

Annual Report June 2012

President's Report – Mick Ashman

The ongoing financial crisis and changes in the funding arrangements for higher education continue to have an impact on the HE sector with applications in England down by 10%. There is still massive uncertainty as to how the fees increase will effect the sector and over what time scale.

Despite the uncertainty it is important to reflect on our successes and achievements over the last year.

We have spent the last year working with HR to develop a policy for introducing change, managing restructuring and dealing with potential redundancies across the University. We believe that this will give us a framework that will offer greater protection for members should the consequences of the new fee and funding arrangements impact on the university.

As in previous years we continue to work to improve the terms and conditions of atypical workers (hourly paid staff). We have had success but it remains a slow process. Kaye Carl has continued to lead the efforts on behalf of our Committee working tirelessly against an unhelpful employer.

We have continued to place great importance on Health and Safety at work, recognising that this also includes the welfare of our members; this includes the fair and equitable management of workloads across all departments. Once again we have ensured that the issue of wellbeing at work remains at the forefront of our campaigning agenda and we will be working hard to ensure that the results from the recent staff survey are used to tackle poor practice in the University.

One area of concern amongst our members is the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) and we have met with HR to ensure that the University's Code of Practice includes specific detail on equality issues, transparency of appeals and internal assessment. We have also received assurances from HR that non-inclusion within REF would not be detrimental to the career prospects of an employee at the University.

As always personal casework support for individual members continues. This work can often take up a considerable amount of committee members' time but for obvious reasons is one of the least visible aspects of the committee's workload.

So whilst these remain challenging times we have responded well. I believe that as a Committee we are a strong and effective team that continues to develop its expertise and capability. Earlier this year we were joined by Jane Roger our new Branch Administrator, Jane has been involved with the trade union movement since 2005 and has experience dealing with representation, departmental restructures, collective bargaining, and organising around campaigns.

Looking to the future the defence of the higher education sector and our pension arrangements will remain an absolute priority. At our recent Annual Conference delegates noted the continued intransigence of the employers' negotiators and voted to resume action short of a strike. The employers were written to by Michael MacNeil (UCU National Head of Higher Education) who informed them that industrial action will resume on Monday 18th June.

Locally one issue that is giving us real cause for concern is the University's proposed use of 'Special Purpose Vehicles' (SPVs) to deliver services. SPVs are created to fulfill narrow, specific or temporary objectives and typically used by companies to isolate them from financial risk. However UCU is aware that they can also be used to conceal debt, hide ownership, and obscure relationships between different entities which are in fact part of the same business. This quasi privatisation allows terms and conditions of employees to be undermined (e.g. no guarantee of union recognition agreements, lower rates of pay) and I believe this initiative will pose a significant challenge over the coming year as the university "experiments" with this new approach to managing the workforce with the intention of reducing costs.

Treasurer's Report – Daragh O'Reilly

A new set of subscriptions has been voted through by Congress for 2012/13, and details follow. Around 10% of members have their subscriptions deducted from their salary. As this increases the costs to the branch, we will shortly be writing to those members inviting them to switch to direct debit.

National Subscriptions

A table showing the **national** subscription rates taking effect on 1 September 2012 is below. These include an increase of 6% voted through by Congress.

It is important to note that the levels of subscriptions are related to the income bands and that members **must** notify UCU if they move into a higher band. Services and benefits – including legal aid and advice – can only be provided to those paying the correct subscription. In particular, please note that members at the top of the university grade 8 scale (pre-92 lecturers/post-92 senior lecturers) now earn over £40,000 pa and should be paying at the highest rate. Members are reminded to update their subscription level online using our Member eServices facility <http://members.ucu.org.uk/>.

The rates for joint members or members employed by the Medical Research Council (MRC) are given, as are those applying to retired and attached members.

HQ will send, to all members paying by direct debit, notification of their individual deduction at the new rates in advance of the deduction falling due on 28 September 2012.

UCU SUBSCRIPTION RATES 2012/13

The tables below set out the national subscription rates which will apply to UCU members from 1 September 2012.

