



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

May 2022

We've now taken five days of strike action over pay. The first day was over the 2020-21 pay freeze, imposed in August 2020. Our one day strike and threat of further action led the Vice Chancellor to promise that we could talk about the length of the working week (we want 35 hours) and equalisation of annual leave (we want 30 days for everyone). This was dependent though, on agreeing not to take further action. We couldn't remove ourselves from the ballot and subsequent action over the 2021-22 pay cut (again imposed on August 2021 and worth 1.5% or a bit more for the lower grades), so talks came to nothing, although a reduction in the working week and equalisation of annual leave for all grades is our long term aspiration.

We then took four days of strike action in March and April, alongside UCU and other UNISON branches across the country. These were helped by the fact that we could make strike pay, of up to £50 a day, available to all members taking action. We had inspirational picket lines, marches and rallies and the fact that we were campaigning over something that affects us all convinced more people to join.

We now need to make some decisions over what happens next. UCU are implementing a marking boycott and will name some more strike days very soon. We also need to focus on the consultation over the 2022-23 pay offer, which is worth 3%, rising to 9% for the lowest grades, but in a era where inflation is likely to hit 10% and all working people are feeling the spiralling costs, then this is still a real terms pay cut.

We know from experience that strikes over pay are not easy and there's no guarantee of victory, but we also know that doing nothing is not the best option for our members and our union.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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Pay Campaigns Latest

After four days of action over the 2021-22 real terms pay cut, UCEA, the employers' organisation are refusing to back down and offer us any more. Obviously this is disappointing, that a handful of excessively paid Vice Chancellors and their friends (including our very own Mark Burch) are refusing to recognise the poverty pay that universities continue to pay their workers.

Our strike action was done alongside UCU and other UNISON branches and has been a determined campaign to push back against this, but there's been no change of heart and no real feelings expressed from our own University leadership. Their tactic has largely been to ignore it and pretend it's not happening. We know it's made a difference and had an effect. Obviously they won't want to admit that.



With UCU's impending marking boycott (which could see students not being able to graduate in the summer), and further strike action planned, our branch has to decide on further steps. We know that members have responded brilliantly, especially once word got round that we can process strike pay of up to £50/day. For many members, this means taking strike action and suffering no financial penalty! For others, it means the loss of pay is manageable.

If we decide to carry on with pressure over the 2021-22 campaign, and plan further strike action, we know members will respond again and we know that the vast majority of people working at the University will support our campaign, because there is no way you can present a 1.5% pay increase, the only increase since August 2019, as a fair response to rising prices.

What we could do though, is wait until the new academic year and focus on the 2022-23 pay rise, over which we'll be consulting members this month. Either way, we are not going to give up campaigning for pay justice for all our members and our longer term aim is to secure pay rises that at least match the cost of living, otherwise we'll be working for less and less. This isn't something any trade union branch should accept.

What is clear is that UCEA would not have offered us 3% for next year if we hadn't been prepared to fight for something better so far. Thanks to all our members who've made this happen.

2022-23 Pay Offer

Why it's so important that you have your say

UCEA representatives met three times with union reps of all unions to thrash out the pay uplift due in August 2022. We've been offered 2.75%, then 2.9% and finally, 3.0% with additional increases for spinal points 3 to 19 (roughly grades 1 to the middle of grade 4), as shown here:

Final Employers' Offer for August 2022 applied to Brighton

Grade	Spinal Point	Pay from August 2021	Hourly Rate	Pay from August 2022	Hourly Rate	Increase	Real change with inflation at 9.0%
1	5	17,901	9.28	19,333	10.02	8.00%	-1.00%
	6	18,212	9.44	19,578	10.15	7.50%	-1.50%
	7	18,529	9.60	19,863	10.30	7.20%	-1.80%
2	8	18,852	9.77	20,134	10.44	6.80%	-2.20%
	9	19,209	9.96	20,400	10.57	6.20%	-2.80%
	10	19,623	10.17	20,761	10.76	5.80%	-3.20%
	11	20,092	10.41	21,197	10.99	5.50%	-3.50%
3	12	20,600	10.68	21,630	11.21	5.00%	-4.00%
	13	21,135	10.95	22,149	11.48	4.80%	-4.20%
	14	21,686	11.24	22,662	11.75	4.50%	-4.50%
	15	22,254	11.53	23,144	12.00	4.00%	-5.00%
	16	22,847	11.84	23,715	12.29	3.80%	-5.20%
4	17	23,487	12.17	24,285	12.59	3.40%	-5.60%
	18	24,174	12.53	24,948	12.93	3.20%	-5.80%
	19	24,871	12.89	25,642	13.29	3.10%	-5.90%
	20	25,627	13.28	26,396	13.68	3.00%	-6.00%
	21	26,341	13.65	27,131	14.06	3.00%	-6.00%

What this illustrates is that 3%, rising to a maximum of 8% for grade 1 employees is nowhere near close to inflation, if we assume the current RPI of 9%. Members at the top of grade 4 and above are facing a massive 6% drop in income, even though 3% seems ok, just because the value of inflation is so high.

