



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

March 2021

Thanks to all those who made it to our first ever Annual General Meeting to be held via Teams. Under the circumstances, we were very pleased with such a high turnout and we hope to be back to having a physical meeting next year.

We heard from our guest speaker, Councillor Kate Knight, about running Moulsecoomb Community Market, providing essentials to those in need. We also discussed the future direction of the University and what we expect the challenges to be in the future, for a union branch such as ours.



One issue which cropped up is the subscription rate that members have to pay. Many of us would like this to fall, because it's horrible when people leave the union as they just can't afford to remain as members. Even though the rates have not

increased for decades, the reality of austerity and our pay falling further behind, combined with the costs of living and renting in the South East of England, does mean that many struggle to afford more than the basics.

We've never seen trade union membership as buying a service or being part of a club which you need to pay to join. We're much more than that, because the point is that a trade union is a unique body of working people, united through the fact that we all work in the same place and have common interests. If we only ever tried to solve members' problems on an individual basis then we're missing the essential essence of what a trade union is about and why we matter. The interests of our members are bound up in the collective and our ability to ***collectively*** campaign on pay, pension rights and working conditions of us all, because they matter to us all.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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Pay Campaigns

As you will know, we had a pay “increase” imposed on us on 1st August last year, which means we’ve not had a pay rise since August 2019 and not had a real terms pay rise since



2015. Our pay has been sliding backwards significantly compared to the cost of living for a decade and we have a responsibility to our members to do what we can to address this.

The 0% for 2020-21, we’re in dispute over. (We’re technically still in dispute over the year before as well, the year UCU tool strike action over before Covid interrupted it.)

Earlier in 2020, we consulted all branches over their acceptance or rejection of the “offer” with a strong recommendation that we should respond “thanks for nothing!”, reject the imposed pay cut and move to a national ballot. Branches responded very positively, particularly given that we were in the middle of a national health crisis.

Thanks to our branch motion, passed after a lengthy debate at the February 2020 national higher education conference, we’re committed to disaggregate balloting over pay. This was a tactical response to the problem of having to achieve a 50%+ turnout to be able to take action irrespective of how members vote. Making this a series of linked disputes across all universities allows branches achieving 50% or more to take action as part of a national campaign without branches with a poor turnout preventing this by depressing the overall turnout. It’s not a perfect solution, but does at least allow a campaign, rather than condemn us to doing nothing year after year.

Our national higher education body agreed to ask UNISON’s Industrial Action Committee (IAC) for a ballot in December. Unfortunately, we’re still trying to sort out the practicalities, and many activists are less than impressed about the delay, plus the fact that the IAC were not willing to support a ballot of all branches without qualifications - either those branches having the option of opting out or reducing the number balloted to correspond to a decent consultative ballot turnout.

So, branches across the UK in national pay bargaining will be asked if they want to participate in a ballot of members, with a strong recommendation that they should do so.

Pending agreement at our next branch committee meeting, we’re very much hoping that we will be able to ballot members in May, which would allow us to threaten and go through with strike action over pay at the start of the next academic year, in October, if the employers’ organisation don’t offer to pay us more. Obviously given the timescale, they could do this by agreeing a decent pay rise in August 2021.

Our pay claim for 2021-22, due in August this year is on the next page. The employers body are meeting all unions three times, with the final meeting due in early May.

It’s likely that we’ll be given an offer that’s terrible, with the difficult financial situation and low rate of inflation used as a justification for that. If we do ballot over this year’s 0% though in May/June, this could make those who make these decisions think carefully about that, especially if this is followed up with a clear plan to take action in September/October (right at the start of the academic year).

We’re hoping that we can link up our pay campaign with UCU, so that we ballot together and threaten to strike together. More news when we have it....



Higher Education Joint Union's Claim 2021/22

This is the “Heads of Claim” i.e. the main points of the claim to be put to employers

- ◇ A pay uplift of £2,500 on all pay points;
- ◇ An increase in all pay related allowances including London weighting;
- ◇ A minimum of £10 per hour wage for all contract types (In London, where the Living Wage rate will be £10.85 per hour, this should be relevant minimum.);
- ◇ For all universities to become Living Wage Foundation accredited employers ensuring that outsourced workers receive, at least, the Living Wage Foundation rate of pay;
- ◇ A maximum sector wide pay ratio of 10:1 which is not limited to the national pay spine (i.e. covers all employees including staff on senior pay rates);
- ◇ Additional uplift at the lower end of the pay spine to address pay compression; aiming to restore the 3% differential between pay spinal column points over the next three years;
- ◇ For the standard weekly full-time contract of employment to be 35 hours per week at all higher education institutions;
- ◇ New JNCHES to establish working group/s to look at career development, progression issues and training opportunities in higher education;
- ◇ Ending pay injustice – meaningful, agreed action to tackle the ethnic, gender and disability pay gap; additionally, to take an intersectional approach to the ways in which intersectionality and protected characteristics impact on pay equality;
- ◇ Agreeing a framework to eliminate precarious employment practises and casualised contracts, including zero hours contracts, from higher education; converting hourly paid staff onto fractional contracts; agreeing national guidance to end the outsourcing of support services in higher education and to bring staff into in-house employment;
- ◇ Meaningful, agreed action to address excessive workloads and unpaid work; action to address the impact that excessive workloads are having on workforce stress and mental ill-health; that workload models and planning take into account COVID pandemic related changes in working practices;
- ◇ To establish the Scottish sub-committee of New JNCHES as set out under the New JNCHES agreement;
- ◇ A UK level higher education redeployment facility for those whose jobs are at risk of redundancy.



2021 EQUALITY CONFERENCE

**ONLINE | FRIDAY 23 APRIL 2021 |
10:00AM - 16:45PM**



WORKSHOPS AND SESSIONS

Impact of the Pandemic on Working Parents

An examination of the impact on members who have struggled to balance their conflicting responsibilities and how UNISON can help.

Round Table Discussion

What have you learned from the past year? What have been the changes in your working life? Is there anything you would like to take forward once the restrictions are removed? What would you like to change?

Disabled Members Working from Home and Reasonable Adjustments

To what extent does the Equality Act protect disabled members who are now working from home, and what can UNISON do to support them.

Panel Event - Poverty, Inequality and the Pandemic

To what extent has Covid exposed and increased pre-existing inequalities for disadvantaged groups?

EQUALITY.

Everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. The ability to live and work without prejudice is a fundamental right, regardless of your background, identity and experiences.

You are invited to the UNISON South East Equality Conference which will help to equip your branch with the tools and resources to raise awareness of equality issues in the workplace.

GUEST SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Christina McAnea | General
Secretary

Gloria Mills | Head of
Equality

Josie Irwin | National
Women's Officer

Peter Kyle | Labour MP for
Hove & Portslade, Shadow
Minister for Victims and
Youth Justice

To register for this event, visit southeast.unison.org.uk/events/regional-equality-conference-2021/ or email equalityse@unison.co.uk with your membership number.