

## President's Report – Craig Brandist

2014-15 has been an important year for the union, both nationally and locally. The entire sector continues to face pressures from the employer side, implementing policies that aim to remake universities according to neoliberal principles. This involves the corporatization of the institution, with a centralization of power, the reduction of the power of representative bodies, the importation of productivity measures from outside the sector and the subordination of educational and research activity to extrinsic metrics. What goes along with this is a concerted attempt to erode professional autonomy and the rise of mechanisms of compulsion to replace the collegial cooperation that the reforms are undermining. In this context the union has faced a number of important issues relating to the conduct of management and larger issues about the friction between the functioning of a corporate body and the universal values on which universities are founded.

Locally the SUCU Committee, and the committees of our sister unions, supported by our Regional Support Official and Regional Officers spent many hours in negotiations brought about by management seeking to restructure the way in which staff are paid for their labour. This management talks about under the heading of Reward and Recognition. Management aimed to shift the local framework agreement to remove the normal expectation of annual increments and to make them dependent on performance review. The national office quickly realized that this would set a precedent for the entire sector and provided us with important support in facing the threat, resulting in a protracted and often tense series of meetings in which we finally managed to protect the principle that increments should be expected unless, in exceptional circumstances, and subject to a defined process with guarantees of appeal, staff were already within a formal performance management procedure. We also managed to negotiate the removal of two deeply unpopular measures that were open to abuse: the Exceptional Contribution Award (ECA) and the rating system central to the SRDS process. We put the package, which we regarded as the best that could be achieved through negotiation alone to a local ballot, and this was accepted with a large majority. The package was by no means perfect, and we need to monitor carefully how the new procedures develop.

We, and as we have seen, many members too, are also concerned about the way in which management have attached the package to a larger process called *The Deal*, in which sensitive personal data has been handed to a private company to target commercial offers to members. While not strictly speaking illegal, we regard this as having worrying consequences for the relationship between employer and employees and are making these clear to management.

We have also been facing considerable pressure due to the number and nature of personal cases, with members facing significant pressures connected especially to the way management is using the capability procedure. There are a number of cases of bullying and intimidation by managers, concentrated in specific areas of the University, and we have been working to develop a collective response to these issues rather than subjecting individuals to the targeting of their managers. One area where we have concerns is the way in which the capability procedure is being invoked to deal with people with disabilities, many of which are mental health problems related to stress. In a management culture based on the assumption, as the head of HR claimed in a recent article 'everyone' will be expected to 'excel' or will have to leave the institution, we believe these instances fall into a general pattern. The committee often finds itself under considerable pressure to deal with the scale of personal cases and we encourage members to come

forward to play a role in supporting each other in this way. UCU offers training in this area, and supporting members is a duty for which some remission on workload can be provided.

Involvement of members in the activities of the Union is fundamental to our work. Clearly our strength depends on such involvement, and it is when this is low that management see opportunities to secure further concessions. We feel that at a national level this is one of the important factors that led to the poor campaign to protect USS, for it required considerable and sustained pressure on the leadership at national level to demonstrate that we were prepared to take action to protect this key aspect of our conditions of employment. SUCU committee did all in its power to press for the organization to take a firm stand on the USS issue, but it proved insufficient to outweigh the conservative influence elsewhere in the organization.

At a local level we have been rather more successful in protecting our conditions, as can be seen in our successful campaign to retain increments. We have also worked well with other unions, for instance to protect the structure of joint representation of all trade unions of the University (Joint Union Consultative Committee). We also had a significant success at an employment tribunal that could have some favorable implications for the status of less secure workers at the institution. In this the Committee would particularly like to acknowledge the tireless work of Kaye Carl and to extend thanks on behalf of SUCU.

Our sincere thanks also go to Branch Officers and Committee Members stepping down; Jon Benson (Branch Secretary), Catherine Fletcher (Communications Officer), Scott Mc Mullin (Health & Safety Officer), and James Crossley. We wish them well. And special thanks to our long standing Committee member Gillian Brown who will be stepping down having given unstinting support to SUCU, but will retain a link through casework support.

### **Branch Secretary Report – Jon Benson**

In my first year as Branch Secretary for the branch I have been on a steep learning curve in this role and this last year has been a busy period for all on the committee covering areas including negotiations, consultation meetings, disputes, personal casework and casework surgeries for members.

Being new to the role, I wanted to highlight areas that have stood out to me reflecting on our activities this last year.

