

Annual General Meeting Minutes, Tuesday 8th June 2021, 1-2.00

Via zoom

Chair: Sarah Staniland, SUCU President

Minutes: SUCU Branch Administrator

1. Welcome and previous minutes
 - 1.1. Sarah welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes of the last [AGM held 4th June 2020](#), and of the [General Meeting held 29th April 2021](#) were agreed as an accurate record.
2. Local subscription for 2021/22: to set out the local subscription rates taking effect from 1 September 2021
 - 2.1. Treasurer Pablo Stern presented the new UCU sub rates starting September 2021. These are detailed in the [SUCU Annual Report](#). The changes in rates and bands are part of a five year programme for a more proportional system.
 - 2.2. Pablo also reported that the Branch finances are very healthy and we are in a good position to do what the Branch needs in the coming year. More details can be found in the Annual report.
3. Reports: to acknowledge the [Annual Report](#) and take questions
 - 3.1. Sarah introduced this year's Annual Report and spoke to the key points of the President's Report. She gave special thanks to all members for their engagement with the union during the last difficult year.
 - 3.2. Comments from the floor included many messages of thanks to Sarah and condemnation of University.
4. [Motion](#) on Palestine conflict
 - 4.1. Lisa Stampnitzky gave background and proposed the following motion on behalf of SUCU Committee. The motion was seconded from the floor.

EMERGENCY MOTION ON PALESTINE

Amidst ongoing violence in Palestine-Israel, this Branch re-affirms its solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people in their struggle for freedom and social justice against the Israeli state which, due to its discriminatory laws and violent oppression of Palestinians, is properly characterized as an apartheid state[1]. We support the de-escalation and ceasefire between Israel and Gaza and hope this is an opportunity to begin to resolve the conflict.

In particular, we note:

1. That the immediate context for the recent violence was the continuing ethnic cleansing by Israeli authorities of Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem

neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah and the attacks by Israeli forces on worshippers at the Al-Aqsa mosque.

2. That Israel's expulsions, attacks and settlements constitute war crimes under international law.

In addition, this Branch resolves to:

1. calls on the national Union to demand:

a. that the British government withdraw its support for the Israeli offensive and work for immediate de-escalation and, more fundamentally, to begin to hold Israel to account for its breaches of international law; more specifically this means an end to the occupation of Palestine and the siege of Gaza.

b. that all opposition parties in the UK should urgently take all possible action to force the government to uphold its responsibilities in support of Palestinian lives and rights.

and

2. Call on The University of Sheffield's Senior management team to review and divest from all links and business relationships with companies enabling or complicit in the actions of the Israeli state and proposes an urgent discussion with University managers on this matter.

[1] See the recent reports by B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch:

https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

There were no questions or comments from the floor so a vote was taken. The motion was passed by a majority (81% for, 2% against, and 13 abstentions).

5. Update about University restructures campaign

5.1. We held an Extraordinary General Meeting last week to discuss the pace and extent of University restructures. In particular we have focussed on the public campaigns opposing the proposed closure of Archaeology and changes to the School of Languages and Cultures (SLC). We have asked our local reps to hold meetings before the summer break to discuss SLC, Archaeology and our Branch concerns about restructures, and fully consider our collective response. SUCU Committee are meeting with University management and have requested all the documents relating to the Archaeology decision. The University is required (under our trade union agreement) to share relevant documents with us. We have concerns about transparency, governance and the way decisions are being made.

5.2. Senate meets on the 23rd June where the Archaeology proposal will be on the agenda. Senate's role is to make recommendations to the University Council which meets on 12th July. According to [Senate Standing Orders](#) it's official role is to, "oversee the teaching and research of the University and the admission and regulation of Students", and the closure of a Department falls exactly under this remit. There are 6 questions that we think Senate should consider: Has the review process been fair and transparent? Has the Department been afforded sufficient opportunity to present a case for investment? Has the review adequately reasoned and evidenced its claims? Has the review fully considered all the relevant options, including evidence related to departments in other universities? Has the Senate received sufficient information on which to form an opinion? Is there a need for an irreversible decision now? The Branch

