



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, we want you to join us. Either follow the links on-line from our blog on Staff Central or ask us for a paper membership form..

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

October 2021

So, October brings the students back, in greater numbers than we've seen at university campuses for a long time. Many people will be very concerned about the numbers of people cramming into small spaces and what that might mean for the safety of us all.

As you'll appreciate, we've been arguing for the University to retain many of the safety control measures it put in place last summer - face-coverings, ventilation, limits on numbers etc.

To be fair, some of this is partially retained, and Estates staff have worked very hard to monitor CO2 levels and keep windows open. What hasn't happened is the retention of face-coverings, which we think it would have been a very small inconvenience for all of us, which would have given people much more of a reassurance.

At least one member of staff we know about has left the University, unwilling to work in close proximity to others with only the suggestion that face-coverings are "strongly advised". We know

that making this mandatory would go a long way to making many of us feel that the University campuses are a safe place to work and that UEB/IRT or whoever makes the decisions here, is taking into consideration what we're thinking.

It's not only a case of physical safety measures, but how people feel which matters. The wellbeing of members of staff and students would have been much better helped if face-coverings had been part of the University's strategy.

For some, with clinical conditions which make them vulnerable or compromised immune systems, it's important that there's a full discussion about what's appropriate over the next few months. Each case needs to be taken seriously to protect people whilst allowing them to work. Either way, we'd expect the University to follow the advice of the GP or qualified clinician, even if that means significant changes, or staying away from the campus for the foreseeable future.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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Pay Updates

As you will know, our branch voted 71% in favour of strike action with a 52% turnout, over the issue of the pay freeze imposed on August 2020.

This gives us a legal mandate for strike action over pay, provided we give sufficient notice to the University.



What was supposed to be a national campaign across multiple universities is now effectively a local dispute, which we'd be happy to settle with some recognition of how much our pay has fallen, particularly given that the pay freeze was imposed at a time when many of us thought that universities were in imminent danger of collapse.

At our Common Interest Meeting in mid-October, we'll be submitting a claim of £1,000 as a bonus for all staff (pro rata for part-time workers.) We think this is entirely reasonable as a starting point. If the University are not willing to come to some agreement, then we still have the option of escalating the dispute, involving strike action if necessary.

Meanwhile UCU are going to ballot over the next few months over pay. If things come together, then it's possible we could be looking to take action in late November or early December.

We will also, almost certainly, be balloting members again over the imposition of the pay rise (real terms pay cut) of August this year, since it is nowhere near where we expect the cost of living to be.

October is Black History Month

Why I joined UNISON:.....

By Bill Acharjee

As a second generation British-Indian, I was born and raised in the UK where, throughout my adolescent and adult life, I have been subjected to various forms of racism, prejudice and discrimination from verbal to physical, directly and indirectly at school, college, university, professional working environments, socialising in bars and clubs and even when stepping out of the front door of home where I was spat at and thrown dog poo. All these incidents had a long-term negative impact on my mental health, feelings of isolation and that I am a 'second class citizen' that doesn't belong in this country. Sadly, my late parents were also too afraid to report such incidents to the Police because they had no faith in the British justice system, as such I never had the support to help or guide me through these challenges in my formative years'.

This all changed when I joined UNISON! Firstly, I started getting involved with the regional Black Members group, which feels more like being a part of a family environment, where I have met like-minded individuals who share the same lived experiences, values and beliefs as I do, and secondly, by getting active and being involved with branch committee meetings and steward training UNISON has given me the ability and confidence to use my voice and words to call out unacceptable behaviour in the workplace and within my community!



Becoming an active member of the UNISON community you will be able to enhance and develop your professional skills by organising events and workshops, and take part in education and training opportunities to empower you to succeed and progress within your career and beyond! How do I know this? Because the skills I developed from UNISON helped me to secure my dream job as an Equality & Diversity Advisor at the University of Brighton!

If you are truly passionate about helping, supporting, being a positive role model, I would strongly urge you to join UNISON and get involved! If you want to use your voice to call out issues of social injustice, and inefficiencies of this problematic UK government, I will strongly urge you to get active with UNISON so that we can fight together!

You can hear Bill speak at 11am on Wednesday 6th October as part of the University's series of talks.



Black History Month Weekend



We're inviting Black members to come together in celebration for a special weekend of events **15-16 October 2021** [featuring guest speaker David Olusoga](#) (pictured), author of the bestseller [Black And British](#) as well as a fantastic online [Black leadership skills course](#) and more!

More details on the regional website, here:

[Black History Month 2021 | Campaigns | UNISON South East](#)



The Young Members' Forum provides an opportunity to meet likeminded young members to discuss important issues affecting young workers. It is an opportunity to create and execute activities and campaigns and ensure that young members are fairly represented within UNISON democratic structures.

The Regional Young Members' AGM will be taking place this year virtually on **Thursday 4 November, 3-4:30pm**.

In order to accommodate this and ensure that members in the South East have the opportunity to participate fairly and democratically, we have made some slight changes to the normal processes and timescales.

Holding our meeting online means that this could potentially be the biggest Regional Young Members' AGM we've ever held in the region. We very much hope to see a great turnout on 4 November!

Please let us know if you'd like to attend.