#### **SUCU Branch**

Branch membership is looking strong with a general upwards trend which is essential in maintaining a strong local membership and committee. The work of the committee is varied and beyond directly supporting members through caseworkers, we do even more work behind the scenes attending many different sorts of meetings collectively representing members in areas including, Health and Safety, Casuals Workers (Atypical), Joint Union Campus Committee (for all campus unions), Joint Committee (just for SUCU), Employment Security, Equality and Diversity and Policies. A lot goes on in our Branch and new members of the committee, whether general members or Officers are always welcome at any point in the year as this will allow the Branch to continue to provide representation for us all.

I must give my special thanks to the exceptional support provided by Jane Rodger in her capacity of Branch Administrator as well as our Regional Officials, Marianne Quick and Mark Oley.

If you'd like to get involved, come and chat to us, and doughnuts are usually on offer most committee meetings!

My first taste of my role as Branch Secretary has been being one of the negotiators from the SUCU committee (alongside our sister campus unions, Unite and Unison). We have been in a long negotiation process with management over changes to the reward and recognition package at the University in the form of the Local Framework Agreement 2015. The changes that we have delivered are not perfect but overall represent a marked improvement for all staff. These negotiations have taken almost a year to

reach an agreement and we have successfully protected the principle of a normal expectation to progress through a Grade each year in recognition of experience, skill and contribution in the role. This is an extremely crucial principle that we have protected.

National Pay Award negotiations are ongoing for 2015/16. The pay offer from the employer side is 1% increase on all spine points and adjustments at the lowest points to bring them equivalent to the 2015 living wage figure. Our national negotiators have also highlighted national pressure to impose performance based pay - something that Sheffield has tried to do locally and crucially without success. The national negotiations continue with UCU centrally and in the event of a dispute the Branch will urge central UCU to learn lessons from the previous pay award dispute last year.

Another major challenge this year has been the proposed changes to the USS pension scheme - ending the final salary section, making the Career Revalued Benefits section more expensive and introducing Defined Contribution elements. The statutory consultation period ended in late May. Our Branch has also submitted a response to the consultation and we all await the outcome - which will almost certainly result in increased contributions and erosion of the defined benefit scheme.

So, this year we have achieved much as a Branch, in particular with protecting annual increments, which is of national significance for the sector. There are many more challenges on the horizon, some of which I've touched on here, some as yet unknown!

At this AGM I am stepping down as Branch Secretary as I am leaving the University. This is a strong and dedicated branch that I look forward to re-joining if I come back to Sheffield in the next few years!

### **Casual Workers**

Casualisation in the sector is an ongoing issue for many of our members locally and nationally. This year a series of faculty by faculty reviews of hourly paid staff has taken place within set criteria with the aim of reducing the need of hourly paid tutors and giving them recognition as employees. Success has been mixed and over the next year we will be pushing for a full review of impact. Given that we have some high profile Employment Tribunal cases, it could be speculated that this review should have been better.

For postgraduate students, the Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) has now rolled out fully. This is currently at Grade 6 only with negotiations ongoing to creating a Grade 7 version as well.

In summary there have been some slight token gestures with questionable impact. A number of ETs have forced the University to recognise some hourly paid workers as employees and made judgements indicating less favourable treatment of workers for being fixed term and/or part time. We are going to push strongly to have a proper review over the next year and push for finding ways to avoid costly tribunals (for all concerned) and get things right in the first place.

### **Treasurer's Report – Pablo Stern**

I am pleased to report that the branch finances are healthy. Our funds had been steadily declining so it was agreed in 2013 to increase local subs, particularly for higher earners, with the local subs altering at the same %age as national subs. This has put us on a stable financial footing, with a gradually increasing balance.

Our main expenditure is for our excellent administrative support.

Our financial health meant we were, and are in a strong position for supporting industrial action, with the ability to give some local hardship support to members. Extensive industrial action had been anticipated over the attacks on USS, though in the event this did not materialise, but given the political and economic climate it is important for the future that we are in a position financially to sustain action and support members in future disputes.

Below are:

1. UCU national and local subs rates from September 2015
  2. Donations and subscriptions since the last AGM
  3. The accounts for the last UCU financial year, to 31 August 2014, approved by UCU head office.
  4. An interim financial statement for the first six months of 2014/15.
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### UCU subscription rates 2015/16

The tables below set out the national subscription rates which will apply from September 2015. They are unchanged from 2014, apart from a reduction for those earning under £5k from £2.67/month to £1/month. The local subs change at the same rate as the national subs, so are unchanged.

