



Support Fair Pay in HE

Earlier this year the organisation representing university employers, the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), made a pay offer to the staff unions– UCU, Unison and Unite. The pay offer of 1% represented a real terms pay cut. Moreover, this is a real terms pay cut that follows several years of real terms pay cuts. Indeed, since 2008 the real value of academics' pay has fallen by 13% - described by respected economics commentator Will Hutton as 'one of the largest sustained wage cuts any profession has suffered since the Second World War.' (*The Observer*, 13/10/13)

Why we are taking industrial action

At the same time as pay has been cut the demands on staff across the HE sector have increased. Workloads have intensified, whilst it is apparent that a culture of casualisation, exemplified by the use of zero hours contracts, is becoming increasingly commonplace.

Increased pressure on employees, coupled with cuts in real pay contrast with the average remuneration paid to many vice-chancellors whose salaries increased from between 4% and 21% in 2011/12 and the number of staff earning over £100,000 rapidly rising. See for more info: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/422329.article>

It is against this background that a majority of members of UCU, Unison and Unite voted to reject the pay cut, and to take industrial action in pursuit of a pay claim that begins to reverse the erosion of our pay over the last 5 years.

This unity of the three HE unions is unprecedented, and reflects the strength of feeling amongst university employees. That is why members of UCU at the University of Nottingham took strike action on 31st October, and since that time UCU members have been working to contract.

We had hoped that this action would ensure that UCEA returned to negotiations with a serious commitment to address the unions' concerns. Talks took place on 21st November but UCEA made no renewed offer. Given the employers' unwillingness to engage in meaningful negotiations UCU members have been left with no option but to continue our action short of strike action, and to call a further national strike.

Our argument is simple . . .

- The success of Britain's universities is the result of the efforts of the people who work in them.
- University employees' hard work and dedication deserves a fair pay award – not (yet another) pay cut.
- Britain's universities can afford to pay – current levels of reserves across the sector (over £1billion) make a fair pay award affordable.

We are determined to win a fair pay award and to turn the tide on years of real terms pay cuts. You can help by showing the strength of feeling on this issue.

- Support the work to contract.
- Support the strike action on **3rd December**.

Join UCU members on picket lines on strike day.

Please note that we are only legally obliged to tell the University if we are on strike, AFTER the event. Don't be intimidated by emails requesting the information beforehand. One email to HR will be sufficient, however, it is a member's choice as to whether they inform their heads of departments, when requested, after the event.

Short of Strike Action – advice for members

UCU members are currently engaged in a campaign of ‘action short of strike action’ in support of our campaign for fair pay. Supporting this action short of strike action is a vital component of the union’s strategy and all members are urged to read the following advice:

The national UCU website contains a helpful webpage with legal and contractual advice on a wide range of issues related to the now on-going working to contract action. (<http://www.ucu.org.uk/workingtocontract>)

Further to this webpage we have received a number of requests from members locally to collect together a list of the kinds of activities which members across the University feel may give opportunities to follow the advice to members. These included working to contract and helping to reclaim a better work/life balance.

The UCU website provides a list of things members should strive to do:

"(i) to work no more than their contracted hours where those hours are expressly stated, or where they are stipulated in a workload agreement and in any event not to exceed the maximum number of hours per week stipulated in the Working Time Regulations (48 hours a week)

(ii) to perform no additional voluntary duties, such as out of hours cover, or covering for colleagues (unless such cover is contractually required)

(iii) to set and mark no work beyond that work which they are contractually obliged to set and/or mark

(iv) to attend no meetings where such attendance is voluntary on the part of the members

(v) to undertake no duties that breach health and safety

Some of it sounds simple and basic but we know from experience that Universities run on significant amounts on unpaid labour and goodwill. This is what we are withdrawing in this action."

In addition to the above the following provides a number of activities which we suggest you could think about and which may not be part of your contractual activities. [Please note that for some people these duties may be a contractual requirement - it is certainly difficult to cover everyone with the following list]:

- TRAC workload reporting (<http://tinyurl.com/tracfaq>)
- Helping with open days and visit days
- Covering for absent colleagues
- Not being pressured into unreasonable marking deadlines
- Optional departmental meetings
- Volunteering for University organized community events

If in doubt, or you would like further advice, please contact the office on ucu@nottingham.ac.uk



Interested in joining UCU or know someone who is? For more information visit www.nottingham.ac.uk/ucu or email ucu@nottingham.ac.uk