coming back from other Countries, a new test scheme is starting this week which means paying for a new test. Members reported they have had personal reassurance that staff are entitled to a discount if flying out in December but there are no plans to extend scheme to January. It is unclear how widely this has been disseminated amongst staff.

AOB

18 March annual meeting of Academic related and professions staff, two delegates allowed. Looking for volunteers.