

**SUCU General Meeting Minutes Wed 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 2016, 1pm**

**Council Chamber, Octagon Centre**

**Chair: Craig Brandist, Branch President**

**Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator**

Craig Brandist introduced himself and welcomed members to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were passed as a correct record of the last meeting and there were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

2. Brief round- up of news – including HE Green Paper

2.1. Sam Marsh, SUCU Communications Officer gave a brief roundup of UCU activities on behalf of SUCU Committee.

2.2. According to UCU statistics 2/3 of researchers are engaged on fixed term contract and 75,000 teachers are on casual contracts. We continue to campaign locally for staff on casual contracts. SUCU had an agreement with University management that there would be a process of review of hourly paid staff the normal outcome of which would be an employment contract. We are trying to find out why so many people did not get a contract following the review.

2.3. Parking fees. Many members have contacted the branch about the recent changes to car parking charges. We are concerned that the changes disproportionately affect lower paid and part time workers.

2.4. Pay campaign. The annual negotiations on pay start in March and a national campaign is being built. Recent below-inflation pay offers have resulted in real-terms devaluation of around 15%. This trend cannot be justified by universities, who have built up cash reserves and reduced salaries as a proportion of their budgets, and must not be allowed to continue. It is now time for a decent pay offer from the Employers. Above inflation pay rises are being offered in the private sector.

2.5. USS Pension. The University are currently running factual and useful sessions for staff about the changes that are about to be introduced. The downgrading of USS is a cut to our deferred pay.

2.6. New University IT code of practice. Overall this is uncontroversial part from there seems to be a requirement for staff to be experts on legal frameworks in every country

which hosts a service they might use, and additionally prohibits accessing content which is "indecent, offensive, threatening, discriminatory or extremist", without defining those terms. The matter has been raised with the university, as we are concerned about restrictions on academic freedom, and the potential for disciplinary cases. We understand the Prevent working group are now looking at the wording and discussions will continue with University Management.

2.7. Collective agreements. Members are invited to look at the collective agreements on the University website and send feedback to [ucu@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@sheffield.ac.uk).

2.8. HE Green Paper. This is still in the consultation phase. HE Convention on 27th February 10-5 at University College London will discuss the Green Paper's implications. Sheffield UCU will fund travel for 5 delegates to the Convention.

### 3. Pay campaign – speaker from University of Leeds, and branch motion

3.1. Craig introduced Ben Plumpton from University of Leeds UCU who spoke about how Leeds Branch has been building the pay campaign locally. It was very useful to hear about their use of email messages and social media.

3.2. Questions and comments from the floor included:

- We must always link pay to the workload issue.

3.3. Sam Marsh proposed the following motion on behalf of SUCU Committee, which was seconded by Jamie Gough.

#### **Motion on pay campaigning amendment**

On 9 October, UCU's Higher Education Committee voted not to challenge the 2015 pay award, and instead "To develop a campaign now and run it into and throughout the build up to the 2016 negotiating round (October 2015 – March 2016). Seek to develop and submit a joint claim early (January) and move to ballot and action in April or May based on a 2016 dispute, if the offer is unacceptable". (Quote from UCU HE News Issue 41.)

This branch is concerned at the lack of progress on a nationally coordinated campaign since the beginning of October. It notes similarities with recent unsuccessful pay and pensions campaigns, where a strategy was agreed but not acted on effectively.

This branch notes the communication to branches of 19 January 2016 outlining the decisions taken at the Higher Education Committee meeting of 13 January, and is pleased to see some movement on this campaign, although it notes that the timetable has already slipped from that agreed in October and considers it important that there are no further delays.

This branch calls for more support in building a campaign on pay and greater transparency in communications from UCU nationally. In more detail, we ask for:

- Key campaigning materials (posters, flyers, blogs etc) to be created nationally and distributed.
- Clear national communication with members on the strategy, its timetable and its implementation.
- Adherence to any strategy outlined above.
- High visibility from those leading UCU nationally (national press articles, interviews etc).

*A vote was taken and the motion was passed nem com.*

#### 4. Equalities update

4.1. Sarah Staniland, Branch Secretary gave an update on behalf of Wendy Michallat, Branch Equalities Officer. This included information about the UCU Equality Conference attended by Wendy in November, motions passed and how we are taking up issues locally. The collaborative work with University Management with regard staff affected by domestic abuse was noted. SUCU Committee are looking at ways to do more to diversify the composition of the Committee and try to actively reach out to Black/LGBT/Disabled members. Ways to better integrate retired members will also be considered.

4.2. Questions and comments from the floor included:

- There will be a focus on equality issues at our General Meeting on Tues 26<sup>th</sup> April.
- We need to establish a link with the University's Staff and Disability Network.

#### 5. Motion for more parity between staff and student support

5.1. Sarah Staniland proposed the motion on behalf of SUCU Committee.

##### **Motion for more parity between staff and Student support (especially with respect to disability)**

This branch expresses concern and requests the University review the current lack of parity between the quality and availability of support offered for students and staff (where similar provisions are required), especially with regards to disability and mental health.

The University strives to provide excellent student services and support and we agree that its aim to develop and nurture its students to enable them to reach their full potential is laudable, and needs to be maintained. However, we are dismayed that this philosophy is

not mirrored in the support and provisions for staff. It seems that Staff are just required to be “exceptional and outstanding” without the offer of similar support that students can easily obtain. We believe the University has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, as well as a moral and ethical obligation. There is also a clear business case that better supported staff can reach a fuller potential and do their jobs better.

We use the example of the provisions for staff and students that suffer dyslexia to demonstrate the vast disparity. In these cases students have ease of use of an accessible service where there is no comparable centrally funded provision for staff.

We demand the University reviews their provisions for staff support to makes the necessary alterations to bring the staff services in line with a high quality of student provision.

5.2. Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Provision for staff is below standard particularly now the Occupational Health Service is to be outsourced. This is just to save money and will cause long term problems.
- Has the outsourcing of the Occupational Health Service had an equality impact assessment?
- Members described an unsupportive approach from University management to requests for a dyslexia assessment.

*A vote was taken and the motion was passed nem com.*

#### 6. Privatisation, outsourcing and commercialisation

Following discussions at the last General Meeting on 24 Nov 2015 SUCU Committee have drafted a statement about privatisation, outsourcing and commercialisation. This was circulated and members were asked to give feedback by emailing [ucu@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@sheffield.ac.uk).

#### 7. AOB

Three events were announced: A Stop Trident Event in London on 27 February; Holocaust Memorial Day events this evening in the Winter Gardens; and Time to Talk Day on 4 February which is a national event to get people talking about mental health to help end the misconceptions around it.