

RIISING TOGETHER FOR BETTER PAY

HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2023/24



University of Brighton

UNISON | Branch Newsletter

April 2024

Welcome to this month's newsletter!

How much of a financial mess is the University really in?

As we all know, the failure of the government to increase the £9,250 tuition fee in line with inflation means that real-terms University income is bound to fall at an institution such as ours. Home/EU tuition fees make up about half of the total income and when inflation is significant, a failure to maintain the value attached to each student means a drop in income that UEB will seek to recover elsewhere.

Income for the 2022-23 financial year actually went up, but with inflation around 10%, it needed to. In cash terms, the increase was 4.7% - around half of what it needed to be.

Universities can only fix this by massively increasing student recruitment, or raising international fees to astronomical levels. Some Russell Group universities have tried to do this, with some success, but their reliance on international recruitment is precarious, especially if the current or future government tries to clamp down further on foreign students contributing to the UK economy, for their own shortsighted ideological reasons.

The reality is that if and when student recruitment falls, we're in financial trouble. We're in trouble anyway, but a dip in student numbers just makes it worse, for the three years that those reduced student numbers roll through the system.

A recent meeting with the Director of Finance reinforced this. There is no cash to come from the sale of Eastbourne campus that hasn't already been spent or allocated to changes required at Falmer. The closure of the campus is essentially cost-neutral, except that the University can make further savings on staff costs and maintenance of buildings which would have required significant investment.

The problem is that the savings come after the initial problem, so the savings perpetually required are a reaction to financial problems already in existence. Without a major turnaround in student recruitment, ideally onto lower cost courses with students paying higher fees i.e. international and postgraduate, then the current state of "savings required" is not likely to go away.



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SCAN JOIN to

2024-25 Pay Negotiations

Given the state of University finances, it would seem strange to demand better pay, but that's what unions are for and we can't limit our demand that our members maintain their living standards just because the government (current or future) won't fund higher education properly.

UNISON has agreed a joint pay claim with the other trade unions (UCU, Unite, GMB and EIS) which has been submitted to UCEA, the employers' organisation. This demands a pay rise of at least **RPI+2% or £2,500, whichever is greater**. With RPI currently 4.3%, this would mean a pay rise higher than 6.3% for everyone up to the bottom of grade 7. We're also demanding, among other things:

A minimum wage of £15/hour, a reduction in the use of casual contracts, a look at excessive workload, an end to gender/ethnicity/disabled pay-gaps and a 35 hour week.

The second negotiating meeting takes place on 22 April, with the final one a week later. We're expecting UCEA to make an offer which we can then negotiate over, but realistically, the offer is likely to be terrible and it's therefore probable that members will be balloted over the 2024-25 pay rise later this year.



Southampton Solent University branch - still campaigning for better pay

We're still talking about changes to avert strike action over 2023-24, but we've been clear that we want the University to make some significant and meaningful changes which would benefit our members for us to be willing to call off strike action whilst we still have a mandate, until mid-August.

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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