

Sheffield UCU General Meeting Tues 11th Jan 2022, 13.00-14.00

Chair: Sarah Staniland, Branch President

Minutes: Jane Rodger

1. Welcome and introductions
 - 1.1. Sarah welcomed everyone to the meeting
2. Minutes from the previous meeting
 - 2.1. There were no amendments made to the minutes.
3. Local Dispute update
 - 3.1. Branch Officers met with Gill Valentine, Susan Fitzmaurice and representatives of HR yesterday and we are here to report back on the meeting. It is good that management has started to discuss the terms of our local dispute. Their willingness to discuss the dispute is the effect of our standing together and threatening industrial action. It was a robust meeting and we have put a motion together for members to consider.
 - 3.2. The following motion was proposed by Branch Committee and seconded from the floor. The proposer gave background. With regard to Archaeology, management have proposed that the Department will remain until 2024, then staff on open ended contracts will be split between History and Biosciences. Management have shifted their position due to our threatening heavy industrial action. This takes us to the point at which Liverpool and Leicester branches were after they had taken action. Management have been silent about Languages though which is 50% of our dispute. A summary of the negotiation meeting is [here](#).

Branch Motion

This branch notes the report of the meeting on the local dispute over jobs in the Department of Archaeology and Languages departments on Monday 10 January, and remains in dispute with the University over the safeguarding of jobs in the Department of Archaeology and Languages departments.

The branch calls on University management to engage constructively with negotiations to find a resolution which safeguards jobs and takes positive steps to rebuild the trust between the University Executive Board and university staff that has been eroded through repeated executive decisions taken without meaningful consultation and consideration of staff expertise and wellbeing at this institution.

- 3.3. The proposer added an amendment that was also seconded from the floor.

Amendment

Add at end of second paragraph ", including consulting Senate on the outcomes of the Implementation Group's report".

- 3.4. Discussion included:
- 3.4.1. It is annoying how much time University management are trying to waste, but we recognise that this is a tactic.
 - 3.4.2. What are our demands for colleagues on fixed term contracts?
Ans. We need a lot more meetings with management to discuss their proposals in detail. We could ask for all staff on FTCs to be made open ended.
 - 3.4.3. Thanks were expressed to Branch Committee for all their work on behalf of members.
 - 3.4.4. The proposals for Archaeology are terrible. It is an attack on culture and education and goes back to where the discipline was decades ago - a separation between Arts and Science. Much damage has already been done. Undergraduate recruitment has been stopped and you can imagine how many post graduates now want to come to Sheffield. Management are actually damaging the reputation of the University as a whole.
Ans. There is also a great degree of uncertainty in Management's proposals, and there needs to be scrutiny of the details.
 - 3.4.5. What are the implications for Professional Services staff?
Ans. We have not had assurances in writing about this group of staff yet.
 - 3.4.6. We need to demand concrete actions about procedural issues and exert all pressures possible, in addition to strike action.
Ans. They seem to be listening to our point about rebuilding trust by actions. Staff will not believe management's promises without actions.
 - 3.4.7. Senate has an important role. This is the academic authority of the University but Senate has been manipulated over this. Senators need to use their power if the Implementation Report goes to this forum.
 - 3.4.8. The Save Archaeology campaign will run parallel to the union dispute.
- 3.5. A vote was taken on the amended motion below and it was carried by 99% in favour and 1% abstentions.

Amended motion as passed

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4. National Disputes

- 4.1. ASOS has now been upgraded and the guidance is coming out from UCU Head Office soon. We need to see this before we can apply the updated ASOS to the Sheffield context. We will send out all member comms by this Friday.
- 4.2. A Branch Delegate Meeting has been called for the 18th Jan to discuss industrial action strategy. We can send two delegates. If you would like to attend please send expressions of interest to ucu@sheffield.ac.uk before midday tomorrow and Committee will discuss this at lunchtime. The results from rebaloted Branches should be known by the Branch Delegate Meeting.

- 4.3. USS changes proposed by UUK will be decided by JNC by the 28th February. Our demands are to revoke the cuts in benefits and a new valuation. UUK decided to launch a member consultation which is open until next Monday the 17th Jan. Members are urged to complete the consultation.
 - 4.4. There is little movement in the Four Fights dispute.
 - 4.5. Next steps for strike action will be decided by UCU Higher Education Committee that meets later this month.
5. Feedback on industrial relations issues
- 5.1. Industrial relations have become strained of late. It was noted that management tactics have changed over the last two years and particularly in recent months. One current issue is management's withdrawal of the union's access to staff lists. Other processes also seem to be breaking down.
6. Covid H&S
- 6.1. The covid situation is changing all the time. The campus unions have particular concerns about ventilation. We understand that the University plans to return to face to face teaching as soon as term begins which makes ventilation issues even more acute. The University is pushing the responsibility of assessing rooms onto individual staff. We are meeting University management soon about H&S. They always ask for specific information, so the more feedback we have from members the better.
 - 6.2. Comments and questions included:
 - 6.2.1. Does the University have any guidance for the clinically vulnerable?
Ans. We do not have any information from the University about this. There is no reason why the University cannot go above and beyond government guidance.
 - 6.2.2. Is there guidance about staff rooms and lift usage?
Ans. Existing criteria about room ventilation, CO2 monitors, poster information available etc should apply to staff rooms. We will raise the question of lift use with management.
 - 6.2.3. Is there guidance from the University about better quality mask usage?
Ans. There is no guidance about this but we will raise it with management. It was noted that staff can wear masks whilst teaching.
7. AOB
- 7.1. The National Annual meeting for staff on Casualised Contracts is scheduled for the 26th February. We can send two delegates, nominate one person to the national committee, and send up to three motions. This annual meeting and membership of the national committee is a good way to connect with others to combat casualisation. If you would like to express an interest in attending as a delegate and/or being nominated to the national committee please get in touch with Ben Purvis (our Branch Anticasualisation Officer) by emailing usu@sheffield.ac.uk.