



Branch Meeting Minutes

Date: 27 February 2025

Time: 13.15-14.45

Location: hybrid (1W 2.104 and Microsoft Teams)

Quorate: the meeting was quorate, with 32 members in attendance (18 (inc. 4 guests) in person, 18 on-line)

1. Welcome and Apologies

Everyone attending the meeting was welcomed by the branch president who presided over the meeting.

Our branch secretary could not attend the meeting; the membership secretary was in attendance to take the meeting notes.

The branch president referred to the email that arrived from UCU head office yesterday, entitled, "UCU update on higher education pay ballot and campaigning ". This email detailed further steps on the next ballot for industrial action. The comment was made that it is very unlikely that there will be industrial action this academic year. There are some internal differences within UCU head office and other central decision-making bodies, on when to call a ballot; this is why progress on this ballot has been a little unclear.

At the meeting, there were four guests: Rachel Jackson and Stewart Fraser from the SW Regional Office and Joey Whitfield and Renata Medeiros Mirra from Cardiff UCU.

The business of the meeting was then moved onto, which included two motions proposed by members.

2. UCU Elections Reminder and UCU Congress Delegates (Ben Ralph)

UCU Bath branch Health & Safety Officer, Michael Carley, Michael Carley is running in the NEC elections.

The branch president noted that if you are interested in being a delegate for congress then email the branch secretary (ucu-sec@bath.ac.uk).

They asked whether members were happy for us to delegate people to go to congress (for this next congress, it would be the branch president and health & safety officer). A member suggested that, to enhance democracy, we might want to make this decision during a branch meeting. It was agreed that this was a good idea for future instances of nominating a delegate.

In this instance, an online ballot will be put in place if we have multiple people wanting to go to Congress to decide on who will eventually go.

The discussions ended by repeating the advice that any declarations of interest to go to congress should be received by the branch secretary; these should be received by the end of March, so that it can be decided who goes by the beginning of April.

3. Transparency (UCU Congress Rule Change, Michael Carley)

Michael was present in the room to elaborate on their proposed [UCU Rule Change: Transparency](#) motion, seconded by David Moon.

The motion centres on seeking to improve the transparency of communication systems within the central Union. The impetus behind creating the motion for Michael was due to difficulties experienced in sourcing information on Union actions, for instance with a hard to navigate website and an irregular release of information, as evidenced with some committee minutes not being current. The contrasting example to this was given in the form of our employers, who have a duty to release certain sources of information in a timely manner.

What is proposed is that we should behave as if we were a university employer, for instance, through having a publication team who creates a systematic way to release data (e.g. on a regular schedule). This publication scheme would be agreed by the NEC and it will align with ICO guidelines.

- When asked if there was any opposition online or in the room, no-one raised their hand.

- We will know the outcome of the motion at Congress, at the end of May, and the rule change would take place immediately. The passing of this motion would require a 2:1 vote at Congress.
- A question was raised online by a member in the room returned to the earlier point of the ease of accessing information and they asked whether there was any advantage to the current communication scheme. Michael answered that there is info that it would be unsafe to make available but there are some areas where information could be made available e.g. certain meeting notes. The idea is to bring in a minimum standard of accountability and transparency.
- A vote was conducted on whether to pass the motion. There were 16 votes online and 12 in the room, all of whom voted in favour of the motion; no people voted against it, nor did anyone abstain.

4. Funding crisis: run Higher Education as a public service (HESC Motion, Tyrone Falls)

Tyrone was present in the room and their motion was seconded by Michael Carley.

Tyrone noted, as outlined in their proposed motion on [Higher Education Sector Conference Motion – HE Funding](#), that the job losses, departmental/ course and funding cuts that were widespread in the sector are unnecessary and the funding system should be overhauled. Tyrone relayed how HE has become increasingly marketized and reliant on tuition fees.

In seeking to create change, it is proposed that we work with other major unions, including the NUS. Often activity in this area is fought on a branch-by-branch level and should instead be fought on a national level.

It was noted that we cannot ballot for a different funding system but we can put in a claim to UCEA to have a different funding system in place. Whilst at the University of Bath large job cuts are not an issue at present, it could come our way and this motion is also a mark of solidarity with other branches experiencing the crisis of cuts first hand.

- There were no hands raised when the branch president asked if there was anyone who wanted to speak against the motion.
- A comment was raised in the room indicating that they had seen that UCU had launched a similar campaign and is this any different from the main UCU campaign? Tyrone responded that if we want the national union to act then it is important that these things happen at Congress so they can be held accountable. Dissatisfaction in how national have acted on this was expressed. Tyrone noted that in the end we need to have an idea of how we escalate this issue, which could possibly include industrial action.
- A member online mentioned the use of the word “unnecessary” within the text of the motion and they queried whether there could be a better word put in place. Tyrone noted that the reason this word was included, whilst acknowledging that not every individual case of funding/ cuts can be assessed, was because sometimes

funding goes down but the service affected keeps running and so the question arises- does this then not indicate it is needed? Additionally, Tyrone noted that people depend on the Union to fight for their jobs; this is therefore the position from which to bargain from and following this, you then discuss the details.

The room then discussed possible options for changing the word, including using the word "avoidable". This was seen as a friendly amendment and was agreed upon by the proposer.

- A vote was conducted on whether to pass the motion, with the word "unnecessary" being substituted for "avoidable".

There were 14 votes online and 14 in the room who voted in favour of the motion; no people voted against it. There was 1 abstention.

5. AOB

There was no further business raised.

6. Guest Speakers from Cardiff UCU

(Joey Whitfield and Renata Medeiros Mirra)

Meeting notes stopped to allow for confidential discussions.