#### Subscription rates from Sept 2015

	Monthly national subscriptions		SUCU local subscriptions
	including political fund	excluding political fund	
£60,000 & above	£23.38	23.15	£3.11
£40,000-£59,000	£21.31	£21.10	£3.11
£30,000-39,999	£19.37	£19.18	£2.37
£20,000-29,999	£18.28	£18.10	£2.37
£10,000-19,999	£11.14	£11.03	£2.37
£5,000-10,000	£5.05	£5.00	NIL
Below £5,000	£1.00	£0.99	NIL
<b>Retired/attached members</b>	£2.67	£2.64	NIL

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#### Donations and subscriptions June 2014 to date

Youth Fight for Jobs	Donation for campaign	£20.00
Barnsley Retirees Action Group	Donation for campaign	£30.00
UNISON Bassetlaw Branch	Donation to Care UK strikers	£50.00
Sheffield Trades Council	Donation to BME event	£50.00
Sheffield Trades Council	Annual affiliation	£300.00
Labour Research Dept	Affiliation and Subscription	£219.50

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#### Financial reports

The accounts for the year ended 31 August 2014 follow, together with the interim I&E report for the current year September 2014 to February 2015.

- These accounts were prepared by the branch accounting service. We get quarterly summary accounts as well as the full end of year accounts.
- The year-end accounts for 2013-14 have been signed off by head office.

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## Income & Expenditure Account 2013-14

### Income

Subscription Income	60,515.03	
		60,515.03

### Expenditure

Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	26,732.94	
		26,732.94

**Gross Profit/(Loss):** **33,782.09**

### Administrative expenses

Travelling Expenses	65.44	
Printing and Stationery	1,459.70	
Catering	1,051.44	
Donations	280.00	
Subscription Collection Charge	742.98	
Subscriptions	386.96	
General Expenses	93.00	
Clerical Assistance	19,910.45	
Audit and Accountancy	900.00	
Depreciation	311.42	
Strike Hardship	1,280.97	
		26,482.36

**Net Profit/(Loss):** **7,299.73**

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## Balance Sheet 2013-14

### Fixed Assets

Furniture and Fixtures	230.97	
		230.97

### Current Assets

Subscriptions Receivable	71.01	
Deposits and Cash	67.45	
Bank Account	26,648.32	
		26,786.78

### Current Liabilities

Creditors and accrued income	2,478.79	
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		2,478.79
<b>Current Assets less Current Liabilities:</b>		24,307.99
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities:</b>		24,538.96
<b>Long Term Liabilities</b>		
		0.00
<b>Total Assets less Total Liabilities:</b>		<b>24,538.96</b>
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>		
B/fwd	17,239.23	
P&L Account	7,299.73	
		<b>24,538.96</b>

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**Interim Income & Expenditure Account 2014-15**  
**Year to date September 2014 – February 2015**

**Income**

Subscription Income	32,678.40	
		32,678.40

**Expenditure**

Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	14,153.64	
		14,153.64

**Gross Profit/(Loss):** **18,524.76**

**Administrative expenses**

Travelling Expenses	11.05	
Printing and Stationery	202.01	
Catering	322.59	
Donations	130.00	
Subscription Collection Charge	381.30	
Subscriptions	390.51	
Repairs and Renewals	69.99	
General Expenses	1,077.98	
Clerical Assistance	10,334.40	
Audit and Accountancy	205.00	
Depreciation	230.97	
		<b>13,355.80</b>

**Net Profit/(Loss):** **5,168.96**

## **Equality and Diversity Officer – Sarah Staniland**

Equality and diversity is an all-encompassing issue that is really at the very core of what a union stands for, and thus ensure it is embedded and progressed on the universities agenda to the benefit of the unions' members is pivotal to our success as a union. I came to this post quite new to the University and I thank Jane Simm and all the Sheffield UCU committee for support and guidance in this role. It really is a privilege to work with such talented, dedicated and fun people.