position is that unless there is a “yes” to all the questions, the proposal should be paused and alternatives considered. The chair of Senate needs to give sufficient time at Senate so the decision is democratic and transparent. SUCU Committee is organising a meeting of Senators and reps from Archaeology will also attend. SUCU will provide a chair, zoom admin, and a member of Committee with governance expertise. We have deep concerns about Management’s approach to the Archaeology review, and the SLC restructure - and how this bodes for our future. We are already aware that a review of all academic programs is pending.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- Can we have this in writing for reference?
Ans. We are working on an all member email containing all the information.
- Papers need to be tabled to Senate by tomorrow. Then they will be circulated to Senators. Senators can send questions 2 to 5 days ahead of the meeting.
- One of the reps from the Archaeology Dept thanked the Branch for it’s long term support. It shows the importance of being a community of people.
- Archaeology and SLC are organising a combined rally on Monday the 21st June. Focused time outside Firth Court will be 11-12.00. The campaigns share the same issues - top/down decisions, and catastrophic managerial incompetence.
- A lot of damage has already been done to the Archaeology Department even if the decision is reversed. Masters applicants received an email to say their course will run next year but it may be in other Departments. This has led to reputational damage.
- Is this a deliberate attempt to cause damage? Have we reached the bottom?
Ans. These issues will be discussed in our workplace member meetings, including how University management are framing the role of Senate.
- The experience of professional services staff in restructures is also one of top/down decisions, and lack of transparency. In the past University restructures were relatively transparent.
- International students, unrelated to the Archaeology Dept have been expressing their concerns.
- HE marketisation and untransparent management decisions are at a critical level. It is brutal and short term. Enough is enough. I urge everyone to take action and show solidarity.

6. Elections

6.1. SUCU Branch Officers 2021-22. This was overseen by Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) who acted as Returning Officer. Jane read out the nominees (below) to the Branch Officer positions. Only one eligible candidate was nominated to each Officer vacancy. Jane declared each candidate for Branch Officer roles elected.

<u>Branch Officers</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Dept</u>
President	Sarah Staniland	Chemistry
Senior Vice President	Sam Marsh	Maths
Vice President × 2	Ed Yates	Management School
	VACANT	
Branch Secretary	Mark Pendleton	East Asian Studies

Treasurer	Pablo Stern	Retired
Membership Secretary	James Cranch	Maths
Equalities & Diversity Officer	Themesa Neckles	School of Education
Anti-casualisation Officer	VACANT	
Communications Officer	Robyn Orfitelli	School of English
Education Officer	Craig Brandist	Russian and Slavonic Studies
Health & Safety Officer	Mick Ashman	Nursing and Midwifery
Pensions Officer	Matthew Malek	Physics
Personal Cases Secretary	Tim Herrick	School of Education
Post Graduate Researcher Officer	Will Hornett	Philosophy
Policy and Governance Officer	Vicky Crewe	APSE
Environmental Officer	VACANT	

- 6.2. SUCU Ordinary Committee 2021-22. This was overseen by Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) who acted as Returning Officer. There was only one eligible candidate for each of the six Ordinary Committee vacancies. Jane read out the list of nominees (below) to the Ordinary Committee member positions, and declared the candidates elected.

Joe Hill	Mechanical Engineering
Ben Purvis	School of Architecture
Bill Lee	Management School
Julian Gosliga	Mechanical Engineering
Traci Walker	Human Communication Sciences
Andrea Genovese	Management School

- 6.3. Branch rules allow the Annual General Meeting to co-opt up to five Ordinary Committee members. Jane Rodger asked if there were any objections to Jane Simm (retired member) and Lisa Stampnitzky (from Politics) being co-opted as Ordinary Committee Members. None were raised, so Jane and Lisa were co-opted.

7. Any Other Business

None

President's Report

Sarah Staniland

This has been a truly difficult year for all of us in one way or another. Most of us have been stretched to our limits professionally and personally: juggling hiked up workloads, adapting to different ways of working, caring-responsibilities, home schooling, caring for the sick. I know many of us have had to cope with their own and/or loved one's sickness, both mentally and physically and tragic losses and grief, and still be there working tirelessly for this institution, their students and colleagues. By December last year, many of us were broken but thought the end was in sight, so I know how crushing and exhausting the third January lockdown was in this context.