TABLE 1 – FULL MEMBERS

The rates in brackets exclude the political fund element (1% of the national subscription).

FULL MEMBERS – NATIONAL MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES			
EFFECTIVE 1 SEPTEMBER 2012 TO 31 AUGUST 2013			
ANNUAL EARNINGS	STANDARD RATES	JOINT MEMBERSHIP RATES, APPLICABLE TO JOINT BDA, BOS, CSP, RCM, RCN, SCP, SOR & UNITE (CPHVA & MHNA) MEMBERS	RATES APPLICABLE TO MEMBERS EMPLOYED BY THE MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (MRC)
£40,000 & above (F1)	£19.07 (£18.88)	£14.31 (£14.16)	£19.42 (£19.23)
£30,000 - £39,999 (F2)	£17.34 (£17.17)	£13.01 (£12.88)	£17.69 (£17.52)
£20,000 - £29,999 (F3)	£16.36 (£16.20)	£12.27 (£12.15)	£16.71 (£16.55)
£10,000 - £19,999 (F4)	£9.97 (£9.87)	£7.48 (£7.41)	£10.32 (£10.22)
£5,000 - £9,999 (F5)	£4.52 (£4.47)	£3.39 (£3.36)	£4.87 (£4.82)
Below £5,000 (F6)	£2.58 (£2.55)	£1.94 (£1.92)	£2.93 (£2.91)

TABLE 2 – RATES FOR RETIRED MEMBERS

The rates in brackets exclude the political fund element (1% of the national subscription)

£2.58 (£2.55) per month

TABLE 3 – RATES FOR ATTACHED MEMBERS

The rates in brackets exclude the political fund element (1% of the national subscription)

ATTACHED MEMBERSHIP	
	National monthly subscription rates 2012/13
Paying attached members	£2.58 (£2.55) per month
Attached unemployed seeking employment (for one year from date of becoming an attached member)	Nil

Local Subscriptions

In accordance with the motion on local subscriptions from the Treasurer approved by branch General Meeting on 8th February 2010, local subs are to increase in line with the percentage increase on national subs, i.e. 6% for 2012/13. This takes the local sub figure for 2012/13 to £2.00 x 1.06 = £2.12.

Financial Accounts

The accounts for the year ended 31 August 2011 are below. These were prepared by the branch accounting service and have been signed off by head office.

SUCU Accounts Y/E 31.8.11

	UCU <u>Y/e 31.8.11.</u>	UCU <u>Y/e 31.8.10.</u>
<u>INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT.</u>		
<u>Income</u>		
Subscription income.	46,488.86	39,359.10
Bank interest received, gross.	0.00	0.00
Total income.	46,488.86	39,359.10
<u>Expenditure.</u>		
Subscriptions payable to Head Office.	28,120.73	29,494.98
	18,368.13	9,864.12
<u>Administrative expenses.</u>		
Clerical assistance.	19,013.47	14,393.93
Auditors'/Accountancy fees.	900.00	0.00
Staty, print'g, post & telephone.	2,792.24	1,677.32
Conferences & meetings, net of reimbursements.	4,089.17	2,833.17

Subscription collection charges. net of reimbursements.	64.87		508.80	
Bank charges.	0.00		0.00	
Depreciation	800.56		1,054.52	
Corporation tax.	0.00		0.00	
Income tax suffered.	0.00		0.00	
Other outgoings.	1,665.70		950.39	
Total administrative expenses.	29,326.01		21,418.13	
Surplus / (deficit) for the year.	10,957.88		11,554.01	

SUCU Accounts Y/E 31.8.11

BALANCE SHEET.

Fixed assets.	1,376.83		1,199.98	
Bank current accounts.	29,108.29		37,416.94	
Subscriptions receivable:				
Employer.	2,556.43		2,470.04	
Direct debits.	0.00		534.10	
Other.	0.00		42.00	
Sundry debtors.	0.00		0.00	
Grants receivable from UCU HQ.				
Travel.	547.26		547.26	
Collection charges.	230.08		294.95	
Other.	0.00		0.00	
	33,818.89		42,505.27	

Accumulated Fund.

