

President's Report – Craig Brandist

2015-16 has been another busy year for the Union, and for the Branch Committee in particular. As we enter a new round of industrial action over pay, in the context of an intransigent employer who is willing to use all opportunities offered by anti-union legislation, we are faced with some important strategic and tactical decisions about how best to conduct action. The balance and relationship between ASOS, and strike action as well as the timing of action in order to make it most effective while avoiding sanctions under the tightening legal conditions governing collective action is especially challenging. We have begun the campaign quite well given the circumstances with two days of strikes already passed, and a new day of action designed to hit exam boards and open days imminent.

Important though the pay issue is given the precipitous decline in recent years along with the rise in University revenues, pay is never an isolated issue, and an effective campaign helps us in all areas of our work. In the last year we have been active on a number of fronts, particularly with the neoliberal reforms of Higher Education (HE) likely to affect our working conditions in a negative way still further. We are concerned about the move to outsource or privatize aspects of University work, with Occupational Health a matter of particular concern, and we continually challenge management about the effects of this move, which we would like to see reversed. On other neoliberal matters, we have been meeting, and continue to meet with University management to ensure nobody suffers any detriment for non-inclusion in the REF, that any additional work arising from the process is properly compensated in workloads, and that due confidentiality is maintained.

The new White Paper on the future of HE, with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as its centrepiece will make the environment still more challenging as the displacement of professional values by metrics will be intensified and become more widespread. We participated in the Higher Education Convention to discuss ways of opposing the White Paper and to draft an alternative vision of HE. This has now resulted in the formation of an important campaign nucleus and the publication of significant campaign materials. Fortunately NUS has voted to campaign against the National Student Survey (NSS) and we will be working with them on this and to cooperate on opposing metricization. NUS has been very supportive of our industrial action and we are keen to maintain good relations, and to cooperate with them in the many areas of interest that we share.

A strong showing in industrial action strengthens us here, and also in areas such as employment security, Health and Safety and performance management. The higher our level of solidarity, the more seriously management take us in all negotiations. We continue to be concerned about the way PIPs are being used across the institution, but we have made some progress in moving towards agreed protocols about their use and the conduct of investigations, which have proven contentious. There are some encouraging signs in these areas, but we need to keep up the pressure to ensure members are not subject to bullying and harassment or performance managed out. We are also pushing for improvements in policies about stress, and we are involved in monitoring and representing members in a number of reviews and restructures across the institution. Just to give a sense of how widespread these are, we should note there have been or are reviews in Engineering Maintenance, Science, EFM, MDH, and there are sometimes others which we only find out about from members themselves.

Casework continues to occupy much of the time of Committee members since there are widespread problems with performance management, excessive workloads, stress and a range of other management

failures across the institution. These are, of course, confidential, but it is a central aspect of our work and relates directly to the collective negotiations and campaigns that we are involved in. We often struggle to cover all the cases that we are faced with and so we appeal for people to come forward to help in this area, in the full knowledge that any of us might be in need of support at short notice.

To finish on a positive note, we are pleased to note an increase in membership in the last year, which now makes up for the numbers we lost when University of Sheffield International College set up their own branch. This is to the benefit of us all, and we need to continue our efforts to grow the branch and the Union nationally. We need to remember that the density of our membership and our level of solidarity is an unspoken factor in all our casework and negotiations. Let us continue to build a strong and actively campaigning union.

Branch Secretary Report – Sarah Staniland

The role of Branch secretary is greatly supported by Jane Rodger, our Branch administrator, for which I need to offer her my full gratitude for her fabulous work; her organisation, efficiency and enthusiasm makes the running of this branch smooth and a joy to be part of.

Issues

To summarise my work within the branch this year, the two most prominent overarching issues we face and need to address are: 1) inconsistency of practices and culture across different departments and services, and 2) Increased workload and work related stress.

1. The University promotes itself for being a fair and progressive employer. We have an Athena Silver award and the University is recognised for being a top employer for workplace equality. We have a raft of negotiated policies (developed with UCU and the other campus unions) with work in progress on guidance documents that should put this ethos into practice. All in all we should be proud to work in such an institution. But is this the experience of all staff at the University? Is the rhetoric and policies translated to actions and embedded in culture on the ground? Universally across all departments?

Firstly, at the highest level there is mixed messages that do not align with the progressive culture advocating equality and diversity that the University advertises, with HR statements about “expecting everyone to be exceptional” and the notion that working up to a “48 hour week” is within the working time regulation and thus should be acceptable for working to contract (which it is not, we have a nominal working week of 35 hours for full-time staff). This idea is completely at odds with our Athena SWAN status to say the least.

Once we then look at consistency across the university, we see vastly differing cultures and levels of adherence to the policies and procedures. The differing uses of Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs), and management of reviews etc across University departments and services exemplified this point. We must do more to ensure the University curtails such bad practices, and we live up to our advertised reputation for fairness and equality.