And yet in this desperate time, how has our employer behaved? I don't think anyone could have imagined the extent of the damage inflicted on our university over the recent months by a disconnected management team driven only by cost-cutting. While the pandemic started off with positive signs of understanding and responsiveness to staff need, with regular union/management meetings and clear support for those isolating and/or having significantly increased care responsibilities, as time dragged on we saw management retreat from those positions. In the midst of the huge amounts of overwork, stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic, last summer the senior management team (SMT) saw fit to attempt a section 188 'fire and rehire' tactic - a deplorable mechanism that should never have been threatened. Thanks to your commitment and action, we beat back this tactic although the damage caused to staff morale and faith in the management team was significant. However, it was January this year we saw the attacks from SMT worsen. Restructures: In the first lockdown restructures were paused. It was recognised staff would be under too much stress and workload to engage properly with them. Yet come 2021, when everyone is back under lockdown, with children at home and sickness to juggle with ridiculous workloads (increased by the VSS last summer), but this time worse than the last lockdowns due to months of fatigue, the SMT deemed it now appropriate to impose a hasty constructed, poorly planned and unmanageable suite of restructures across many work areas, followed by a wholesale portfolio review of all UG programmes! We are so deeply disappointed that SMT has not taken the opportunity to learn from the failed S188 and numerous previous disastrous restructures, but has instead accelerated the pace of sweeping cost-cutting changes. These are so short-sighted they threaten the integrity of the institution itself.

Professor Lamberts has had a troubled two years as VC. He seems to have developed little understanding of what our institution is about and other than draw his salary from our work, has achieved little except the destruction of key elements of what makes Sheffield University great, along with the wholesale loss of the confidence of his staff. We continue to reject the flawed principles underpinning these restructures and the complete absence of concern for staff demonstrated by trying to force these major changes through after the last eighteen months. The most prominent current examples of the failed vision is the grossly mismanaged attempt to dismantle and reorganise the departments of SLC and MLTC (and possibly SEAS) and the attempted closure of Archaeology. Both projects are without intellectual or pedagogical justification and have caused significant harm to staff and students and the university's reputation. The recent sweeping restructure in Arts & Humanities are sadly not the only attacks of this nature, with reviews and restructures across many other faculties and service areas, affecting academic, research, teaching, technical and professional services colleagues. We have repeatedly demanded a pause to this massive programme of change, but the disconnected SMT refuse to listen to staff.

We remind Professor Lamberts and his fellow SMT members that they are simply custodians of our University for a short time and the staff body will outlive them (despite their best attempts to destroy it) and that we reject his mean, short-termist and anti-intellectual approach to what this university is about and for.

Along with our students, we are the University of Sheffield.

As authorised by you, we are looking to initiate what further steps may be necessary to defend jobs and the University. A huge thank you to all the local reps and committee members who have been supporting those undergoing restructures - particularly Jess Meacham.

Faced with all of this from our employer, on top of everything else we have had to deal with this year, I am truly inspired by you, our members. There you are, turning up in your hundreds to meeting we call with only a few days notice. Still you find time to write to us with information, insight, offers of help and inspirational action. I want to take a moment to thank all the staff that have worked so hard, not just in their day job, but actively keeping our branch as strong as ever, fighting with integrity, in the most difficult of times. Your unwavering enthusiasm, action, energy and support for doing what is right is what has kept me going this year. A particular thanks goes to our most active members and our committee. Thanks to the long-serving, especially as they entered this difficult time on the back of organising the strike action of 2019-20. Thanks to our newer members of committee for injecting new energy and ideas.

We are hugely aware of the impact of the COVID pandemic on all of us, although recognise that this affects us all differently. People with caring responsibilities - often women - have had severe disruptions to their career trajectories, and as a branch we will be watching closely to ensure that the university's commitment to taking this into account in probation, promotion and performance processes is both real and sustained. Thanks to the equalities team and those active around policy and governance - particularly Simon Stevens, Vicky Crewe, Robyn Orfitelli and Craig Brandist for the work they've done in these areas. Reps have also made important interventions on workload issues, promotions processes, and social media policy, amongst others.

