

University of Bristol UCU General Meeting

Wednesday, 16 March 2022, 14:00-15:00, on Teams

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YTU2MmE5NGMtNTI0ZS00YjY3LWIwZjEtYTc0NDVkMWJmODY0%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22b2e47f30-cd7d-4a4e-a5da-b18cf1a4151b%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22f0fcbaa9-697b-4e7d-ab4e-df011d4063a0%22%7d

All papers available from:

<https://ucubristol.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/files/2022/03/allpapers-16march2022.pdf>

Agenda

1. Minutes of the Emergency General Meeting, 1 March 2022
2. Update on 4 Fights / USS disputes and GTVO campaign
3. Motions – voting to start no later than 14:40pm
 - a) UCU HE Members To Decide Future HE Strike Action
 - b) UCU HEC invitation to UUK to ACAS collective conciliation
 - c) UCU HEC invitation to UCEA to ACAS collective conciliation and local negotiations
4. Delegates for SHESCs
5. AOB

Minutes of Bristol UCU Emergency General Meeting, 1 March 2022, 13.00-14.00

MS Teams - 148 members attended -questions put in chat will be monitored and answered.

Jamie Melrose, Branch President

We don't know the outcome of HEC's meeting on Friday regarding future strike action. This is why we could not circulate documentation before today's meeting.

Our existing strike mandate ends at the end of April.

Key issues for discussion following branch Executive meeting and other discussions:

- University of Bristol senior management two weeks ago decided to back the employers' proposal and not support UCU's counterproposal. UCU's counterproposal is affordable. We have been challenging the supposedly prohibitive costs of the counterproposal. Our estimates show the cost at half that claimed amount.
- USS accepted the employers' proposals yesterday.
- Four Fights: Total inaction by employers has been the answer to our demands about improving fairness and reducing precarity.
- Tomorrow is our final day of strike action which will coincide with students' day of action. Rally and march which will stop outside Wills Memorial Building to support students occupying the building. The students are supporting UCU and making demands in support of Bristol UCU.
- HEC has issued some decisions on the dates of future HEC special conferences, USS HESC 27 April. There will be a Four FIHTs HESC 20 April.
- UCU's legal challenge has had initial success by clearing the hurdle to gain a hearing of a potential claim.
- Overturning USS benefit cuts is a key aim.

Possible actions:

- Call a special Senate to address Board of Trustees' Code of Conduct has been breached.
- Support student occupiers.
- Tomorrow's action is during an open day: picketers should discuss University's response with parents and prospective students.
- Branch events to support morale and develop proposals to support better employment practices.

Legal Action, Neil Davis, Pensions Officer

UCU appeared at High Court and were given permission to take legal action forward. This is a procedural step. Next stage is a disputed hearing (w/c 28 March) involving barristers arguing both sides. If we succeeded, the claim would go to trial.

Claim has four aspects:

- claim was flawed in timing and assumptions
- Costs of scheme have been allowed to increase unreasonably
- changes are potentially discriminatory
- USS has no plan to combat climate change

Today the scheme announced .5bn loss due to writing off investments in Russia. This is a good example of a lack of oversight.

What next re USS dispute? What are we able to support in terms of Industrial Action going forward? As a branch we need to decide what we are willing to do.

The upcoming USS HESC offers a chance to submit a motion. We could influence UCU's negotiation that way.

Local options to influence board of trustees and SMT.

University of Bristol's Board of Trustees (about 25 people) appointed by board members, only 2 of whom are academics, governs the University. The UEB is not representative of university staff or students. The principles of the Board include being objective. However, it has become clear that the decision to reject UCU's counterproposal was not based on much information. Board members had little information on equalities implications or impact on individual members, although these matters should be of concern according to Bubo's ordinances.

We could raise a complaint with the Board of Trustees and force an investigation of the Task and Finish Group of the Board of Trustees. It could be valuable to highlight how decisions are actually taken even if this investigation were simple an exercise in exoneration.

We could call for a reform to how Board members are appointed (by other Board members). Most leading universities have some form of elected Board membership (Harvard, Oxford, even UCL.) Not Bristol!

