



***Our newsletter is free to all members.***

*If you're not a member, come on, you need to be!*

*Fill in a paper form or join online. Just ask a steward or follow the link from Staff Central.*

## **University of Brighton Branch Newsletter**

# **March 2020**



Thanks to everyone who was able to come to one of our Annual General Meetings (AGMs). This year, we tried to have an aggregate meeting, which is based on running pretty much the same meeting across four different sites, across four days. It was a bit experimental, but it worked, and a record number of people were able to attend. For those of you who did make it, we hope you found it useful and informative, and we really value your efforts in helping us to maintain an active, campaigning branch of UNISON.

This month's newsletter has an article on the AGMs plus more information on the changes we're anticipating.

Just in case there was any doubt, we're also reaffirming our support for UCU members taking a colossal number of days of strike action.

If you're able to support their efforts, the link to their hardship fund is

[justgiving.com/crowdfunding/brighton-ucu](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/brighton-ucu)

All donations are welcome, no matter how small.

Thanks for reading!

*Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary*

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# 2020 Annual General Meetings

It's always a worry with the AGM that it's theoretically possible that nobody will turn up. Obviously that's not going to happen, but you never can tell and if the weather's bad then there's always that element of danger.

So, it's always very gratifying when our members turn up in numbers to support our efforts, ask questions and generally to find out what's going on. On behalf of the branch committee, thanks very much to every single member who made the effort, and also all of you who would have come along but couldn't.

Next year, we'll make sure members are personally invited, rather than relying on emails and **Staff Central** announcements, which are easy to miss.

Those members who could make it were able to learn about what happened at Birmingham University when they took strike action in 2019 over their pay claim. The technology we tried to use in Cockcroft Hall was almost up to the challenge and for those wanting an answer to the question of what they won, it was 1.2% more than what UCEA had offered us for 2019, but on a (complicated) sliding scale, so the lowest paid got a pay rise worth 4.85%



*University of Birmingham strikers out in force*

We also talked about the impending changes to schools and student administration and what we'll be doing to support members through that process. We re-affirmed our commitment that if the scenario looks bad, we'll consult properly with all our members over what we should do. A scenario which looks like a significant loss of jobs will result in a recommendation for strike action.

The meetings also considered two motions:

Motion 1 demanded that we look at anti-racism training, making the point that the unconscious-bias training does not deal with how we should take up cases of racist behaviour, and does focus on the idea that we should all be aiming to be **anti**-racist, rather than just not racist. Members pointed out that the University should be delivering anti-discrimination training and we'll take up all these points with the University management over the next few months.

Motion 2 was a very clear statement of our branch's support for the UCU strike action. It's an unprecedented situation where one set of the workforce is on strike over a claim which would benefit us all if they were to win some concessions from UCEA, the employers' body.



For that reason, we voted to make a donation of £500 to UCU's hardship fund and ask all our members to give

personally whatever they feel they can. UCU speakers at three of our meetings outlined the strike so far and also appealed for support, and many of our members have provided solidarity to the pickets in a variety of ways.



Many of our more photogenic members were happy to show their support for UCU, as these pictures demonstrate.

Once again, thanks to everyone who contributed to making our AGMs a success this year.





## ***Academic Services, Size and Shape, IS and EFM “savings”***

At the time of writing, we still have very little detail on what’s going to happen and when. We know that people involved in the changes to student administration will be consulted from the week beginning 30th March, but that’s about all.

It’s maybe worth explaining what consultation in this context means.

If the University want to make changes to your contract, i.e. your job description, hours, location etc. then they have to consult with you. This involves writing a document which explains what they want to do and why, and also the implications this would have on your employment. They need to show that they have come up with a fair and transparent process of determining how everyone affected is going to be moved from the existing structure into the proposed new one and if there are any issues i.e. not enough jobs, then how they propose to resolve that. This could mean that they propose redundancies and they need to be clear if that is a possibility.

This document should be shared, and all those affected have a month to propose changes and amendments or just explain why they think it’s a bad idea. Every member of staff is entitled to an individual consultation with whoever the University put forward to manage the process and probably someone from Human Resources.

UNISON will be present at the initial group consultation and if you want us to come with you at the individual consultation meeting then we’re happy to do that.

For each individual, there are a number of potential outcomes. Either you will be slotted into a new role if there’s a significant fit between what you’re currently doing and the new role in terms of grade, type of work etc. If it’s not possible to provide a “slot” then you might be asked to express an interest in a different role. Generally this will not be at a higher grade, but it could be. If there’s a role at a lower grade that you’re slotted into you’d be entitled to pay protection, which would mean you carry on at the same rate of pay for a number of years.

It’s possible that you could go into the redeployment list. The University has a duty to avoid redundancy if at all possible, so if they can find a suitable alternative post then they would suggest this, and you could be redeployed if it’s agreed as an appropriate fit.

Obviously we can’t outline every possible scenarios and we expect a reorganisation of this scale to be complicated with hundreds of different permutations.

We are not here to make it easy for the University management, but aim to solve our members’ problems as much as we can.

As soon as we have more detail on what’s proposed then we’ll make sure our members are kept up to date with what it all means.