

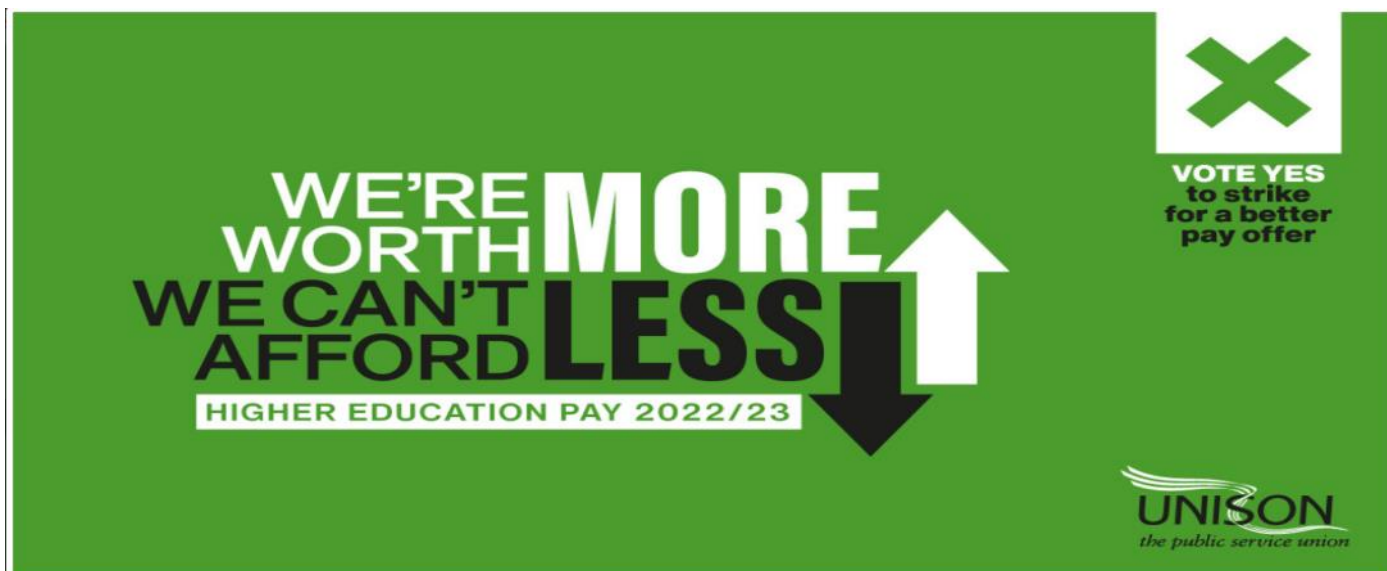


Our newsletter is free to all members.

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

September 2022



A massive thank you to everyone who voted in our pay ballot during July and August.

Our branch achieved an 82% YES vote with a 61% turnout!

This is the highest turnout we've ever managed for a postal ballot. It shows the strength of feeling of our members, in that we have to do something about our falling pay, but also the determination of our branch activists to make sure that as many members as possible voted, so that we hit the 50% turnout target to make our ballot count legally.

As it stands, we now have a strike mandate to take action over our pay. More details inside...

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2022-23 Pay Campaign

UNISON members at a total of 80 universities in England were balloted during July and August, with branches in Scotland balloting slightly earlier and branches in Wales balloting on an aggregate basis.

In total, just over twenty branches now have a mandate for strike action over the imposition of the 3% pay increase (real-terms pay cut) in August 2022.

Since these were disaggregate ballots i.e. each branch declaring a dispute against their own university, branches are able to determine the best strategy for striking, that is when to do so and how long for.

Part of that consideration is when would cause the most disruption to the running of the University, bearing in mind that UCU are currently balloting on an aggregate basis. The outcome of this ballot, which closes on 21st

October, could mean that UCU will be able to take strike action from early November.

Obviously, we don't want to strike, lose pay and cause disruption, but if you're forced to do it, then you might as well do it properly.



So, some branches are due to take action as early as 19th September, now likely to be a bank holiday, since it coincides with freshers' week and enrolment. Others are waiting until October.

Our branch committee met to discuss this and determined that dates in mid-October, when the university is back to teaching as normal, will be the most appropriate time to strike. We'll give more details later in the month, at our all-members' meeting, scheduled for the 28th September.

Our demands have not changed - we want the employers' organisation, UCEA, to come back with a better offer than a 9.3% pay cut for most (based on a 3% uplift with RPI inflation currently at 12.3%). UCEA's final offer was based on feedback from universities, including ours, that more than 3% was unaffordable, but we would like our Vice-Chancellor to tell UCEA that our members deserve more and if the University of Brighton genuinely can't afford to pay more then we'll campaign jointly for more funding for higher education.

What we can't do is sit back and accept massive cuts to pay because the money in society is all in the wrong place.

Any strike action we take is part of the national campaign for pay justice, with inflation at unprecedented levels, we know our members are going to struggle even more than they are doing already. Rail workers, postal workers and telecom engineers have led the way, but university workers are no different. Facing massive reductions in pay, we have to fight back.

Once we announce strike dates, we'll be looking for volunteers again for picket lines, so please get involved if you can, and we can campaign as a union for a better pay deal.

Please Complete our Stress Survey

We're very aware that stress as a result of work is a massive issue, particularly for many university employees. Multiple things can cause work-related stress and it's always hard to distinguish between stress as a result of working arrangements and stress as a result of stressful lives outside work.

There are generally considered to be six main areas of work which can cause stress - demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. Different people may experience and deal with pressure in different ways.

The University or Students' Union, as the employer, has a legal duty to do what it reasonably can to protect employees from stress at work.

In recent years, the University has conducted surveys, mainly relating to how people feel about Covid and remote working, but we don't think this goes far enough to properly assess how people feel about their workloads and the difficulties people face, potentially as a result of changes to working patterns, especially after restructures. We know, anecdotally, that some groups are really struggling, and so our survey is a first attempt to really get to the bottom of this, so that we can formally ask the University to act on it.



Our survey is based on a short series of questions which should only take few minutes to complete. It's entirely confidential and we'll only use the data to demonstrate the scale of the problem. Ultimately, we'd like to see the University Safety and Wellbeing Committee survey the whole university with the resources at their disposal.

We would like as many support staff to complete the survey as possible.

You don't need to be a UNISON member, although obviously we'd like all support staff to consider joining us.

You can access the Form from the link in the **email of 13th September**, and we'll keep the survey open until late October.

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.