

RIISING TOGETHER FOR BETTER PAY

HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2023/24



University of Brighton

UNISON | Branch Newsletter

November 2023

Welcome to this month's newsletter!

Thanks to everyone who's played a part in the 2023-24 pay campaign. We took strike action on 2nd and 3rd October, and we'll arrange for strike pay to be paid to everyone who's had wage deductions at the end of this month.

As the campaign continues, we're going to re-ballot all members over the Winter, which would allow us to gain a ballot mandate from March until August. We're balloting all higher education branches willing to be part of this, so that our renewed mandate matches all those other branches.

Our current mandate runs out at the end of January 2024. This does allow us to take action if we want to, and we'll be considering a request for strike action in December, allowing us to strike early in the new year, if we think it's worth it.

We won't be striking for the sake of it, but we do need to put pressure on UCEA, the national body negotiating national pay, so that they'll re-open up negotiations over 2023-24 and/or recognise that another early payment of next year's pay settlement would be welcome, as we received last February.



Locally, we've put a list of demands to the University, and started to talk about them. As we expected, the University's financial state means that they are not likely to be willing to give us anything that would cost money, but that all depends on what pressure we can exert on them.

If we have some significant movement on these items, we'd be willing to decide not to strike in January, or later in the year, but our ballot is to give us options that it will be useful for us to have.

So, ballot papers will go out at the end of November, and we'll be doing our best to make sure every University of Brighton employed member returns their ballot paper in the post. You can help by letting us know when you've voted.



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SCAN JOIN to

**VOTE YES
IN THE
RE-BALLOT**

RISING TOGETHER FOR **BETTER PAY** HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2023-24

Ballot papers for our pay re-ballot will be posted to home addresses on 29 November.

As always, it's really important that we hit our 50% turnout threshold, so every vote will count.

Please make sure you return your ballot paper in the post as soon as you can.

If you don't receive it by the middle of December, please let us know and we can arrange to get you a replacement.

We will be contacting as many members as we can to check that you've voted, but you can help by letting us know when you have.

Please remember that non-members can join and have a vote, so let's use this as an opportunity to ask people to join.

Are you in our WhatsApp Community?

Our branch has a group for messages to members. Ideally, we want all members to join it so that we can send out urgent messages when we need to.

If you'd like to join, just email your name and phone number and we'll add you to it.



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SCAN JOIN
to

Higher Education Branch Seminar

Every year, representatives of UNISON higher education branches meet up for a couple of days to discuss issues, learn from each other and network with other activists.

This year's was in Liverpool, and Bobbie McVey and Alan Dilley were our branch delegates...

Myself and Alan Dilley attended the Unison Universities and Colleges seminar as delegates in Liverpool last week; this was the first joint seminar with members from both further and higher education sectors. I attended various workshops in small groups with delegates from across the country, including *'campaigning for a 4-day work-week'* and *'understanding finances in higher education'* which were really well presented and engaging. In-between the workshops we had various speakers presenting plenary talks.

The workshop I found particularly useful, as a health and safety representative, was on *'stress as a workplace hazard'* as I know that high workloads and organisational issues at our workplace are a huge source of stress for our members, and can lead to long-term sickness absences. In this workshop, presented by the Manchester Hazards centre, some horrific statistics on poor mental health and suicides related to work-place stress were presented which were honestly shocking. It was also made clear to me that assessing stress and taking steps to minimise the risk of stress is a responsibility of the employer, while they will often put the onus on the stressed individual to just be less stressed – do some yoga(!) Once this workshop had concluded, myself, Ivan and Alan had a discussion and made plans to assess stress in a local area of the university that none of us work in by arranging a time to visit and talk to members in that area.

I would like to feed back that the language used in some of the plenary talks wasn't fully explained, for example, we had a talk on *'wholly-owned subsidiaries'* – words I'd never heard in my life! While this is an incredibly important issue in universities, the talk went right over my head as the speaker didn't explain what this meant in lay-person's terms. If Unison want better attendance to events by new and younger members, the accessibility of information needs to be considered, by simply explaining what the speaker means the first time a concept is brought up and expanding acronyms the first time they're used.

Overall, I had a great time at the event - the range of topics for workshops and talks was broad enough that there was something for everyone! It was great to meet members from other institutions and it was a pleasure to spend some time with Alan and Ivan.



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HE Seminar held in Liverpool 8th – 9th November 2023

From the Branch: Bobby Mcvey, myself and Ivan Bonsell (organiser and MC for the event).

Day 1

Our very own branch secretary, Ivan opened proceedings and welcomed us all to the Seminar in his role as deputy chair of the Service Group Executive for Higher Education. After several introductory speeches I attended the first workshop of the day in which we discussed the pros and cons of the various pension schemes that are available to staff. After lunch, Ivan and Ruth Smith ran the workshop on campaigning and 'getting the vote out'. We decided that 'wording' was the key here and to make it clear to members what it is that we are asking from them when casting their vote. The word strike ought to be prominent and the headline in any literature we hand out – let's not try to disguise this fact!

In the evening we paid tribute to a much loved and sorely missed colleague and vehement activist, Linda Holden who had passed recently. This was followed by an enjoyable albeit rather late lunch and then a general knowledge quiz in which our team that included Bobby and Ivan came an honourable joint third!

Day 2

The first workshop of the day was Stress in the Workplace; this is quite pertinent for our Branch as for some time now we have been urging



Management to take this matter seriously and duly carry out a proper stress survey of all staff at our university. Armed with lots of new material we intend to keep pushing for this to happen.

In the afternoon, at our final workshop Ivan was once again to the fore by giving a presentation on HE institutional finances using Brighton University as an example. Although not the worst off (we lie somewhere in the middle) but obviously struggling to make ends meet. It appears that recruitment and thus student fees are one of the main contributing factors along with 'shrinkage' that will decide the fate and long-term prospect for our university. After this rather gloomy note the Seminar concluded.

Special thanks to Bobby and Ivan for looking after me on those occasions when I got the 'olds'.

Best wishes,

Alan Dilley, H & S officer.



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