

Branch Meeting 12 March 2024 13:15-14:05 (hybrid)

20 members in attendance (9 in person, 11 on-line)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The meeting started at 13:15. The Chair (UCU Bath Branch President) welcomed new and old members who were attending either on-line or in person.

2. UCU Election Result Discussion

The UCU Bath President provided an overview of the recent UCU elections and noted that for the General Secretary (GS) candidates, Jo Grady won a second term. The other candidates were Saira Weiner, Vicky Blake and Ewan McGaughey.

There was a question from the floor about whether there was a branch-by-branch breakdown of results. There is no information on this.

The President provided information on the HEC candidates, with information on what faction they aligned with e.g. UCU Left Candidates, Independent Candidates (supported by the Rank and File Network), Independent Candidates and UCU Commons candidates. The President then gave a factional breakdown of the results, showing which factions have a majority in the HEC. Overall, there seems to be a shift to the "Left". The Vice President and trustee candidates were discussed.

3. UCU Congress 2024

[UCU Congress 2024](#) will be held on Wednesday 29 - Friday 31 May 2024 at Bournemouth International Centre.

Last year's branch delegates were Michael Carley and Ben Ralph. Congress is the sovereign body of the Union. The HEC is the body delegated to make decisions between Congresses. What is proposed to Congress is more than just the branch position but also what we are saying the Union's position should be.

The Chair explained that during the meeting the motion proposer would be asked to briefly introduce the motion. Those in favour and those against would then be invited to put their views forward. Finally, the proposer of the motion would be allowed to give their reply and the motion would be put to the vote as required.

4. Motion to Congress

Proposer: Hedley Bashforth

Secunder: Hartmut Logemann

The Proposer of the original motion outlined the motion and its rationale, which was linked to in the agenda of the meeting.

The Proposer outlined the importance of academic freedom in relation to a 2017 UCU survey, details of which they outlined. They noted how Jo Grady recently called out a political attack on academic freedom. They also noted that attacks on academic freedom came both from without and within the Union. The form of these challenges to academic freedom could include changes to funding, growing job insecurity, anti-terrorism legislation and the partial application of legislation by certain governance structures. Drawing attention to two specific cases relating to academic freedom within their Motion was done for illustrative purposes but also because there was reportedly no mention of them on the UCU website. The motion calls on the Union to have a conversation about this and to take seriously the idea that academic freedom could be derailed not just by certain politicians but from the people and organisations we interact with in our daily lives.

5. Amendment to Motion to Congress

Proposed: Michael Carley

Seconded: Kate Ehrig-Page,

The Proposer of the amended motion outlined the amendment and its rationale, which was linked to in the agenda of the meeting.

The Proposer of the amendment suggested reading the amendment from the bottom up. The reason for the amendment is that the NEC are well aware of the case of the two individuals named in the original motion; inclusion of their names in the motion leads to it becoming a debate on those individuals rather than on academic freedom. In addition to this, there have been recent cases where other academics (beyond the two named in the original motion) have run into issues over academic freedom; some of these recent cases may go to employment tribunals. As a result of this, the reason for the amendments, and requesting legal advice, is to make the motion more likely to pass through Congress.

6. Debate on the original motion and the amendment

The Secunder of the amendment spoke in defence of the amendment, reasoning that the cause of academic freedom was bigger than the two individuals mentioned.

The Secunder of the original motion spoke about the proposed amendments: they do not have a problem with large parts of the amendments and they recognise the good in the legal aspects of it and calling for clear steps/ instructions. However, not all the issues are legal. Additionally, by not putting in named individuals it makes the motion abstract. The HEC and Jo Grady have been completely silent on the two individuals named. A main criticism of the amendment is that no examples are mentioned.

A speaker from the floor (online) wanted to speak against the original motion and in support of the amendment. In their view, by mentioning the two individuals, it potentially sends the message that people could be subject to hate speech. The amendment is a good amendment, and putting the onus on legal advice is important, but as a Union we need to distinguish between academic freedom and hate speech and should operate in guidelines of what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable.

A second speaker from the floor (in person) noted that the previous speaker from the floor's comments seem in conflict with the outcome of the recent employment tribunals. They note that the amendment is fine, except that it leaves out the examples.

A third speaker from the floor (in person) wanted to speak against the original motion and in support of the amendment. They noted that the debate being had seemed to illustrate the points of the amendment's Proposer and that the examples take away focus from seeking guidelines on processes.

A fourth speaker from the floor (in person) wanted to speak against the original motion and in support of the amendment. They did so by echoing the comments of the previous speaker.

Providing them with the right to reply, the debate ended by returning to the Proposer of the original motion who was concerned that when you continue with a campaign to silence people, it is important to not silence opinions that you don't necessarily like. In so doing, people run the risk of damaging themselves in the future.

7. Vote on the Motion to Congress and the Amendment to Motion to Congress

At the time of the vote, the meeting was quorate with 19 people in total (9 in the room, 10 online).

Vote on the text of the Amendment:

- In favour - 14 (9 online and 5 in the room)
- Against – 5 (4 in room and 1 online)
- Abstain - 0

Vote on whether to support submitting the Amendment to Congress

- In favour – 13 (5 in the room and 8 online)
- Against – 1 (in person)
- Abstain - 2 (in the room)

The branch voted in favour of submitting the amended motion to Congress.

The Chair/ President informed attendees that due to the volume of business, that even after being submitted, this motion (the amended version) may not be heard at Congress and sometimes motions are left out. Once the branch submits this, other branches can propose amendments to it.

8. Election of Congress Delegates

The Chair called for expressions of interest in attending Congress through emailing the branch Secretary.

9. Any other business

A speaker from the floor, who is also a UNITE rep spoke about the Bath Trades Council event on 16/3 at 10am on Stall Street this Saturday. Additionally, next Thursday at 7.30pm at The Grapes in Bath there will

be a talk on the 40th anniversary of the miners strike and the place the LGBT community had in supporting it.

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 13:05.

Appendix

Full text of the [Motion to Congress](#) that passed at the branch meeting.