

SUCU Emergency General Meeting Tues 17th Dec 1pm
Hicks Lecture Theatre C

Chair: Sam Marsh, Branch President

Minutes: Lauren Selfe, Branch Secretary

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1. The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.

2. Update on USS conference (Chair)

USS dispute only within the remit of the conference (i.e. not the pay dispute). 4 delegates were sent from the Branch Committee + ARPS rep + anti-Cas rep. Motion from Sheffield and amendments sent by the branch passed. Key motion passed: a plan for future industrial action regarding spreading strike days, including an amendment that specified future strike dates. Only the HEC has the power to call strike days, but it is likely to follow the motion passed at the USS conference. (Starting 20th Feb with 2, 3, 4 and 5 escalating strike days). Full list of motions and results here: https://www.ucu.org.uk/hesc_Dec19.

Question from floor: will there be future opportunities for the branch to feed into HEC decisions regarding future strike action?

Chair: we can always pass motions and feed back to HEC, which should take into account branch suggestions.

Question to clarify: further strike action won't be legally called until next HEC meeting in January

3. Update from democracy commission special congress (Jess Meacham)

Only half of the motions were discussed at the conference. E.g. GS can now serve a maximum of 3 x 5 year terms. Motion to reduce the term of the GS to three years fell. Motion to form strike committees fell. $\frac{3}{5}$ majority required for a rule change, so some motions received a majority but not enough of one. No formal route to debate the rest of the motions; work of democracy commission has been formally concluded. Remaining motions are now in the public domain so could be brought as branch motions to congress in the future. Members invited to contact Jess regarding bringing motions to 2020 Congress. Full list of motions here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10474/Special-congress-democracy-commission--motions>

4. Dispute update (Chair)

Pay and conditions. Robyn Orfitelli (Branch VP) currently in negotiations with UCEA. UCEA has until now been unwilling to negotiate over pay rise, but have now agreed to discuss the workload, casualisation and pay gap issues. Letter sent to UCEA from UCU expressing disappointment regarding lack of progress was made public last week.

USS - JEP2 report published on Friday. SUCU Branch and USS negotiating team will be preparing a more detailed response. Broadly a positive, constructive report for moving forward. UCU and UUK have common views over the necessary timetable for preparing the 2020 valuation; USS seem less enthusiastic. Report makes clear that if its recommendations are not implemented, it will constitute a "failure for the sector". This should put pressure on USS.

Question from floor: Are there any scheduled meetings to discuss the report ahead of next potential strike action?

Answer (chair): there will be fortnightly meetings for next 4 months to discuss valuation (UUK, UCU, USS and Pensions Regulator). Sam Marsh's personal view in favour of JEP chair facilitating these discussions. Possible solution to employers: pay additional contributions in order to end dispute, so that all parties can then focus on determining a sustainable valuation method. Report vindicates UCU's position on the flaws of both the valuation and the governance of the scheme.

Question: What if USS dispute is resolved and pay dispute is not?

Answer (chair): Onus should be on employers to buy time to work on the recommendations in the USS dispute, then we could focus on the pay dispute.

Question: Can you explain the two discount rates proposed by JEP2?

Chair: This is based on how you understand your investments will grow over time. Plan for a higher risk growth during working years and then derisk nearer to and in retirement to ensure a stable pension. Broadly speaking a positive idea, depending on implementation.

Question: if strike days motion was voted on in USS conference, will it hold for pay dispute?

Answer: technically no, but we expect the days to be the same for both disputes.

Suggestion from floor: several members have asked about REF boycott as part of ASOS; union should look into this. We could talk about this in the new year. Could also include applications for research funding. Regarding external examinations: not currently part of ASOS.

Question: update on branches that are being re-balloted? Will marking boycott part of ASOS?

Answer: 13 branches currently being re-balloted to close end Jan. More branches to join starting in Jan. Regarding marking boycott: not current part of ASOS, but an escalation option. We can feed into HEC as a branch on this.

Question: where can I find clearer guidance on ASOS?

Answer: see SUCU and national UCU guidance. For determining what is voluntary, write to your line manager.

5. ACP (Chair)

Rob Gower (HR) invited to action group on 22nd January. Come to voice your concerns! Deadline for appeals was during strike action. HR have now extended deadline for appeals to 24th December - if you are not sure if you are eligible to appeal still lodge your intention to appeal by this deadline. It can always be revoked, but you can't start the process after this deadline. Appeals process is more robust than initial promotions process.

Question: can we have statistics on this cycle compared to previous years?

Answer from floor: Hannah Morgan in HR will have this data. Also raised many ED&I issues.

6. Green officer (chair):

Elena Simon co-opted as an ordinary member with a specific remit on green issues. We bring a proposed rule change for a green officer role to a future branch meeting.

Related ACP green issue: ACP incentivises academic travel

7. Events/branch news: key points read by Caroline; full update to follow in newsletter.