Brought forward.	43,201.77		54,755.78	
Surplus / (deficit) for the year.	10,957.88	32,243.89	11,554.01	43,201.77

Liabilities.

Subscriptions due to UCU HQ.	0.00	720.48
Creditors & accrued expenses.	1,575.00	23.98
Taxation.	0.00	0.00
Subscriptions received in advance.	0.00	0.00
Other.	0.00	0.00
	33,818.89	42,505.27

Health & Safety Report – Gill Brown

In the year since I took on the role of Health & Safety Officer there has been a lot of activity. This is an attempt to pull it together.

UCU committee established two priorities for Health and Safety:

- To raise awareness with members
- To consolidate and develop better relationships with our employers.

We have done this by producing a Health & Safety issue of the SUCU bulletin in the Autumn that focused on awareness raising on harassment and bullying. This was circulated to all members and a number of printed copies have been used as promotional/recruitment material during the year. We had some excellent feedback from members. We are looking to do another H&S bulletin for the start of the new year around H&S issues for new staff and especially for postgraduate students who will be teaching.

One of the really good things about taking on a role like this is that UCU provide excellent training and support. I am three quarters of the way through a 4 x 2 days Health and Safety course. I have learned a lot from this and look forward to using the knowledge and skills from this to further promote awareness on all health and safety issues in the future

Without doubt the main issue raised with us by members is increasing workloads and the consequent anxiety and stress this causes. The recent Staff Survey undertaken by our employers asked a number of questions about this and we are looking forward to working with the university on the results from this survey.

The University has appointed a new Director of Health and Safety who will take up post in June and we are looking forward to working with him and the Safety Services team.

Equality and Diversity Officer – Jane Simm

I can report that the last year has been a busy one on this important topic which relates to all aspects of our work, and is not a single issue.

As part of representing all campus unions on the **University Equality/Diversity Board**, a series of events have taken place: The Board implemented a review of equality objectives and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Project was launched at a workshop in December 2011. We considered the data gathered on this topic, listened to provocations from external speakers and senior managers and heard personal stories from staff and students. Some of the most moving experiences are re-visited during the project and serve as a reminder that this project must be seen as more than a tick box exercise. I have taken part in training sessions on running Equality Focus groups and volunteered to get involved in the Policy Focus Group. The other focus groups, which some of our members may have contributed to are Recruitment and Civic, to which I have also tried to feed in comments and information representing the views of our members and sister unions.

More recently I gave a report back to the HR Committee on where we are at with this on -going project, and emphasised much more needs to be done in areas such as disability and the issue of reasonable adjustments to support our members. The Board and project also serves to reinforce our networks with academic staff, professional services – including Human Resources, the Students Union, and senior managers within the University. It also provides ample opportunity to remind senior management that all grades of staff should be taken into account and treated with dignity and respect.

During the last year I have continued to have a watching brief over matters relating to equality/diversity issues and to try and update/share information with committee members. This is an issue which involves all our committee and union members and requests for contributions are welcomed and encouraged please. The recent UCU Congress

which I attended gave us an update on new initiatives and campaigns. One worthy of note is the pilot scheme in the North West – Women and UCU which we will monitor. The new UCU publication on Disclosing Disability will be a useful support to our members.

Equality/diversity aspects of our work are regular features at our branch meetings where we try and review casework implications that should be taken forward to meetings with other campus unions and Human Resources. Key themes remain especially around disability discrimination, and bullying and harassment, and we intend to continue to campaign on behalf of our members. Casework is monitored to take into account equality issues and see where we can implement changes. The advice and guidance from our Regional support officer Marianne Quick has been invaluable in terms of campaigns, and the implications for personal casework for our members.

Finally, in addition to supporting colleagues on the various committees, task groups and working groups we are involved with on your behalf, I have also contributed to other university working groups such as the Teaching Policy group and the Health and Wellbeing task group along with Gillian Brown. For the next year I will continue to do my best to support our membership in this crucial aspect of our work.

