

SUCU General Meeting Thurs 19th October 2017, 1pm

Council Room, Firth Court

Chair: Craig Brandist, SUCU Branch President

Minutes: Jane Rodger, SUCU Branch Administrator

1. Welcome and introductions

Craig Brandist welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1. The minutes of the Extra-ordinary meeting held on 25th July 2017 were accepted as a true record.

2.2. Craig paid tribute to our colleague Steve Ludlam, who passed away last month. Steve served on the Sheffield AUT and then UCU committee for many years. Craig proposed a donation of £100 to the Cuba Solidarity campaign in Steve's name – a campaign he was closely associated with. A vote was taken and the donation was agreed nem con.

2.3. A minute silence was then observed in Steve Ludlam's memory.

3. Brief round-up of news

3.1. Lecture capture is being rolled out across the University and SUCU Committee circulated guidance in the recent Branch News. It is important that members are not recorded without their knowledge. We have heard of cases when a lecture has been recorded even when the green light is on, and other instances where recordings were made before and after the lecture. Members are urged to feed concerns back to Committee.

3.2. The Strategy Delivery Group continues to look at all University operations. We are concerned and doing our best to support members in one area of Professional Services where various teams were informed without warning that they would be moving Department.

3.3. We want to raise the profile of the plight of our international colleagues. Although the University claims to be "international" it is not doing enough to help international staff including failing to give financial help to cover the cost of renewing visas.

3.4. A recent post on the University security webpage that seemed to push the blame for sexual assault on to the individual was slow to be taken down despite many complaints. SUCU Committee sought assurances and we received an apology but there was no comment regarding training. The matter was raised at the University Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Committee but we were advised that this was not a matter for this forum.

3.5. Support has been sent to UCU colleagues at Leeds who have taken strike action against the introduction of new measures that can lead to dismissal, colleagues in Manchester have also taken action over job cuts. There was a big turnout at both Branches.

3.6. The “Death of Justice” rally will be held on Tues 31st October 5.30 at Devonshire Green. The rally is organised by the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign who are seeking a public inquiry; similar to that of the Hillsborough disaster.

3.7. The Branch is trying to organise an anticasualisation public meeting in conjunction with the local Student Union. We will keep members informed.

4. USS Pension

Sam Marsh and Matthew Malek have participated in a University working group discussing the USS pension scheme valuation. We are not convinced by the method used to define the fund deficit. The Government’s Pensions Regulator is further applying pressure for an even more pessimistic valuation. This is a complicated issue. UCU has convened a national conference on 9th November to determine a response to proposals in respect to USS, and the Branch will be sending delegates. The outcome of the consultative ballot of members was 86.6% in favour of strike action, with a 55.8% turn out.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- What is the timeline for this?

Ans. Originally it was intended that the valuation would be agreement between UUK and UCU by the end of November this year. This now will not be the case and the ultimate deadline is July 2018, which includes a two-month consultation period with members.

- Is the Pensions Regulator querying the valuation?

Ans. Yes, The Regulator is questioning whether the valuation is prudent enough.

- Should we write to our MPs?

Ans. This was discussed at our last USS themed Action Group. We are formulating template questions.

- What are the politics within UUK?

Ans. They have understood the situation properly, and are seeking a solution, but the Universities are split.

- If there is a deficit, should contributions be raised?

Ans. Universities have made it clear that they will not increase contributions, and this would not help the valuation.

5. Saturday Open Days and branch motion

University management’s inclination to push people to attend the increased number of Saturday open days rather than to invite and reward staff has led to considerable unease.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- An amendment was suggested – to state that working on Saturday open days should be entirely voluntary. This amendment was accepted.
- An amendment was suggested – to state that members being compelled to attend is not likely to help student recruitment. This amendment was accepted.
- The guidance issued to managers indicates attending Saturday open days is considered to be mandatory.

- If one Department is dealing with this issue differently this does not change the University wide approach.
- This is having a disproportionate effect on women and staff on lower grades.
Ans. One particular Department was highlighted at the recent SUCU Action Group.
- The motion would be better as joint from all the trade unions.
- This could be the thin end of the wedge.
- There seems to be different practices across the University regarding the definition of plain time.

The following amended motion was proposed by Craig Brandist and seconded by Mick Ashman.

