

RIISING TOGETHER FOR **BETTER PAY**

HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2023/24



University of Brighton
UNISON | Branch Newsletter

July 2024

Welcome to this month's newsletter!

We have a new Labour government, but what that means in terms of workers' rights and the future of the higher education sector remains to be seen.

For many years, UNISON has argued that higher education needs to be properly publicly funded. That means an end to tuition fees and a proper system that allows all potential students to attend, on the basis that higher education should be no different from education provided for 5-18 year olds.

The introduction of tuition fees, and the conversion of maintenance grants into loans, now leaves students in massive amounts of debt, and universities are dependent on an inflationary increase to the value of fees to maintain income. For political reasons, since no government has wanted to push fees for undergraduates above the £10,000 level, fee inflation has not happened. Many universities are making cuts and redundancies to stand still and we're all now waiting to hear how the new government proposes to solve this problem.

Unfortunately, there's little suggestion that it's a top priority until a university goes bankrupt. Could that happen here? Well possibly, although the signs are that the accounting deficit for the year about to end will be not quite a big as previous years, where a £10 million loss has been standard for a while. Breaking even would be a major achievement.

Measures taken to reduce the deficit take a while to be fully realised. The recent round of voluntary severance for example, will not reduce staff costs in the 2023-24 year, but will maybe be noticed at the end of July 2025, although the significant issue is that of cashflow i.e. not running out of money in between Student Loan Company payments, which are not spread evenly during the year.

The new Vice-Chancellor will inherit a precarious situation where student recruitment through clearing is desperately required across the whole sector. Brighton is in competition with other universities, and struggles against those who have the luxury of cheaper accommodation and a cheaper cost of living all round, because they're not in the South East of England.

We've already seen a significant reduction to the size of the University with closures of campuses catching up with a reduction in student numbers and the contraction of the University into the remaining Brighton sites.



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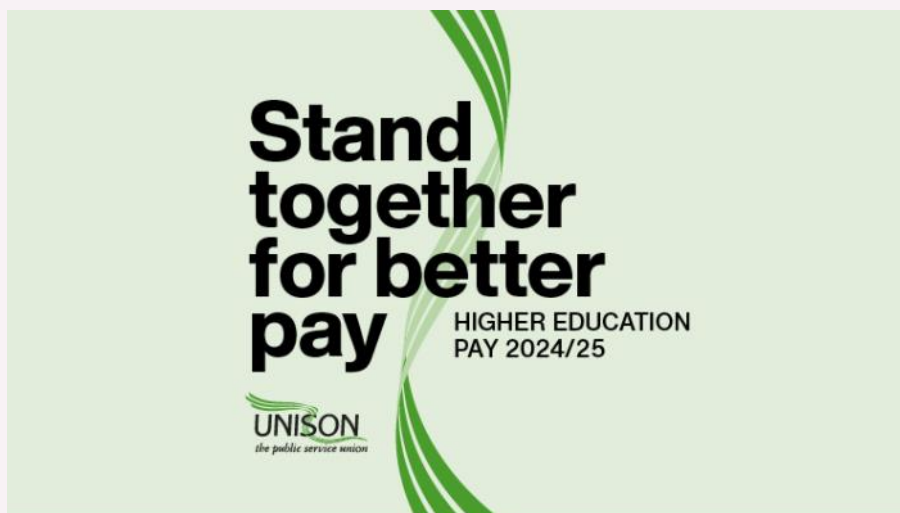
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There's the suggestion that the government will raise fees, from September 2025, by a bit, but not enough to breach the £10,000 value, and therefore not enough to make much of a difference to those universities struggling the most.

We'll be arguing that UNISON needs to use any influence with Labour MPs, especially the Deputy Prime Minister and others who are and have been members and activists of UNISON, to pressurise them for a resolution that secures jobs and prevents the catastrophe of university bankruptcy.

Ultimately, we want free education, but for the time being, we'd be content with public money as grants to fund universities, rather than increasing student debt. Many of us are looking to lobby the government over university funding and we'll let you know what plans we have over the next few months.

In the meantime, we can't accept cuts to pay. Members will be consulted on the final pay offer, made by UCEA, and there are due to be dispute meetings with UCEA in August which we will use to explain our objections to those at the lower grades still living on wages which are a struggle to survive on.



In percentage terms, even with the staggered increases (£900 in August and the rest in March), the pay award is not terrible, compared to the current rate of inflation. What it doesn't do, is make up for years of real terms pay cuts in the recent past, which is why the national leadership are recommending that members reject it.

Our pay consultation starts in August and we'll be making some national decisions informed by that outcome in the first week of September.

Please make sure you have your say and complete the pay consultation.

Members should receive an email in early August.



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