

SUCU General Meeting 18th October 2012

Present: 26

Chair: Craig Brandist

1. Minutes from the last meeting

No amendments.

2. Abdi Suleiman – Sheffield Students Union President

Abdi was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that one SU objective is to encourage student members to join a trade union whilst in employment.

Abdi spoke about the current SU “Reclaim Education” Campaign, and the National SU demonstration on 21st November. The SU campaign seeks to achieve: No fees, anti-cuts, International Students to be valued, post grad funding, and to hold politicians to account.

Comments from the floor included:

- There is a 100% cut of Government funding for teaching in most Schools. Abdi asked for a breakdown of this by Department, so that the SU can target recruitment.
- There was consensus that SUCU and the SU shared a number of common concerns, for example, opposition to the move to viewing students as customers.
- It was pointed out that post docs are eligible for free UCU membership. Full details can be found on the UCU website.

3. Pay Dispute - Liz Lawrence (UCU National Negotiator)

Liz Lawrence was welcomed to the meeting. She talked about the reason for the pay dispute - the employers’ offer of another real-terms pay cut and their refusal to agree ways of tackling wide spread inequality in the sector.

The outcome of the pay ballot was that a majority were not in favour of strike action (44% voted for and 56% voted against).

There was a majority vote in the ballot in favour of action short of a strike (ASOS) - 70% voted for and 30% against. However the national negotiators and officers decided not to call upon members to take this action, though a minority disagreed with this decision. Considerations included the possibility pay sanctions being imposed for partial performance, and the absence of an immediate escalation route. The risks were considered too high.

Comments from the floor included:

- Options in the pay ballot were misrepresented. ASOS appeared to be a legitimate alternative.
- In other Sectors ASOS always preceded strike action, but this should have been made clear on the ballot paper.
- The outcome of the ballot should be implemented. When people vote for ASOS they are aware that there may be pay sanctions.

4. Emergency Motion

The Committee proposed an Emergency Motion regarding the decision not to take ASOS:

Emergency Motion on the Pay Dispute for SUCU Branch Meeting 18 October 2012

This Branch notes:

1. The decision of the national negotiators and officers to take no ASOS action on this year's pay dispute in spite of the 70% vote in favour of ASOS in the recent ballot.
2. The legal requirement to take some action within four weeks of the ballot result for the mandate to remain valid

The Branch:

1. Calls for an urgent recall Higher Education Committee meeting to immediately review the decision of the national officers.
2. Calls for a special delegate HE Sector Conference for January or February 2013 to debate how to ensure this situation does not recur, and to plan for our 2013 claim, to achieve pay restoration, advance equality, and defend members' conditions.

The outcome of the vote was:

For: 18

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1

5. Change Management Suite update

Pablo Stern gave a summary of the improvements won by SUCU in negotiating the Change Mgt policy suite, which includes: Restructuring Procedure, Redundancy Avoidance Procedure, Redeployment Procedure, Redundancy Procedure. The total process lasted 2 years.

A brief summary of the key improvements included:

- Previously, there wasn't a coherent set of policies to cover change management.
- The consultation period will be at least 90 days (the government is planning to reduce the statutory minimum below 90 days).
- There is a requirement to seek voluntary redundancies before compulsory redundancies, and to widen the pool.
- There will be enhanced redundancy pay of double the statutory minimum at all points in the process.
- Time on the redeployment list can now be extended if appropriate.
- There is agreement in principle that paid protection is funded centrally.
- Pay protection for redeployed staff will be for 3 years (University wanted 1 year). Pension issues arising from pay protection will be looked at on a case by case basis.

PS also reported that there seems to be an agreed way forward on all the key points on the other policies and procedures – disciplinary, capability etc.

PS also highlighted that working with other campus unions and union density has strengthened the bargaining position.

Comments from the floor included:

- Congratulations and thanks to Branch Officers
- A member asked when the policies would come into effect. Pablo Stern advised it was planned for be January 2013.

6. USS update

Pablo Stern (in Hamish Cunningham's absence) reported on the Special Sector Conference held 13th September. There was a decision not to take action. The Branch had given cautious support for action. Negotiations are now ongoing with the Employer and it is hoped that concessions will be made to the position that they have taken. The biggest risk to USS scheme members is probably the inflation cap.

7. SUCU Anti-Stress and Bullying Campaign

Jane Simm alerted members to this national UCU campaign which SUCU will be supporting during the week commencing 19th November. The campaign will raise awareness of issues that impact on increasingly high stress levels, and of bullying in the workplace, and press for measures to combat these issues. Jane explained that these are key concerns identified in SUCU personal casework.

8. TUC Anti-Austerity Rally 20th October 2012-10-26

JR advised that tickets are a limited number of tickets still available. Members are asked to give a £10 contribution.

9. AOB

None