



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, we want you to join us.

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Just follow the link from our blog on Staff Central.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

January 2021

Happy New Year, and welcome to the first newsletter of 2021.

2021 is going to start as we left 2020, with uncertainty over where the pandemic is going to go, what impact it's going to have and for how long.

Whatever happens, the safety and welfare of University staff and students is our top priority. We need to revisit all the risk assessments done last time and determine what's appropriate on-site activity and what's not.

Unfortunately, the government have decided that universities should remain delivering on-line teaching for most students, but the list of courses making up exceptions to this, at a university such as ours, equates to quite a lot of students. Added to this are those students who could not make it home over Christmas or those who live here anyway, and we have a sizeable number of students on campus, for which UEB is determined

to provide a service, arguably service as usual.

It's complicated though, and things change daily.

Added to the situation of people working back on-site, are the endless complications of what people working at home are supposed to do.

The schools were open and welcomed kids back for a day. The University nursery managed a couple of days before closing. We're all now apparently key workers, so that means we need to get our kids into schools, whether we think that's a good idea or not, only to then be told, actually, it's only if you're supposed to be working on-site that you should be getting your kids into schools.

So, if this situation settles down into any kind of stable situation, our priority is for our members to be safe, at home or on-site and for the University to take into account all the challenges people have, including the full-time job of caring for children or others.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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General Secretary Election Result

Thanks to all those who voted in the election for UNISON's next general secretary.

The results were:

<i>Paul Holmes</i>	<i>45,220 (33.8%)</i>
<i>Christina McAnea</i>	<i>63,900 (47.7%)</i>
<i>Roger McKenzie</i>	<i>14,450 (10.8%)</i>
<i>Hugo Pierre</i>	<i>10,382 (7.8%)</i>

So Christina McAnea is the new general secretary.



Our branch nominated Paul Holmes as one of the two candidates, along with Hugo Pierre, who did not work for UNISON. Paul was the candidate chosen by the organised left of UNISON.

However you voted, thanks for doing so. If you didn't receive a ballot form and you've been a member for more than six months, it's probably because UNISON's membership system doesn't have your correct home address . Please get in touch to check for next time.

What's concerning is the poor overall turnout, with just of 10% of UNISON's members voting. There's a lot of work to be done across the whole union to turn this around and sufficiently inspire members to vote in future elections, beginning with elections to the National Executive Council (NEC) this Spring.

However it feels like these elections don't change anything, electing those candidates on radical fighting programmes could turn around our union into one which is more capable of standing up to the challenges we face.

Our branch committee will be considering nominations for the NEC in February and all members will get chance to vote in the postal ballot, provided we have your correct address (!)

Please get in touch if you think we might not have.

Or, you can check your details by registering for MyUNISON, here:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/>

You'll need your membership number to register though, which you can get from us if you don't know it.

UNISON Covid Advice

For those working on-site

Many of our members are still working at the four campuses, or have been asked to do so, either in full or on a rota system since Christmas.

The important issue here is that everyone has seen, read and understood the risk assessments and knows what to do if they don't feel that their situation is as safe as it could or should be.

Generally speaking, people should keep well apart, the windows should be open, with appropriate heating/clothing etc., and there should be no activity taking place which could be done at home.

If people are asked to work on-site and they have childcare at home to deal with then they should talk to their line manager with a view to coming to an amicable agreement based on what's realistic. For this lockdown period i.e. first part of 2021, there are an additional 15 days of special leave available, where people have used up previous allowances. Make sure you ask for it if you need it.

If you have any reason not to be here, then it's worth asking to discuss this with Occupational Health and/or your GP. The University should not be insisting that you're working on-site if you shouldn't be, either due to your health risk or because it's not necessary.

For those working from home:

The situation is very similar to what we all experienced in March/April, so everyone should work on that basis of doing what you can. Obviously, other pressures of life such as childcare or care for others will mean that this is variable, especially since most schools are unable to take more children and you should not be pressurised into putting your kids in school if you don't think it's appropriate.

The DFE has recently said that for those working from home, school places should not necessarily be made available - the idea being that those who need to work on-site should be able to take up school places.

Again, the advice is to talk to your line manager about what you can do and when. Managers should be reasonable under the circumstances and they should be aware of the special leave available for situations where the normal volume of work is not possible.

There's more general advice on UNISON's national website, here:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/key-issues/covid-19-advice-staff/>

...but if you want any specific advice about what you're being expected to do then feel free to contact us.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

12 noon, Wednesday 3rd March

Save the Date!



Our AGM this year will take place under circumstances none of us ever anticipated. Although we don't yet know what the situation will be in early March, our meeting will be on-line using Teams.

Last year, just before all this became such an issue in Europe, we hosted four site-based AGMs and achieved a record turnout. This year, we'd like to repeat that success, although we appreciate that having an on-line meeting makes it easy for some and almost impossible for others.

We'll therefore be organising a series of "mop-up" meetings for all those who can't make 12pm on the 3rd March at different times of the day afterwards. If you have an requests for a time and date then please let us know.

Usually we'd have a free lunch provided, but Teams does not yet have that functionality, so we're hoping that people can eat from the safety of their homes or workplaces while we meet. We're inviting a speaker involved in food banks, which will put things in perspective, and we'll have all the usual elections of branch officers, reports and essential union business, as well as trying to answer any questions which our members have.

As usual, if you want to be involved in our branch, more than just a member, then now is a good time to let us know. Obviously things are a bit weird at the moment, but we need to lay the groundwork for what we'll be doing in the future.

More details on the meeting will be on our blog.