Atypical Workers Report – Gill Brown

Over the past few years (since 2008 in fact) UCU has been discussing and negotiating, (together with our campus union colleagues), with our employers on the regularisation of atypical workers (that is reviewing work undertaken by all those paid on an hourly basis to establish whether they have an employment relationship and so should be offered a contract of employment).

Over the past few years there have been quite a few difficult moments and indeed we felt compelled to resort to instituting a collective dispute in December 2010 in order to find a way through a number of particularly thorny problems.

Towards the end of 2011 we were able to conclude this work should come to an end and to look forward to future work to ensure the good practice that has been established continues. We will be producing information at the beginning of the new academic year to highlight this.

By far the largest group of hourly paid workers are those who undertake seminar leading and demonstrating. The majority of whom are postgraduate students who teach. Our employers have at long last begun a project to find a way to identify these workers as a separate group and we look forward to future discussion with them on how to take this forward.

We have had a number of successes by taking on personal casework for hourly paid members and establishing they do have an employment relationship with the University.

It is important to remember that although hourly paid workers:

- have no security of employment,
- no pension scheme,
- no progression through a pay scale,
- workload allocation that, in a number of departments and faculties bears little resemblance to colleagues on contracts of employment,
- fewer holidays,
- entitlement only to statutory sick pay

They are an incredible motivated and engaged group of people doing a fantastic job. We think it is shameful our employers have taken this long to recognise the tremendous contribution this group make to the learning experience of our students.

There is loads of information on the SUCU website and we ask all members to encourage colleagues who are hourly paid to look at this information, join UCU and benefit from the help and advice we can offer.

Membership Report – Daragh O'Reilly

The UCU central membership database has been established for some time now at head office. Members are now able to join, leave, or change their details online. This has simplified the work of the branch to some extent. The branch and head office still need to be in regular communication about changes to the membership, and handle queries relating to e.g. joint union membership, membership status, or membership accounts. The branch also follows up all eligible new starters (notified regularly by HR) with an invitation to join, as well as, for example, setting up a stall at University Welcome Events.

Overall, the number of members at the end of May 2012 is up compared to the same time the previous year, with quite a few new members joining because of the industrial action. The average penetration rate (UCU members as a percentage of eligible staff) remains roughly the same.

Daragh O'Reilly finishes his term as Hon. Membership Secretary at this AGM.

Pensions Report – Pablo Stern

It has been an eventful year on the pensions front, nationally and locally, and I will attempt here to summarise events and where we now stand.

There are three pension schemes relevant to us: The key one is USS (which we are nearly all members of) but there is also TPS (for academic staff in post-92 Universities, FE and schools), and USPS (for University of Sheffield staff up to grade 5).

Context

The broader context is of course an international financial crisis. This is being used in this country and many others as an excuse for a permanent shift in wealth from the less well off to the wealthy. There has already been a significant increase in inequality as a result.

Pensions are a form of deferred pay, and cutting pensions and increasing their cost to the employees are central planks of the British government's strategy, in our case imposed indirectly via our employers. The impact of reduced pensions will take many years to be felt fully, yet Britain already has relatively low pension levels with resulting high rates of pensioner poverty and mortality – official figures show this is linked to 20-30,000 additional deaths from cold and malnutrition each winter.

On the plus side there has been strong resistance to this assault from trades unions, with unprecedented repeated votes for industrial action across the public sector – including even the doctors now. The enthusiasm of the union leaderships has not always matched that of the members but nevertheless there have been major concessions won and none of the three schemes relevant to us are as bad as they would have been without our resistance.

USS

Some Background

- USS was not in financial difficulties. Rather the aim of the changes is to create a big surplus which can be used to reduce the employers' contributions – they want it down from 16% to 10% of salary costs.
- In summer 2012 the joint negotiators agreed a solution, but the employers then rejected their own negotiators' recommendation. The dispute is entirely of the employers making.
- UCU members' strong support and industrial action forced some concessions from the employers, but the proposals are still grossly unfair.
- It is likely that the employers will try to force current members onto the second tier scheme down the line.