We remain concerned about the university's approach to disabled members of staff, with the regular difficulties accessing reasonable adjustments and combatting ableism that we see too often in casework becoming more acute over the last year. Our Equalities Officer Themisa Neckles and Branch secretary Mark Pendleton has been doing some excellent work locally here, and through UCU and TUC Disabled Members Committees. We also secured UEB agreement - belatedly - to pursue a target of eliminating the gender pay gap - we continue to monitor this work, along with a focus on the ethnicity pay gap, through participating in a joint management/union working group. Ongoing work to confront antisemitism at the university through a consensual process developed by the ED&I committee in conjunction with trade unions, the chaplaincy and other relevant parties was sadly overridden by a hasty decision by senior management to recommend that Council adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which raises significant concerns around academic freedom - Katy Fox-Hodess, Lisa Stampnitsky and Craig Brandist amongst others have been highlighting problems with this approach and developing alternatives. Flexible working arrangements post-pandemic will also be a key area of focus for us particularly to ensure that these arrangements are put in place in ways that best meet the needs of staff.

Our H&S team - primarily Mick Ashman, Craig Brandist and Jess Meacham - have done a stellar job over the last year in holding the university to account as we have realised belatedly (and through no fault of theirs!) the absolutely essential nature of H&S work at the university. The volume of risk assessments these reps have had to digest and respond to is simply astounding - massive kudos to you all! We have also been slowly building our safety rep network, more than doubling our trained safety reps this year and with plans for further growth in the coming years. This is a great way to support the work of the branch and ensure we all have a safe working environment - please do get in touch if you'd like some training or to be more active in this or any other area in this report.

We've also been increasingly building our capacity to organise in response in other ways. Huge credit has to go to the anti-casualisation team for their continued work to protect jobs and improve conditions for staff - thanks to Steffan Blayney, Edanur Yazici, Elena Simon, Will Hornett, Ed Yates and all of the activists working with them. Our Professional Services staff network was ably led by Amy Ryall for many months until her departure and we are delighted that Em Nunn stepped up to replace Amy in that important convening role - thanks to both of you and all of the members active in that network!

Tim Herrick has done a fantastic job convening our growing network of caseworkers, who have handled a very large number of cases across many areas of concern for the branch and our members - see his report below. We also continue to provide reps for various formal mechanisms of the university.

PGR members of our branch have also been active in various initiatives to highlight the significant impact of the pandemic on PGR students and on PGRs as staff - thanks to Elena Simon and those active in the

PandemicPGRs network in particular! We've also developed an equalities network for equalities reps in UCU as well as our fellow campus trade unions Unite and Unison - we hope in time this grows to be a useful bottom-up alternative to the top-down models of ED&I working in the university.

Another major initiative over the last year has been to grow (both in numbers and effectiveness) our departmental reps network. Led by Katy Fox-Hodess, this work identified areas where we did not have representatives and worked to identify and train people into these roles. We are really pleased at the growth in engagement and connection across the university, but particularly in some areas where we haven't always had significant involvement - such as in parts of Engineering and MDH. Thanks to Katy for all her work on this!

We continue to also play significant UK-wide roles with Sam Marsh and Robyn Orfitelli continuing as negotiators over pensions and pay respectively. Branch members also play active roles in various other UCU committees, including the disabled members, LGBT+ and academic-related and professional staff committees.

We would like to note the departure from the committee of several long-term and committed trade unionists - Caroline Metz, Amy Ryall and Edanur Yazici all left the university and will be greatly missed. Staying a bit closer to home, Membership Secretary Katy Fox-Hodess, Policy & Governance Officer Simon Stevens, Pensions Officer Moty Katzmann, Anti-Casualisation Officer Steffan Blayney, Environment Officer Elena Simon and Communications Officer Jess Meacham are all stepping down from the committee after several years of service but will (we hope!) stay active in the branch as local reps, case workers, safety reps and in other roles. We would of course welcome them back to the committee at any point in the future! And thank you for all the work you have done for members.

We have also coopted several new members onto the committee since the last AGM - Bill Lee from the Management School joins us to help develop our trade union learning work. Julian Gosliga and Joe Hill join us from Engineering and Traci Walker from MDH. We welcome further interest in joining the committee as you may be able to - we currently have a few vacancies for co-option.

Given the scale of the changes being proposed locally by a hostile SMT and the wider context of a possibly damaging autumn spending review, continued below inflation pay increases, and further attempts to undermine our pensions, the coming year is likely to be another difficult one. However we know that this branch is one of the most committed, active and engaged branches in the country and we are absolutely sure you will be ready and willing to push back as needed.