I think one of our biggest allies in recent years in the battle for better equality is the Athena SWAN charter. For those that don't know this was established 10 years ago as a way to recognise commitment to advancing women's careers in the STEMM disciplines in HE and research. University's departments, faculties and the entire University can submit an application to be recognised at for bronze, silver or gold awards. So much equality and diversity rhetoric is spoken and often diffused to little affect, but seeing real action is what we are all interested in and the very fact that funders take Athena SWAN very seriously has ensured that all Universities need to take this seriously and act on it. While equality covers more than just gender equality and should consider all academic subjects, not just science, engineering and medicine, it has been a very effective starting point to move forward and from this year Athena SWAN will be expanding to umbrella the arts and humanities subjects (AHSSBL) and is starting to develop a race equality charter. All the relevant departments in Sheffield obtained bronze awards over the last couple of years and this November the Entire University will be submitted. This is a very real mechanism to drive through action, and also offers regulatory and monitoring means. I have been heavily involved in this charter (being the Athena SWAN champion for Chemistry) and am already using it to drive change from issues raised by our members. For example, I am currently looking into how weekend open days affect impact on equality and diversity of staff and seeing how the university values and rewards for this, which if they get it right could be very important to our submission.

I also chair of the E&D committee in my department, and as part of my role I am on the faculty and University E&D board, which has provided a platform to further raise UCU issues and importantly to communicate issues between all these bodies and UCU branch, the students union, support services and networks and HR.

Recently I joined the JUCS policy sub-committee were HR and the campus unions' work together to develop policies. This year I can report the development of some really good policies, such as shared parental leave (paternity leave benefits similar to maternity leave benefits), disability leave and a dignity at work policy. The latter being very important, as a mechanism for addressing bullying and harassment. Further, and intricately entwined into this issue; the group are now currently formulating a stress policy too. So we are successful in working with HR to implement useful policies, but now the really important step is ensuring our members know about them and use them effectively. We will continue to communicate these to our members and also feedback individual and collective concerns to our employers.

Of course there is always much more work to be done, particularly in the area of disability with respect to reasonable adjustments instead of implementation of performance improvement plans in some circumstances. However, I am overall optimistic. We have many issues to address and a lot of hard work to be done, but I do feel slowly but surely, the mechanisms are being place to enable real, effective action to make the University of Sheffield a better place to work.

## **Membership Report**

We have seen a substantial increase in members compared to this time last year. The essential work done by SUCU Departmental Contacts in providing information to potential members is vital to building the

strength of the union. Contact from colleagues in departments has proved to have a significant impact on recruitment. The University also continues to provide monthly updates of new staff to the campus unions. This is used for organising and recruitment purposes - an initial email invitation to join SUCU is sent to individual eligible staff, and occasional group emails are sent to make staff aware of what SUCU members have achieved on their behalf.

The national membership database is subject to ongoing development by UCU HQ in consultation with Branches. Members are now able to update their own records online. It is important that all the information is accurate as we need to be "ballot ready" to avoid challenge by the Employer. The Branch Administrator, with the help of SUCU Departmental Contacts also conducts a full audit of members from February to June every year.

### **Health & Safety Report – Mick Ashman**

Sheffield UCU has had representation on the University of Sheffield Health and Safety Committee since I have been a SUCU member.

In the past SUCU has undertaken workplace inspections with the other campus unions (Unison and Unite) in accordance with the Safety Representative and Committees Regulations (1977). The University has always responded to these in the spirit of joint working, recognising that any Health and Safety concern brought to attention to the institution should be addressed promptly. Regrettably this consensus has been strained during 2014/15.

In October the branch decided that it would use Health and Safety Law to inspect those departments where we considered our members and other staff were at risk due to stress and/ or poor management practice. We used evidence from our casework and the Staff Survey results to identify those departments where this was an area of concern.

We identified two departments and undertook an inspection (along with the other campus unions) of one of them. It was clear from the outset that the Head of Safety Services was unhappy that we were using Health and Safety Law to scrutinise management practices and our "ability" and "experience" in undertaking such an inspection was questioned.

Our inspection highlighted that there were serious concerns regarding the organisational culture in that Department, which we feel posed a serious risk to staff. There was no evidence that a risk assessment had been undertaken which we and our national advisors regard as a serious breach of Health and Safety Law (the Law states that Employers have a legal obligation to protect their health and safety and that of their workforce. Regulation 3, of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, requires, among other things that all employers assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees while they are at work).

The approach from the University has been to look for alternative remedies in those departments that are identified as having problems that could impact on staff wellbeing. However our view is that Risk Assessments must be undertaken across the institution that identify all the risks posed to staff whether they are the risk of falling from heights, electrocution or workplace stress. This is an agenda that we as a branch will pursue in the coming year.