Saturday Open Days: defending the right to a fair and reasonable work life balance and challenging exploitative practices

University of Sheffield UCU Branch motion

This branch notes that:

- Up to nine Saturday open days per year will be mandatory activities for all departments undertaking undergraduate student recruitment.
- The University is seeking to compel attendance without incentivising staff consistently, and members being compelled to attend is not likely to help student recruitment.
- Workloads for many staff continue to increase.
- Pay has decreased in real terms by over 15% in the last 8 years, and deferred pay, in the form of pensions, is under threat of severe downgrades.

This branch believes that:

- The lack of incentives offered to those working Saturday open days is exploitative practice, loses goodwill and demoralises staff.
- The threat of using the disciplinary processes for staff who decline to attend Saturday open days is unacceptable.
- The burden to attend Saturday open days is likely to fall disproportionately on lower grades, and disproportionately on women.
- Imposing change on staff without appropriate consultation demonstrates poor understanding of the principles of good management that one would expect from a 'Top 100 Employer';
- Management decisions that have workload implications for staff should be evidence-based and subject to consultation. The University's duty of care toward staff must be met.
- Some departments are concerned that the shift to Saturdays could be harmful for their student recruitment.
- Time off in lieu (TOIL) will be meaningless compensation for a large section of staff (who, due to workload, are often not able to take all their holidays), especially if TOIL is to be taken within a specified short timeframe, possibly during term-time.

- Staff on Grades 1-6 should have a choice as to whether they wish to work unsociable hours, and should be offered enhanced payment as an alternative to enhanced TOIL.
- Staff on Grade 7 and above should be offered additional appropriate incentive as an alternative to TOIL.
- Where TOIL is the preferred compensation option, work or commitments must be covered or replaced, ensuring that the time taken results in a genuine reduction in workload.

This branch demands that:

- Attendance at the Saturday open days should be declared entirely voluntary.
- The University properly engages with staff and offers meaningful incentives fairly and consistently, and with agreement with campus unions.
- The University reimburses childcare, car parking and travel expense costs to staff willing to sacrifice a Saturday from their personal time (recouped centrally not from departments).
- An equality impact assessment be undertaken and shared to demonstrate that an inclusive approach to Saturday open days will be managed. The EIA will need to make clear that there is no unreasonable discrimination against staff, student workers, or visitors with protected characteristics in moving to Saturday open days.
- Our research-led University undertakes a proper evidence based cost-benefit analysis of the action to move to exclusively Saturday open days, and is accountable, taking full responsibility if the change results in a negative effect on recruitment.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed nem con.

6. Motion to affiliate to love music hate racism

Hamish Cunningham explained that historically two organisations have opposed racism: the Anti-nazi league and Rock Against Racism. Racism has changed and we need to respond by giving a voice to people in music who do not want their music to be used in a racist way. Also, more young people are becoming politically active and music is one way to help in this. Hamish proposed a £50 donation to Love Music Hate Racism Sheffield who need help to put on events, such as the recent successful event at the White Lion. Hamish proposed the following motion which was seconded by Claire Allam.

Love Music Hate Racism Sheffield

University of Sheffield UCU Branch motion

This branch notes:

Racism in Britain is a clear and present danger to us all. At different times and places various social groups are used as scapegoats. Presently those identified as Muslim are particularly at risk. Racist attacks are increasing, and every member of society suffers increased fear and distrust as a result. Love Music Hate Racism is a music-oriented campaign that organises concerts to spread a message of unity and mutual respect. It follows in the tradition of the 1970s Rock Against Racism

(RAR) campaign. RAR was very successful in showing that not only is racism the wrong response to social problems, but also that anti-racists have all the cool tunes!

Love Music Hate Racism Sheffield aims to unite people in Sheffield against racism through shared culture, hosting live music events throughout the city.

This branch (University of Sheffield UCU) opposes racism in our society and pledges its support to Love Music Hate Racism Sheffield.

This Branch resolves to:

- affiliate to Love Music Hate Racism Sheffield.
- to donate £50 to Love Music Hate Racism Sheffield.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed nem con.

7. Proposed donation to Disabled People Against Cuts

SUCU Committee have received a request for help to fund a training program for community volunteers in Sheffield ahead of the roll out of Universal Credit. Craig proposed a donation of £200. A vote was taken and the donation was agreed nem con.

8. Prevent

We are hearing concerns about the Prevent training sessions. Members were urged to send feedback to SUCU Committee.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- We are hearing of members who participated in the “off the shelf” festival who were sent a prevent form to complete.

Ans. This is standard practice.

9. AOB

The matter of lecture capture guidance was raised from the floor. It was highlighted that the recordings could be copied and spread, and this could constrain what staff may say. SUCU Committee will consider this when updating the advice.