

## **SUCU Extraordinary General Meeting, 5 November 2014**

**Chair: Craig Brandist**

**Minutes: Jane Rodger**

### **1. Welcome and introduction**

1.1 Craig Brandist welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself. The focus of today's meeting is the assessment and marking boycott which starts tomorrow and the USS dispute.

### **2. Report from USS briefing 4<sup>th</sup> Nov**

2.1 Craig introduced the Branch Treasurer Pablo Stern, who attended the special USS dispute meeting on behalf of SUCU Committee yesterday 4<sup>th</sup> November.

2.2 Pablo reported that there was a good turnout for the meeting which was for consultation and information but delegates could not vote. UCU contests the valuation of the USS scheme which is over prudent. The Employers want to de-risk the scheme by adopting a low risk, low yield approach - much like a short-term investment. This amounts to a savage attack on our pensions.

2.3 The UCU Higher Education Committee met last week and agreed an alternative proposal the details of which will be released to members tomorrow. The proposal is significantly better than the Employers' and includes: a career average scheme for everyone based on 1/70, no defined contribution element, and an increase in the earnings cap to £75,000. UCU negotiators will put this proposal to the Employer this Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November.

### **3. Assessment boycott questions and practicalities**

3.1 The assessment and marking boycott starts tomorrow. There was a lengthy debate about how this can be implemented across different Departments. There was also a discussion about how academic related staff and staff that do not have assessment and marking responsibilities can support the boycott.

3.2 So far, the University of York is the only institution to say they will deduct 100% for partial performance. It was noted that the law allows for this deduction. However, Imperial College has made a statement that they will not be making deductions and Oxford, Cambridge, Warwick and London School of Economics are opposing the Employer proposal. UCU has written to York asking that their threat of punitive deductions is withdrawn by next week.

3.3 Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Great concern was voiced across the room that UCU negotiators have made a concession so soon, and that all out strike action has not been called in support of members at York.
- The UCU proposal is still much better than that of the Employer. We must have a strong show of action for an improvement to the Employers' offer. It's vital that we stop the introduction of defined contributions. A marking boycott can be very affective.
- There was considerable concern that members at York are not isolated.
- The point of this industrial action is to disrupt the process of assessment which would lead to students not progressing and ultimately not graduating. Members need to ask themselves how this can be done best in their own Departments. Members were encouraged to hold local Departmental meetings.
- A move to strike action was discussed.
- It was suggested that graduate teaching assistants should be supported in joining the action, as many undertake marking. One way to do this is for colleagues to contact GTA's they teach modules with.

3.4 The following motion was put to colleagues.

**Motion from University of Sheffield UCU EGM 5 November 2014:**

This meeting is deeply concerned at the proposals discussed at the national USS meeting yesterday, which are to be put to the employers very shortly:

- We believe UCU is conceding far too much too early. This is a dangerous opening gambit.
- Our proposals should be on the basis of a realistic funding valuation, not the over prudent valuation which is disputed by UCU and some employers.
- The proposals should also be on the basis of what was voted on in the ballot. Putting forward proposals on the basis of the flawed valuation goes against the whole direction and tenor of the previous emails and publicity from HQ.
- The employers are breaking ranks in public, and in UCU there was an excellent ballot turnout and ballot result. We should make use of our strong position, not immediately make huge concessions.

We strongly urge our negotiators not to put forward to the employers proposals like those discussed on 4 November based on the flawed funding valuation.

*Passed nem con*

4. AOB

None.