

Annual General Meeting 27 May 2021 (on-line)

Chair: Dai Moon

42 members in attendance

1. Welcome

Chair welcomed all members and thanked them for taking time off from during a very busy marking period to attend this meeting. Chair explained that there had been no AGM last year as National UCU had advised against holding AGMs in the middle of the pandemic.

2. Reports from Branch Officer

Chair drew member's attention to the Branch Officers reports that had been circulated by email ahead of the meeting and which are published on the University of Bath UCU website (<https://bath.web.ucu.org.uk/>). Chair invited the Branch Officers to give a brief overview of their reports.

President' report

The Branch has been extremely busy over the past couple of years and this is reflected in the lengthy President report. The Branch is in a bit of a bind with regards to information and are actively trying not to make excessive use of lengthy emails to members, however it is important to keep membership up to date with development in a timely manner. This is even more important in the current climate where there is activity on several areas that affect our overall working environment.

The President wanted to draw members' attention on to a few topics in particular:

2019 Industrial Action

This demonstrated that the Branch remains strong and is willing to turn out in force when action is called for. This is really important because, as much as the working relationship with the University is good, the reason UCU is taken seriously is down to the fact that members are willing to mobilise. The 2019 action was positive at a local level, both in terms of turnout and commitment, and contributed to securing some local victories such as the agreement to collectively bargained agreements on the Gender Pay Gap and Anti-Casualisation. Some of the developments at local level resonated nationally by sending a message that the University was willing to takes steps towards a more flexible position, while this had no tangible national impact it was nevertheless very welcome.

Pandemic

The President explained that many of the subsequent reports will touch on issues brought about by the pandemic but wanted to highlight that all aspects of this had resulted in a significant burden on all Reps to all of whom he wanted to extend his gratitude. The President wanted to single out the H&S Rep in particular, for all the hard work in this area and his positive engagement with the University to keep us all safe.

Academic Workload

The President explained that this is a topic the Branch is very tuned into and that it will be discussed in more detail in future meetings.

Teaching

The branch found itself in the middle ground between supporting the national call for teaching to be moved on-line but with a clear steer from the membership that there was not a desire to raise a dispute over this.

Cost savings

There had been several rounds of negotiations over this, and the President was pleased to report that the University had not faced the same extent of problems as others in the sector. The President commented there had been a point of fairly unexpected tension with the University with regards to cost savings. This came about due to the insistence that cost saving proposals would not be shared by UCU with its members. On a positive note, he was pleased to report that any delays in increments and promotions had been seen off at the last round of talks.

On-going negotiations

There were a number of ongoing negotiations, including: Anti-Casualisation, Professorial Pay, which was now on the second phase and awaiting for feedback from the national office on the latest proposal before taking it back to members. The President highlighted the work on the Gender Pay Gap, which will be covered by the Vice President in her report, and the work of the Pensions Working Group, of which the Pension Officer was a member.

The President concluded his address by expressing his gratitude to all members of the committee and to all new (and old) case workers. He expressed regret that longstanding members of the committee Hartmut, Elke, Kier and Cynthia had stood down and that there had not been a chance for a proper send off. At the same time, he wanted to thank all members that stepped into positions which had been left vacant. He wanted to thank all the committee members that were leaving this year, in particular Caitlin and Theo. Finally, he expressed his gratitude to Hayley for agreeing to act as returning officer.

Vice-President's report

The Vice-President report focussed on the Gender Pay Gap negotiations which had progressed well. A members' survey had been drafted to collect members experiences, not just women. The Vice President thanked all members in advance for feeding back experiences and views via the survey, especially at a very busy time of the year. The Vice-President encouraged members to use the free text boxes in the survey to share views and experiences as these would be very useful in refining negotiating positions.

Secretary' report

The Secretary explained she had been co-opted into post due to the departure from the University of the previous post-holder and her duties in the past 7-8 months had mainly focused on organising meetings and keeping tabs on paperwork. She observed that attendance at on-line meetings had been better than in person. She expressed the view that once normality returns it would be desirable for Branch Meetings to be hybrid to facilitate members participation.