The figures are very confusing, because we've all been used to relatively low inflation for such a long time, but with spiralling costs of everything working people need to buy, even a 6%, 7% or 8% increase in pay is not good enough. It's a real terms pay cut!

All those working directly for the University (i.e. not Students' Union or agency members) will be asked what they think of this in the consultation running through the second part of this month. Emails will go out asking for people to either accept the increase (cut) or reject it, and be prepared to take action to demand more.

Obviously we want a high turnout so that the results more accurately represent the feeling of our members. The results will be used to determine what happens next, and this will potentially result in planning for strike action in the Autumn term if the employers don't offer us more.

Please make sure you respond to your consultation email. If you don't get one, just let us know and we'll show you how you can participate on-line.

Reorganisations:

Technicians, Placement Teams, Research Administrators and Executive Assistants

The University never stops its perpetual cycle of changes. Those in teams above are either in the process of being reorganised or will be soon. This is mainly driven by changes to school structures, where things were left unresolved and now need fixing.

The good news is that we don't anticipate any attempts to make anyone redundant. This is not the Information Services changes or the closure of the Nurseries, but we know it can be unsettling for people when change is coming and there's no clarity on precisely what that change will be.

In each case, the University has to consult on the implications of the changes and listen to suggestions. We'll be involved on the consultation meetings and are happy to talk to all members about the details and what the changes may mean for you. If you have any questions about any of this then feel free to get in touch.

UNISON National Delegates Conference 14th - 17th June, Brighton Centre

The annual conference of UNISON will take place in Brighton next month. This is a gathering of delegates from all branches, across public services, to determine the policies and rules of our union. Our branch has always played a part in this, but with it being local, all members can easily come along as visitors for some of all of the four days.

Coming to conference gives you chance to see how decisions are made and watch some of the debates on the way forward. We'd encourage everyone to come and have a look, even if for just half an hour. Our branch has two motions and one amendment on the agenda. (We would have had more but they've been ruled out of order.)

If you'd like to go, it will need to be in your own time. Just let us know and we'll register you as a visitor.





**ASSEMBLE 11AM PORTLAND PLACE W1
MARCH 12 NOON
RALLY 1PM PARLIAMENT SQUARE**

Working people have had enough. Everything's going up but our wages. Ministers partied while people died. Now they do nothing while living standards plummet and P&O lays off hundreds of workers on the spot.

It's time for a new deal for working people, real help with energy bills and a pay rise.

The government needs to act now!
Join us and demand better.



#DemandBetter
tuc.org.uk/demandbetter



We'll be marching through London, the day after our national conference to demand better from this government.

We can arrange free transport from Brighton Train Station, so please make a note of the date and you're welcome to join us.

Why we think you need to join a trade union



If you're reading this, the chances are you're already a member of UNISON, but whether you are or not, it's in all our interests that we strengthen our branch and our union by recruiting more members.

Trade unions are not groups of people who moan about everything, or clubs for lazy workers. We're organised workers who see the need for workplace organisation that's based around mass membership and collective interest.

We support all members with their individual problems at work, but the main reason we're all members is that we can do so much more when we have the weight of hundreds of members with us.

Many people working at the University will be concerned about what's round the corner. Universities like ours are facing all kinds of uncertainty. Public services in general are being cut, sold off and privatised. Workers' terms and conditions are being attacked as those in charge are forced to run things as "efficiently" as possible. In short, we're all expected to work harder for longer and less money.

The entire system means we have to fight back. Trade unions are about working people seeing that we're much stronger together. You can fight and win on your own, but you're much more likely to win if you're fighting alongside hundreds and thousands of other people like you.



Please make sure you join a trade union and stick up for your rights at work.

If you're already a member, please ask those working alongside you to join as well.

You can join UNISON on-line, or ask a steward for a paper membership form.