

SUCU General Meeting 30th November 2012

Present: 15

Chair: Mick Ashman

1. Minutes from the last meeting.

Clarification was sought from the floor regarding item 2. The 100% funding cut refers to government funding.

2. Matters Arising from previous minutes

2.2 This year's pay increase will probably be paid in December, and there is a circular on the national website regarding next year's pay claim.

2.3 Mark Oley (Regional Official) gave an update regarding the Change Management suite of policies. There was a meeting with HR two weeks ago regarding the policies, and the documents have now been sent to UCU Headquarters with recommendations i.e. that ambiguities regarding Fixed Term Contract staff are corrected, and the University makes a commitment to improve the conditions for Hourly Paid staff.

2.4 Mick Ashman reported on a very successful Anti-stress and Bullying Campaign week. This included a stall at North Campus where Branch Officers and Committee Members met and talked with staff. SUCU Committee will continue having stalls at various locations around the University Campus.

3. Recruitment

3.1 Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) reported regarding the Branch's three-term recruitment strategy which will start with a mail shot to all non members employed by the University. Mark Oley explained that this will be a hard copy mail shot, as the University have refused to provide email addresses. The Branch is developing a non member database which will be used to support recruitment.

3.2 Mark Oley explained that UCU is a body of workers rather than a service provider. He urged members to talk to colleagues about this. It is important that non members join UCU at the earliest opportunity as full support cannot be accessed immediately after joining.

3.3 Kaye Carl reported that SUCU continues to win improvements for Fixed Term (including Researchers) and Hourly Paid members and urged members to speak to colleagues about joining UCU. This builds the strength of the union particularly in negotiations. Members present volunteered to speak to colleagues and circulate information for hourly paid and fixed term staff. Jane Rodger will provide the leaflets in hard and electronic form.

3.4 SUCU is in the process of upgrading the website and reviving the Twitter and Facebook accounts.

4. REF and Workloads

4.1 Daragh O'Reilly reported that after negotiations with SUCU the University has agreed to a no detriment clause for colleagues not returned in the REF:

"It should be noted that non inclusion within REF, will not of itself, be used as a measure of research performance, lead to any contractual or workload changes, nor will it be detrimental to the career prospects of an employee at the University of Sheffield."

A SUCU sub group continues to meet with HR and RIS. The group is currently discussing the definition of "career prospects". Daragh advised there is a spectrum of approaches across the

University to REF, and members need to be alive to the potential dangers. He asked that members make contact with SUCU should they be aware of actions that do not appear to be in the spirit of the clause.

- 4.2 Daragh reported that UCU nationally are campaigning on workload issues. SUCU has approached Management who have agreed to look at the principles of the Workload Model. SUCU would like the University to survey Departments to identify current practices. SUCU has a set of proposed survey questions, following consultation with Departmental Contacts, that will be put to Management. UCU want to protect the meaning of teaching and research, career development, and challenge equality concerns.
- 4.3 Comments from the floor included that there is pressure to get impact and this takes time. Also it was pointed out that management have started to talk about research in terms of “business, the market and maximising output”. REF and workload are linked - staff on teaching contracts will see an increased workload and need to be treated fairly.

5. University review of Statutes

- 5.1 Mark Oley reported that the University wishes to review the Statutes. It is evident that the University wishes to use a set of recently negotiated policies for staff that are not covered by Statutes as the basis for procedures for Staff who are currently covered by Statutes. Committee has provided members with previous updates regarding this suite of policies. Negotiations had proceeded for the last 18 months on the expressed understanding that the policies did not apply to staff covered by Statutes.
- 5.2 Mark explained that the Statutes and Charter allow Universities to be self-governing bodies, to protect them from undue outside control, and have been used for hundreds of years. They are fundamental to academic freedom, and the procedures for controlling academic staff by disciplinary or similar means are defined in the statutes for exactly that reason. The only way that Statutes can be changed is through the Privy Council. The Statutes also define an academic – in this institution you must be teaching and research active. Other specific people are also covered by Statute. UCU believes that as a minimum all staff who teach or undertake research should be protected in this way. Statute 6 gives enhanced employment rights and is concerned with justice and fairness, covering regulations for disciplinary, grievance, sickness and redundancy, which bolster academic freedom (on which the University does not have a good record).
- 5.3 The current and the new suites of policies for other staff are weaker than the rights protected by Statutes. The University is also proposing a change to a more centralised business model of governance. Mark explained that the context to the University’s wish to revise Statutes is the Government’s attack on employment rights more generally. However, many institutions have decided to improve their Statutes, or keep them as they are, e.g. Leeds, Bradford and Hull. The next meeting to discuss Statutes with the University is on the 10th December. This issue is a high priority for UCU and Jane Thompson the union’s Solicitor will be attending this meeting.
- 5.4 There was a discussion that included:
 - Other campus trade unions are supporting SUCU’s position.
 - It is not clear what input there will be from academic staff in the recruitment of the pro VC. It was agreed that Committee will raise this at the next Joint Committee.

6. AOB

Mick Ashman reported that the University now has the results of the Staff Survey. SUCU are due to meet with HR on 10th December to receive the results of the survey to departmental level, including areas of poor practice. SUCU will identify areas of concern in the context Health & Safety and ensure that they are addressed.