ACTIONS: challenge Board of Trustees, write motions to USS HESC.

Student Occupiers: Madhu Krishnan: 7 students first occupied Great Hall at 7 AM. At 9 PM students were being blocked by security guards who had been told by 'a person' and eventually they gave the students the food. We've heard student occupiers will be evicted this evening. Students are meeting with Judith Squires via MS Teams. Students want UCU Branch Officers present. 7 PM at WMB there is a rally to support student occupiers.

ACTION: BOs support students in meetings.

ACTION: All members come to support student occupiers 19.00 on 1 March.

Neil Davies: We could ask students to add a demand that UEB agree to investigate Pensions Task & Finish group has not met University's code of conduct underpinning ordinances.

Tonia Novitz: We should not give student occupiers specific recommendations. This is their fight. ACTION: We could ask them to demand UEB launch an impact assessment of changes to USS. Withdrawing threat over ASPs and spreading strike deductions seem most important issues.

Catherine Dodds: ASOS is still subject to an incomprehensible written threat and yet Judith Squires has stated that the University has no intention to 'monitor' ASOS. This may mean student complaints will determine if and how UoB enforces the threat to dock pay.

Jamie Melrose: I'm not sure those who issued the threat understand it. University of Bristol has chosen to focus on one aspect of ASOS, the uploading of online materials. But UoB has no desire to consider a failure to reschedule teaching as partial performance subject to pay docking. The threat of partial performance does not mean staff should replace lectures with online material. Taking down asynchronous material not related to lectures might be regarded as partial performance.

Madhu Krishnan: Occupiers don't want anything from Bristol UCU. We have confirmation that SMT told security to block student occupiers' access to food and toilets.

Future of the Dispute

We don't know what will come out of HESC, but it looks like industrial action before Easter will be likely. A marking boycott also seems likely.

Neil Davies: Calling a special Senate worth doing but in the past, it has been challenging to get enough Senators to be willing. ACTION Jamie to lead on getting 20 Senators.

Calling a special Senate could also be helpful in making Senate central to the University's decision-making processes.

Tonia Novitz: The marking boycott is being presented as a cure-all. In 2006 we succeeded in securing a pay increase using a marking boycott. But now we have the difficulty that UCEA are not just asking for 20-30 Percent pay deductions for ASOS, but 100 percent pay deductions for the whole of the marking boycott. The financial impact of losing a month's pay would be huge on some staff. Also, a marking boycott may affect staff on casual contracts and not impact Professional Services members. Members could legitimately be required to do the marking later.

Jamie Melrose: Members will have a chance to be consulted by way of a formal ballot over a marking boycott.

AOB

Students are doing an impromptu rally to support occupiers at WMB. Come if you can! Tomorrow we must support the occupiers and peacefully target open day events.



Bristol UCU Motion – UCU HE Members To Decide Future HE Strike Action

HESC notes

- 'The UCU higher education disputes emergency survey' sent on Friday, 25th February by email.
- UCU's Higher Education Committee (HEC) 'has the power to authorise or endorse sanctions including industrial action, having regard to the decisions of the Sector Committees' as regards HE industrial disputes.
- The *ad hoc*, unsatisfactory nature of Branch Delegates Meetings (BDMs).
- UCU members have expressed dissatisfaction that the first occasion they learn of strike action dates, and the options that HEC has considered, is after decisions have been taken.
- Members and delegates were given an opportunity before the BDM of 12th November 2021 to deliberate on the timing of strike action, its duration, the timing of reballots in the USS and Four Fights disputes.

HESC believes

- Before HEC takes any decision regarding industrial action, such as selecting the duration and timing of strike actions and rebalotting, it must consult with all HE members in branches with a mandate for strike action, ideally by e-survey
- As demonstrated by the 'emergency survey', an e-survey is within UCU's current capabilities.
- Such a consultation of members would better inform HEC members, increase members' participation in the decision-making process and ensure that UCU takes the most representative democratic decision possible

HESC resolves

- To instruct HEC that before any decision on the timing or duration of strike, it must consult with all members in branches with a mandate for strike action in the form of an e-consultation of members
- That any e-consultation of members must ask whether the member is willing to take further action, and what strike action, based on an array of options concerning the timing, duration and nature of strike action provided by HEC, the member wishes to take.

