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SENT: 13 April 2018 15:51
TO: Alistair Jarvis
SUBJECT: USS update: UCU ballot outcome

_SENT TO: VICE-CHANCELLORS, PRINCIPALS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE CONTACTS AT
USS EMPLOYERS_

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to confirm that the UCU member ballot resulted in a majority in favour of accepting the proposal, developed at Acas, for a Joint Expert Panel on the USS valuation. The vote was 64% in favour with a turnout of 63.5%.

This result means the immediate suspension of the strike action planned for Monday in 13 universities and the suspension of the further industrial action (including action short of a strike) that had been threatened for the summer term across 65 institutions. We understand UCU will make immediate contact with affected branches to suspend next week's action and thereafter contact all institutions affected by recent industrial action. UUK has prepared communications to reassure students and parents that they will not experience disruption over the exam season and to outline steps which are being taken to minimise the impact of last term's industrial action for students.

Today's UUK's media statement is copied below - please feel free to draw on this to inform your own staff and student communications.

UUK and UCU will now move swiftly to appoint a chair, establish the terms of reference and protocols for the panel and agree its membership, building from the proposal outlined in the Acas text [1].

The panel's task is to agree key principles to underpin the future joint approach of UUK and UCU to the USS valuation. The panel will consider the valuation process, assumptions and associated tests. It will seek to consider the questions raised by some USS members and employers about the 2017 valuation process. The panel represents an important opportunity to pause for reflection, build confidence and to rebuild trust damaged by the dispute. Working with UCU we hope at this stage that panel can be convened and begin work in May.

It will be necessary for the panel to report in sufficient time for a way forward for USS reform to be agreed in time for implementation from 1 April 2019, if we are to avoid the imposition of substantial increased costs on employers and scheme members.

UUK and UCU will also discuss our joint approach to the USS Trustee and

the Pensions Regulator, fully recognising their statutory responsibilities and accountabilities.

The current indicators are that the USS Trustee and the Pensions Regulator acknowledge the context driving the convening of the panel and are prepared to work with UUK and UCU within the constraints of their statutory responsibilities and accountabilities. We expect the USS Trustee to write to USS employers early next week setting out their position on the panel and what they require to ensure they can demonstrate a credible plan to the Pensions Regulator.

I will update you further as the panel develops and expect to share communications for scheme members on the panel and 2017 valuation with USS employers early next week.

Best wishes

Alistair

UCU BALLOT RESULT ON JOINT EXPERT PANEL

Commenting on the decision of University and College Union (UCU) members to support the establishment of a Joint Expert Panel to examine the USS 2017 valuation, a spokesperson for Universities UK, which represents the collective view of USS employers, said:

"The decision by UCU members to support the creation of a Joint Expert Panel means that strike action is immediately suspended. This gives students important reassurance that they won't be affected by further disruption during their summer study and exam period.

"Reviewing the methodology and assumptions in the current valuation will build confidence, trust and increase transparency in the valuation process. It will provide an opportunity to consider the questions raised about the valuation by scheme members and employers. It is important that interested parties engage with the panel and remain open-minded about its possible findings.

"Working in partnership with UCU, we will now appoint a jointly agreed chair for the panel as soon as possible before developing its terms of reference, order of work and timescales.

"Alongside UCU, we will seek support for this process from USS and the Pensions Regulator, fully recognising their statutory responsibilities and accountabilities. Current pension benefits are guaranteed until 1 April 2019, so the panel will need to conclude its work in time to put in place a sustainable way forward for USS from that date."

ALISTAIR JARVIS
Chief Executive
Universities UK