

RIISING TOGETHER FOR BETTER PAY

HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2023/24



University of Brighton
UNISON | Branch Newsletter

May 2023

Welcome to our May newsletter!

We all knew that the University would plan to make redundancies sooner or later, but the plan to make 110 redundancies, primarily from academic staff, is a significant attack on jobs.

For support staff, the number of redundancies planned falls mainly in “non-core” areas, but that doesn’t make the news any less devastating for those involved. This comes after a slow drip of support staff job “loses”, starting with IT technicians, then nursery workers, and finally security staff, most of whom are likely to be leaving the University since they can’t reasonably work both days and nights for less pay.

Obviously, as a trade union, we have to oppose compulsory redundancies, and the University can limit or eliminate the “need” for people to go in this way by making volunteering to go more attractive. We’ll soon have some indication of how many people have volunteered, but there needs to be an imaginative way of preventing more redundancies to be added to those already made.

Given all this, we’ve launched a vote of no confidence in the Vice-Chancellor and her senior team. This was not something we’ve done lightly and the branch committee had a lot of discussion about the need to take this step. Early indications are that the result is overwhelmingly a no vote, with an impressive turnout of staff and students.

Our issue is not so much what UEB are trying to do, but more their failure to respond to the government’s deliberate destruction of higher education at universities outside the top few. We want some clear and meaningful message about university funding being continually cut, rather than a reaction which involves cutting the wage bill.

Obviously, it’s easier to make staff redundant, but this is not going to solve the problem in the medium term. This government, and potentially its replacement, need to fund higher education properly, otherwise we’ll see a spiral of managed decline as the University of Brighton becomes smaller and smaller with more job “loses” and course closures, with a leadership exercising a “what else can we do mentality”.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary



UnisonJoB



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In short, we'd want a socialist, nationalised education system with democratic ownership and control, but in the meantime, we'd want the senior leadership to call off all compulsory





2023-24 Pay Ballot

Our ballot over pay starts on 31 May with ballot papers posted to all University-employed members' home addresses. As always with a formal trade union ballot, we need a turnout of over 50% for the result to count, due to the undemocratic nature of the anti-trade union laws. We could get a democratic vote of 100% in favour of strike action with 49% of members voting, but that wouldn't count, so every vote matters and we'll be working hard to make sure that we maximise the turnout.

What we want you to do:

2. Post your ballot paper as soon as possible.

It's very easy to leave it to tomorrow, or carry it around without posting it for a few weeks, but please make sure you fill it in, and get it in the letter box as soon as you can, like this:



2. Take a photo of you posting it.

If you're so inclined, the more pictures we have of ballots being posted, the more we get the message across. Please don't be shy, let's see you getting those ballots posted.

3. Tell us you've voted

We'll be checking all our members have, so if you let us know when you have done, we'll stop bothering you and you'll make our job much easier. You can email iadb@brighton.ac.uk

4. Tell everybody else

There's no point going to all that effort unless hundreds of others do as well. Please don't keep it to yourself. Union members need to vote and non-union members who join get chance to vote as well.



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Why we need to campaign for better pay

It's understandable that many would think that a university which is making staff redundant can't afford to pay its staff more, but as trade unionists, we always have to campaign for jobs, pay and proper university funding.

We can't accept the "logic" of either fighting for jobs or pay. With this argument comes the race to the bottom, where we accept declining pay to save jobs or accept job cuts to pay for adequate income.

It is true that the University we work for does not have large cash reserves, but we're part of national pay bargaining and pay is settled by UCEA on behalf of most universities signing up to be part of it.

The only long-term solution for universities retaining jobs and decent pay, is for funding to match what we're demanding - that our pay does not fall further behind the cost of living.



It shouldn't be up to us to campaign for adequate funding for public services, but with a government intent on destroying large parts of the education system, that's what we have to do.

That doesn't mean failing to keep up the pressure for decent pay for university workers.

We all know that food, energy, housing and transport costs rise more and more, but our wages are not keeping up. Industrial action has made UCEA give us a small pay rise due in August, with some of that brought forward to February, but this falls well short of what higher education workers need. This was also a case of spending on higher pay workers when those on lower grades are still struggling.

Please make sure you have your say and vote in the pay ballot.

Ballot papers will be posted to home addresses in June and will look like this:

Please vote and return yours in the post as soon as you can.