Use your summer to recharge as best you can (take ALL your leave!), as we all need to after the last year. But also talk to your colleagues about why being in the union is important. Discuss issues that concern them and report these to your local reps. Have a think about how much time you can spend each week doing something for the collective benefit of all of us - whether ten mins, an hour or more. And keep one eye on your inboxes - we'll be in touch with developments as they happen. If you need some advice on what getting more involved might look like, get in touch at ucu@sheffield.ac.uk - our union is all of us, and we are, as always, stronger together.

Treasurer's Report

Pablo Stern

I am pleased to report that the branch finances continue to be healthy. Our income comes from the 'local' element of your monthly subscription, graduated according to income (see section 1 below).

The accounts below (in section 3) are for the full year from September 2019 to August 2020, audited by UCU head office, and for the six months up to February 2021. I have also included a breakdown of the Hardship Fund element of the accounts for your information.

Our branch funds saw a decline in 2019/20 of about £12k because of our extensive industrial action. The expenditure included a voluntary donation of £13.8k to the central UCU Fighting Fund, agreed by a branch general meeting.

Overall though our funds continued on a sound financial footing, with normal income a bit more than normal expenditure. Our main expenditure is for our excellent Branch Administrator. The year to date has been very

unusual of course and expenditure on eg travel and catering has been well below normal, so we were £7k in surplus for the six months to February 2021.

For the coming year we will hopefully return to some sort of normality and we can expect our income and expenditure to be again roughly balanced, depending of course on future events.

We would be able to financially sustain further substantial industrial action if that were required for local or national disputes.

Reports

Below are:

1. UCU national and local subs rates from September 2021
2. Donations and subscriptions since the last AGM
3. Financial Reports
 - a. The audited accounts for the last UCU financial year, to 31 August 2020, approved by UCU head office.
 - b. An interim financial statement for the first six months of 2020/21 (September to February).

If you have queries or comments or would like to see the accounts do contact me via the SUCU office or p.stern@sheffield.ac.uk.

1. UCU subscription rates 2021/22

The tables below set out the national subscription rates which will apply from September 2021. The changes from the previous year are a reduction of 2% for members with income between £5k and £30k, with no change for those earning above 30k and for retired members.

The local subs change at the same rate as the national subs, as agreed at our 2013 AGM.

Subscription rates from Sept 2021			
	Monthly national subscriptions		SUCU local
	including political fund	excluding political fund	subscriptions
£60,000 & above	£27.38	£27.11	£3.65
£40,000-£59,999	£24.17	£23.94	£3.54
£30,000-39,999	£21.26	£21.06	£2.60
£22,000-29,999 <i>[was from £20k]</i>	£17.77	£17.60	£2.31
£15,000-21,999 <i>[was to £19,999]</i>	£10.59	£10.49	£2.26
£5,000-14,999	£4.61	£4.57	NIL
Below £5,000	£1.00	£0.99	NIL
Retired/attached members	£2.91	£2.89	NIL

2. Donations and subscriptions June 2020 to May 2021

21/9/2020	Sheffield Trades Council	Donation to Sheffield Needs a Payrise organiser fund	£1,000.00
30/11/2020	Liverpool UCU	Donation for legal opinion for UCU members	£1,000.00
16/12/2020	Rhwydwaith	Donation to Camp Residents of Penally union	£250.00
18/1/2021	Campaign against Climate Change	Affiliation	£25.00
18/1/2021	Hazards	Affiliation	£15.00
18/1/2021	JusticeForColombia	Affiliation	£90.00
18/1/2021	Sheffield Trades Council	Affiliation	£447.00
18/1/2021	National Shop Stewards Network	Affiliation	£50.00
21/1/2021	Tamil Solidarity	Affiliation	£50.00

25/1/2021	Rhwydwaith	Donation to Camp Residents of Penally union	£250.00
1/2/2021	Cuba Solidarity	Affiliation	£40.00
4/2/2021	CND	Affiliation	£25.00
4/2/2021	Labour Research Dept	Affiliation	£267.25
4/2/2021	Just Giving	Donation to Brighton UCU	£300.00
4/3/2021	Just Giving	Donation to Gaza Home Restoration Appeal	£250.00
18/3/2021	Stand Up to Racism	Affiliation	£50.00

3. Financial reports

The accounts for the UCU financial year ending 31 August 2020 follow, together with the interim I&E report for the current financial year, September 2020 to February 2021.

- These accounts were prepared by the branch accounting service. We get quarterly summary accounts as well as the full end of year accounts.
- The accounts for 2019-20 have been signed off by UCU head office.