Proposer: Jamie Melrose

Secunder: Tonia Novitz



Bristol UCU Motion – UCU HEC invitation to UUK to ACAS collective conciliation

To be proposed at the UCU HE sector conference on USS

HESC notes

- The ongoing dispute regarding UUK's refusal to engage with reasonable UCU proposals regarding USS pension reform
- The considerable stress and loss of pay experienced by UCU members taking industrial action in the pensions dispute in 2018 and 2022, as well as disruption to our students' education
- That ACAS offers collective conciliation processes that enable parties engaged in industrial disputes to come to an agreement, but does not impose any agreement on those parties.
- The temporary resolution of the pensions dispute by recourse to ACAS conciliation in 2018 which established the Joint Expert Panel for USS, whose recommendations need to be given effective implementation.

HESC believes

- A request should be made to UUK to resolve this USS pensions dispute through ACAS conciliation which, if agreed, would reduce salary costs and stress experienced by members taking industrial action which are becoming considerable.
- Such an offer would force UUK to explain its refusal to implement JEP recommendations or, as is more probable, to agree to do so in order to avoid further industrial action.
- Making that offer to engage in ACAS collective conciliation would not be a sign of weakness but, if refused, would rather be illustrative of the unreasonable conduct of UUK and would lead to greater membership support for the call to take further action.

HESC resolves

- To instruct HEC that a formal request be made to UUK to consent to ACAS collective conciliation as a means to resolving the USS pensions dispute.
- That a reasonable timescale be agreed with UUK for submission to collective conciliation and related processes, after which further industrial action will be taken.
- That a condition of the agreement to engage with ACAS compulsory conciliation that the expiry of the mandate of any current ballot to take further industrial action be extended from 6 to 9 months.

Proposer: Jamie Melrose

Secunder: Tonia Novitz



Bristol UCU Motion – UCU HEC invitation to UCEA to ACAS collective conciliation and local negotiations

To be proposed at the UCU HE sector conference on Four Fights Dispute

HESC notes

- The ongoing dispute regarding UCEA's refusal to engage with reasonable UCU proposals regarding the 'four fights' on pay, workload, equality and casualisation
- The stress and loss of pay experienced by UCU members taking industrial action in relation to the four fights dispute in 2019 – 2020 and 2022, as well as disruption to our students' education
- The cost of living crisis which makes it increasingly difficult for members to take action in support of the 'four fights' despite their importance
- That ACAS offers collective conciliation processes that enable parties engaged in industrial disputes over pay to come to an agreement, but does not impose any agreement on those parties.
- Giving incentives to universities to engage in collective negotiation with UCU branches on workload, equality and casualisation would enable change in the working conditions of UCU members and could build towards acceptance of national negotiation with UCEA on these issues.

HESC believes

- An request should be issued to UCEA to address the urgent cost of living pay dispute through ACAS conciliation which, if accepted, could lead to an agreement that would reduce stress and salary costs to UCU members caused by industrial action and alleviate effects on our students.
- Making that offer would not be a sign of weakness but would rather be illustrative of the unreasonable conduct of UCEA if it were refused and would mean that the call to take further action would receive wider membership support.

UCEA's complete refusal to engage at all on three of the four fights could be addressed by local negotiations and those universities who were prepared to bargain on these key issues would not be the immediate target of strikes.

HESC resolves

- To instruct HEC that a formal request be made to UCEA to consent to ACAS collective conciliation on pay as a means to resolve the first of the four fights disputes.
- That a reasonable timescale be agreed with UCEA for submission to collective conciliation regarding pay, after which further industrial action will be taken.
- That a condition of the agreement to engage with ACAS compulsory conciliation be that the expiry of the mandate of any current ballot to take further industrial action be extended from 6 to 9 months.
- That UCU branches be encouraged and assisted in local negotiations on workloads, equality and casualisation, with their success being assessed in 9 months time, after which industrial action could be contemplated on specific outstanding issues arising.

Proposer: Jamie Melrose

Seconder: Tonia Novitz