Membership Secretary Report

The Membership Secretary explained that approximately 9% of members, both full and student members, had been lost from the branch since the start of the pandemic. This short-term trend was in contrast with the growth of the branch year on year for the past 5 years. National data also indicated that membership was on the rise and was possible that our Branch had been affected by the departure of some members over the VE scheme. The Membership Secretary was confident that a return to normality would be reflected in numbers bouncing back due to the increased visibility of the Branch when operating from campus.

Treasurer's report

The Treasurer reported that the Branch accrued a surplus of just over £7000 in the financial year to the end of August 2020. This was a healthy position to be in. The Treasurer explained that the Branch Finances are run via 3 separate funds: General Unreserved and Hardship fund and Refugee Scholarship fund, with the latter two being reserved. Given the financial position there was no need to increase the local subscription rates.

Health and Safety Convenor

The Health and Safety convenor reported that it had been a very busy year. He had been supported with help and advice from the regional office and that he wanted to publicly thank colleagues in Exeter for all of their hard work. He commented that Health and Safety colleagues at the University had had to battle with contradictory guidance from various government agencies but he was pleased to report that engagement was good and that the three unions on campus had been consulted appropriately. He reported that it would be impossible to make serious predictions as to what will happen in the next few months, but he thought it would be fairly safe to assume there would be significant pressure to get students back on campus and to reduce social distancing measures, especially in shared workspaces – such as laboratories.

Professor's Rep

The Professor's Rep was unable to attend the meeting, but his report had been circulated to members ahead of time. The Secretary drew the attention of members to the work carried out on Professorial Pay. The Professor's Rep had held a number of meetings with the professoriate to devise a negotiating position on this important aspect.

The Secretary explained this concluded the summary of the reports received in writing ahead of the meeting and asked if any other Reps wanted to give a brief highlight of their work over the past few months. No other Reps came forward. The Secretary explained that the report from the Pension's Rep had warranted a separate agenda item and will be received later on.

3. Elections for the Branch Committee following the nomination process

The Secretary explained that the nominated Returning Officer had received 12 nominations for the 23 positions on the committee. All nominations forms received were accompanied by secondment and by a declaration of willingness to serve by the nominee. All nominations were for different positions on the committee and were unopposed so each nominee could

be declared elected. The Secretary summarised the results of the election and drew particular attention to the vacant positions.

Role	Current holder	Nominee
President	David Moon (PoLIS)	David Moon (PoLIS)
Vice-President	Fran Amery (PoLIS)	Fran Amery (PoLIS)
Interim Secretary	Sabina Gheduzzi (Mech Eng)	Sabina Gheduzzi (Mech Eng)
Treasurer	Tim Barrett (Com Ser)	Tim Barrett (Com Ser)
Membership Secretary	Steve Alston (Library)	Steve Alston (Library)
Recruitment Officer	Stuart Bennett (RIS)	Ben Ralph (Com Sci)
Health & Safety Convenor	Michael Carley (Mech Eng)	Michael Carley (Mech Eng)
Equality Officer	vacant	
Anti-casualisation Officer	vacant	<i>Alejandro de Coss-Corzo (SPS)*</i>
Pensions Officer	James Davenport (Com Sci)	James Davenport (Com Sci)
Casework Co-ordinator	vacant	
Green/Environment Rep	Sophia Hatzisavvidou (PoLIS)	Sophia Hatzisavvidou (PoLIS)
Women & Non-Binary Members Rep	vacant	<i>Catriona Gray (Com Sci)*</i>
BME Members Rep	vacant	
LGBTQ+ Members Rep	vacant	
Disabled Members Rep	Mesar Hameed (Com Sci)	
International Members Reps	Galadriel Ravelli (PoLIS)	Galadriel Ravelli (PoLIS)
Postgrad Rep	Katy Brown (PoLIS)	
Postdoc Rep	vacant	<i>Kathrin Morosow (SPS)*</i>
Academic-Related & Professional Services Rep	Catilin Taylor (HSS)	
Teaching Fellow Rep	Ben Ralph (Com Sci)	Ben Ralph (Com Sci)
Lecturer/Reader Rep	Theo Papadopoulos (SPS)	<i>Jim Hordern (Education)*</i>
Professor rep	Peter Hall (Com Sci)	Peter Hall (Com Sci)