3.a.1. Income & Expenditure Account 2019-20

September 2019 – August 2020

Income		<i>Totals</i>
Subscription Income	67,419	
Hardship Fund Income (<i>see 3.a.3</i>)	5,418	
Charges on Income		
Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	15,767	
Subscription Collection Charges	446	
Total Effective Income:		56,624
Expenditure		
Travel	509	
Telephone	110	
Printing & Stationery	642	
Catering	7,100	
Donations	2,588	
Donation to UCU Central Fighting Fund	13,800	
Subscriptions/Affiliations	1,001	
Miscellaneous	1,610	
Repairs & Renewals	119	
Clerical Assistance	25,929	
Pension	4,975	
Hardship Support (<i>see 3.a.3</i>)	9,719	
Admin/Ins Cost	95	
Accountancy Fees	800	
Total Expenditure:		68,997
Net Income/(Expenditure):		-12,373

3.a.2. Balance Sheet 2019-20
September 2019 – August 2020

		<i>Totals</i>
Fixed Assets	0	0
Current Assets		
Bank	59,466	
Bank – Hardship Fund	709	
Cash	25	
FX Card	445	
		60,645
Current Liabilities		
Creditors and accrued income	1,462	
		1,462
Total Assets less Current Liabilities:		59,183
Accumulated Funds		
B/fwd	71,556	
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	-12,373	
		59,183

3.a.3. Hardship Fund Report 2019-20 (details)
From September 2019 to August 2020

The SUCU Hardship Fund sits alongside the core branch funds and is used to support members in particular difficulties. The national Fighting Fund was able to provide strike pay to a large proportion of the membership during the 2019/20 industrial action, with lower-paid members having a higher rate of support, but some members fell through the net or were in particular need, particularly ‘casual’ staff, and the local Hardship Fund was used to assist those individuals.

		<i>Totals</i>
Income		
b/f	10	
From Branch Funds	5,000	
Individual donations	5,418	
Hallam CLP	50	
Rotherham TUC	50	
		10,529
Expenditure		
23 payments to casual/short term staff	4,041	
14 payments to part-time staff	2,281	
22 payments to full-time staff	3,499	
		9,821
Current Balance:		709

3.b.1. Interim Income & Expenditure Account 2020-21
Year to date September 2020 – February 2021

Income		<i>Totals</i>
Subscription Income	33,916	
Donations Received (<i>see 3.b.2</i>)	937	
Charges on Income		
Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	6,740	
Subscription Collection Charges	191	
Total Effective Income:		27,922
Expenditure		
Travel	0	
Telephone	60	
Printing & Stationery	0	
Catering	144	
Donations	2,800	
Subscriptions/Affiliations	1,009	
Miscellaneous	531	
Repairs & Renewals	0	
Clerical Assistance	13,294	
Pension	2,566	
Hardship Support	0	
Admin/Ins Cost	48	
Bank Charges	0	
Accountancy Fees	400	
Total Expenditure:		20,852
Net Income/(Expenditure):		7,070

3.b.2. Balance Sheet 2020-21
Year to date September 2020 – February 2021

		<i>Totals</i>
Fixed Assets	0	0
Current Assets		
Bank	65,565	
Bank – Hardship Fund	1,646	
Cash	25	
FX Card	514	
		67,750
Current Liabilities		
Creditors and accrued income	1,497	
		1,497

Total Assets less Current Liabilities:		66,253
Accumulated Funds		
B/fwd	59,183	
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	7,070	
		66,253

3.b.3. Interim Hardship Fund Report 2020-21 (details)

Year to date September 2020 – February 2021

Income		<i>Totals</i>
b/f	709	
Individual donations	937	
		1,646
Expenditure		
Payments	0	
		0
Current Balance:		1,646

Membership Report

Katy Fox-Hodess

Sheffield UCU has experienced rapid growth over the past 5 years -- increasing its membership by more than 35% between January 2016 and January 2021 to become one of the largest UCU branches in the country. This growth is a testament to the commitment, solidarity and hardwork of members. The best recruitment agents for the union are YOU so please make a practice of speaking with non-union colleagues and new hires about joining the union.