The Changes in October 2011

Our employers forced through the changes to USS without agreement from the Unions on 1st October 2011. This was despite overwhelming opposition from USS members as shown in both of the consultations (USS's own and UCU's). Some key changes are:

- A second rate CARE (career average) scheme for new members.
- An inflation cap which applies to all our pensions, as well as deferred pensions and CARE revaluation. This would sharply reduce our pensions if there were a few years of high inflation.
- Higher 'Normal Retirement Age'.
- Higher contributions.
- Removal of the previous redundancy protection.

The Dispute

We were balloted by UCU over July/August 2011 and voted 58% for strike action and 77% for Action Short of a Strike (ASOS). There was then a national delegate meeting in September to decide on strategy for the new academic year. There was strong support for strike action at the start of term (when the new conditions were to be imposed) followed by low-level action short of a strike in the Autumn term building to stronger action in 2012.

In the event there was no strike at the start of term, but there was a 'work to contract' and 'work to rule', neither of which were strictly industrial action, but both of which highlighted the extent of excessive workloads in this university and nationally. UCU decided to suspend the action from January but we should still not be expected to routinely work over 35 hours a week full time.

We have discussed the dispute regularly with our Students Union and I am pleased to say that they have been very supportive.

There was a national strike over pensions on 30th November across the public sector, with strong support nationally and in our institution.

UCU had another national delegate meeting in January to decide on our future strategy, with the alternatives being essentially either escalation or suspending action. We held a branch meeting before the national meeting to discuss the issues and options and guide our delegates. Our meeting was in favour of escalation, but unfortunately this was not the result of the national meeting. UCU is now negotiating on the basis of at least parity with TPS (when it is settled) for our CARE scheme – though the TPS dispute shows no sign of ending any time soon.

The Future

The suspension of the action by UCU nationally was conditional on a complete rejection of inflation caps and on agreement on the core issues by the time of Congress (8-10 June). There has unfortunately been no significant move from the employers in response and Congress will be discussing how to take the dispute forward.

TPS

The Teachers Pension Scheme applies to post-92 institutions (such as Sheffield Hallam) and to all FE colleges, as well as to school teachers of course. There has been industrial action across the education sector over the drastic changes to TPS – which reduce the pension, increase the age it can be claimed and increase the contributions – including strikes on 30th June 2011, 30th November 2011, and with PCS and others on 10th May 2012.

Nationally UCU's current USS strategy is to hang on the coattails of the TPS dispute, so it is very much in our own direct interests here for us to give what support we can to Hallam and Sheffield College, as well as wanting to show solidarity with our colleagues.

USPS

The new USPS scheme was forced through in December 2011, and imposes a drastic reduction in future pension accrual for all University of Sheffield staff in grades 1-5. Their future University pensions will be roughly halved for the same contribution, and there are many other negatives to the new scheme. It would have been even worse without the opposition and industrial action taken by our colleagues in Unite and Unison, with the strong support of SUCU of course. The new scheme creates a two-tier workforce, and this University has taken a national lead in slashing pensions for the poorest staff. University staff in grades 1-5 now have by far the worst pensions in education and the public sector in Sheffield, and this from the wealthiest educational institution.

It is worth reiterating that this was entirely unnecessary. The University could enrol all these staff in USS or the (cheaper) SAUL scheme at little or no extra cost. The University used 'risk' as the excuse, pointing to their own poor management of the old USPS scheme, yet the cost and risk from enrolling these staff in USS would be only a fifth of the cost and risk the University already accepts for the better paid staff.

This unnecessary attack by the University on its worst paid staff will stand as a blot on its history.

Conversely UCU members can be proud of standing alongside our lower paid colleagues throughout this episode, and our support and solidarity has been much appreciated.

Finally...

It has not always been easy to be Pensions Officer in this difficult period, but it has been a pleasure to work with such supportive colleagues both in the Committee and across the branch. We have had good and constructive discussions at branch meetings, and these have been invaluable in guiding myself and the other branch officers. Thank you for your support.