*[Post meeting note: the four members highlighted in Italics and denoted * came forward after the meeting and, in accordance with the Local Association Rules adopted by the Branch on 31 May 2019, were co-opted into the positions indicated in the table.]*

Chair invited questions from the floor on items 2 and 3.

A member highlighted that they had been asked to plan for next year's practical classes assuming no social distancing measurement would be in place. All of this was extra work that not captured in the workload model. The Health and Safety Rep confirmed that University Management were making the assumption that there would be no social distancing come the new academic year. The Rep explained that the issue of workload was one the union is very aware of and that there might be additional concerns if a scenario where teaching needed to be delivered part face to face and part on-line as this could involve a further increase in workload. The H&S Rep recognised that there had been adjustments to the workload model but that these are not satisfactory as they have simply involved a re-address of the research allowance. UCU would have preferred to see this as a temporary measure to reflect what had been necessary to deliver teaching in the past academic year, however moving forward a better way of capturing colleagues' work effort would be needed.

Chair also commented on the issue of workload. The rebalancing of the workload which had been communicated via email by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor last year had instigated a response from the committee. This eventually resulted in a statement circulated to all staff with guarantees that UCU would be involved in future conversations. Reassurance had been received that the rebalance would be temporary and that measures would be put in place to ensure there would be a recognition if an equality issue was to arise. There had been no further communication on this and the next step would be for UCU to go back and ensure these commitments would be honoured moving forward. There was also the issue of the availability of timetabling of f2f hours which assumed an embedding of not face to face delivery. While this was not necessarily a bad thing, there might be issues if people were opted into this type of delivery in relation to the recently agreed policy on lecture capture.

4. Pensions update

The Pensions Officer highlighted first a point of possibly minor interest to UCU members: the University was proposing that new entrants that would have gone into the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) would now be entered into a separate scheme run on the University's name by a commercial provider. This could conceivably affect some UCU members and a request will be circulated to members who are currently on LGPS to make themselves known so the impact on them could be worked out.

The main issue, as members were concerned, was USS. The Trustee Company of the scheme had produced a valuation which everyone else (with the exception perhaps of The Pension Regulator) considered inaccurate but from which they were not moving from. One way of unlocking this situation might be for Universities to agree on a much stronger covenant which some Universities were unwilling to commit to. Some Universities, including Bath, had issued statements in favour of covenant strengthening measures which was very helpful.

UUK had produced a revised scheme which essentially kept their costs down by giving less to USS members. The Pensions Officer gave a demonstration of the UCU pension valuation tool due to be launched soon to assess this proposal. He explained that the tool showed two different scenarios: the current scheme and the new scheme. In each case both pension and cash sum at 66 were displayed. In the proposed scheme the cash sum was split into two components: one accruing from the defined benefit portion (which is guaranteed in real terms) and one from the investment builder, i.e. from the defined contribution portion. The Pensions Officer explained to members that while the total amount of cash appeared to be greater for the proposed scheme, this was not the case as the annuity that can be bought

from the defined contribution portion at age 65 would ultimately result in members being worse off compared to the current scheme. Furthermore, the defined contribution portion was not index linked and dependent on the investment performance of USS, contrary to defined benefit portion. This, in effects, represented an average pension cut of around 31% for members, while, at the same time, being asked to pay in more.

5. AoB

Chair explained that under the Local Association rules any changes to the rules need to be circulated at least 10 days in advance of the AGM. Chair alerted members that in due course he will circulate paperwork where name changes for three of the Rep positions will be proposed to align with the changes to the career structure in the Education and Research Job Family.

The Secretary confirmed that the meeting had been quorate throughout and closed the meeting.