As branch membership officer, my focus over the past year has been on developing our branch reps and contacts network through recruitment and training in departments where we had not previously had a strong union presence. We now have more than 90 reps and contacts serving in nearly every department of the university, including as Health and Safety reps and as anti-casualisation reps. Branch reps and contacts have been supported in their work through a number of means, including the provision of bespoke trainings on recruitment and organising and one-on-one meetings to provide support. We hope to continue to offer trainings in future.

Many thanks to everyone serving as a rep or contact -- your work is absolutely essential to the branch. If you are interested in getting more involved in the branch, becoming a departmental rep or contact is a great way to get started. It involves a small time commitment of 1-2 hours per month but provides a vital link between the rank-and-file and the branch. Please get in touch if you are interested.

In order to develop a better picture of our density across the university, we conducted a mapping exercise last year. Through the mapping exercise, we confirmed our suspicion that density is highly uneven across departments and faculties. While departments in the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences have exceptionally high density, density is far lower in the Faculties of Medicine, Dentistry and Health (MDH) and Engineering (with the Sciences falling in the middle). As a result, we prioritised membership work in the Faculties of Engineering and MDH -- as well as among Professional Services staff, in response to member feedback.

Working individually and collectively with reps from both faculties, work has advanced, particularly in the Faculty of Engineering where the branch has seen significant membership growth and really positive initiatives

by reps. I particularly want to thank the reps and contacts from Engineering and Medicine for the really valuable work they put in to develop a UCU presence in areas that we have failed to reach previously. Among Professional Services staff, former branch committee member Amy Ryall took the lead with a monthly meeting of the PS members network, and we have held recruitment activities targeted to PS staff. This too will continue over the next year.

Personal Casework Report

Tim Herrick

“Personal casework” is understood here as individual work with members, supporting them in navigating concerns about their workload, working conditions, contractual arrangements, questions of performance, or the institution’s response to situations of ill health. Often this involves accompanying members to meetings that form part of university processes; invariably it includes working alongside them to pursue a positive resolution that meets their needs. All members of more than three months’ standing are entitled to support through a casework surgery, which we hold every 6 weeks or so, and if their situation would benefit from individual support, a specific caseworker is assigned to work with them until a resolution is reached.

We have recorded a total of 95 cases since the last AGM, with 59% of cases concerned either with working conditions or with issues around contracts. This perhaps reflects the changes to place of work that all of us have experienced in the last 15 months, and the uncertainty around income and student numbers last summer being translated by the university into pressure on job security. In terms of the distribution of cases across parts of the university, the largest proportion are from the Faculty of Social Sciences (36%), with members in Professional Services the second largest category (21%). This is perhaps of note, reminding us that, as with the current programme of restructures, there are few places in the institution that are currently safe from management pressure. We currently do not have a robust system for gathering data on the outcomes of cases, but 42% of cases don’t go further than advice from the branch administrator or at a surgery session, suggesting we have some success in addressing concerns relatively early in the process.

In my first year as personal cases secretary, I have emphasised caseworkers being in touch with each other to share expertise, experiences, and moral support. We have therefore held two meetings for caseworkers to discuss their experiences, strengthened and formalised the existing procedures for newer caseworkers shadowing those who have been doing it longer, and created a set of written documentation, such as indicative case studies, to help support those coming into the role.

If you are interested in being involved in casework, please contact me individually, or ucu@sheffield.ac.uk for further information; it can be a highly rewarding experience, working with colleagues at difficult points within their career, and achieving outcomes that strengthen both the individual and the institution. There is also national support, with regular training courses; and, as noted in the previous paragraph, strong local support. It is an excellent role for understanding the complexity of institutional life, and for helping to hold the university to the high legal and moral standards which it professes.

Pensions Officer’s Report

Moty Katzman

While our members have been trying to survive and adapt to the realities of life with COVID-19 and to make universities work under unprecedented conditions, USS management identified this time of crisis as an opportunity to attack yet again our defined benefit pensions, with a view to replacing them with reduced and risky defined contribution pensions. This was done by coming up with a "valuation" which makes outrageous financial assumptions which bear no relation to any plausible future, and exploited the stock market dip at the very beginning of the pandemic as a basis to estimate future returns of assets.

UUK has learned nothing and has not changed its tune either: it wishes that our pensions would go away so that university bosses can continue to focus on funding their pet projects and large entourages, rather than staff welfare at old age.

The coming year will be difficult: we can only rely on our resolve and on the strength of our union to protect us against the neo-liberal assault on our pensions. See you all on the barricades.