2. When polling you our members, in conversations or in voting on our recruitments stall by putting balls into barrows, the overwhelmingly most pressing issues are increasing workloads and the work-related stress that this causes. More and more we are given extra work without the action of removing other work, or even considering what other work will suffer. Implementations of new work without considering the heavy workload times of the year is an issue. One example of this is the recent mini REF exercise. However, this must be considered, as increased workload reduced the quality of output and increased levels of stress and other mental illness. This is a health and safety issues and should be treated as such (see the Health and Safety report). Stress risk assessments should be common place in all departments with respect to issues such as marking deadlines. Furthermore, a clear and transparent workload allocation model (WAM) should be in place in all departments where you can see if your work load is too great and thus enable you to address this

issue. As mentioned above there is disparity across the University, but we as UCU members can do more to ask for these things in our departments, raise awareness and keep the committee informed of any inappropriate practices.

Action group

This year we have changed the branch committee meeting structure, reducing our meeting to fortnightly, so there is less time commitment for anyone thinking of joining the committee. This also frees up alternate weeks for other activities. The flagship monthly activity being our new Action Group, the first meeting of which was in mid-May. This really was excellent. We discussed the imminent strike action, and the ideas that were discussed were implemented during our local strike day campaign. These included our excellent picket line turn out and a well-attended “teach-in” event on Wednesday lunchtime. Thus if you have any ideas or want to input into UCU activity please do come along. (the next one will be 1-2pm 15th June).

Treasurer's Report – Pablo Stern

I am pleased to report that the branch finances are healthy. Our income is from the ‘local’ element of your monthly subscription, graduated according to income (see below). Our funds continued on a sound financial footing, with a steadily increasing balance over the last year.

Our main expenditure is for our excellent Branch Administrator. The monthly costs increased from November 2015 when she joined USS, and again from April 2016 with the increases in employer National Insurance and USS pension contributions.

For the coming year we can expect our normal income and expenditure to be roughly balanced.

Industrial Action

Our financial health means we are in a strong position for supporting industrial action. This could include the costs of printing, equipment, transport and so on as necessary, supplementing any national funds which are made available.

Importantly we are able to give some local hardship support to members who are particularly hard hit by their support for industrial action – for instance part time workers and low paid single earners. At the point of writing it is not clear how extensive the current industrial action over the pay claim will be so SUCU Committee has agreed to initially allocate up to £10,000 for hardship payments, with Committee reviewing the situation if we get near that limit.

Reports

Below are

1. UCU national and local subs rates from September 2016
2. Donations and subscriptions since the last AGM
3. Financial Reports
 - a. The accounts for the last UCU financial year, to 31 August 2015, approved by UCU head office.
 - b. An interim financial statement for the first six months of 2015/16 (September to February).

1. UCU subscription rates 2016/17

The tables below set out the national subscription rates which will apply from September 2016. They have increased by 1.5% from 2015.

The local subs change at the same rate as the national subs, as agreed at our 2013 AGM, so also increase by 1.5%.

Subscription rates from Sept 2016

	Monthly national subscriptions		SUCU local
	including	excluding	subscriptions
	political fund	political fund	
£60,000 & above	£23.73	£23.49	£3.16
£40,000-£59,000	£21.62	£21.41	£3.16
£30,000-39,999	£19.66	£19.46	£2.41
£20,000-29,999	£18.55	£18.37	£2.41
£10,000-19,999	£11.30	£11.19	£2.41
£5,000-10,000	£5.12	£5.07	NIL
Below £5,000	£1.01	£1.00	NIL
Retired/attached members	£2.71	£2.67	NIL

2. Donations and subscriptions June 2015 to date

CND	Affiliation	£25.00
Campaign Against Climate Change	Affiliation	£25.00
Counter-demo costs	Travel costs, counter demo to White Man March	£100.00
Cuba Solidarity Campaign	Affiliation	£40.00
Hazards	Affiliation	£15.00
Justice for Columbia	Affiliation	£90.00
Labour Research Department	Affiliation and subscription	£225.50
National Shop Stewards Network	Affiliation	£50.00
Sheffield Campaign Against Climate Change	Donation for coach travel to demo	£100.00
Sheffield Students Union	Donation towards coach hire for national demo	£100.00
Sheffield Trades Council	Affiliation and subscription	£296.25
Sheffield Trades Council	Donation to Banner Theatre Production	£100.00
Sheffield Trades Council	Donation for coach to national Anti-austerity 20-Jun-15	£100.00
Tamil Solidarity	Affiliation	£50.00

3. Financial reports

The accounts for the year ended 31 August 2015 follow, together with the interim I&E report for the current year, September 2015 to February 2016.

- 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 2014-15 have been signed off by UCU head office.

3.a.1. Income & Expenditure Account 2014-15

Income

Subscription Income	63,355.92	63,355.92
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Expenditure

Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	27,180.38	27,180.38
Gross Income/(Expenditure):		36,175.54

Administrative expenses

Travelling Expenses	61.25	
Printing and Stationery	287.27	
Catering	1,006.59	
Donations	380.00	
Subscription Collection Charge	746.26	
Subscriptions	670.31	
Repairs & Renewals	69.99	
General Expenses	1,077.98	
Branch Administrator	20,660.55	
Audit and Accountancy	505.00	
Depreciation	230.97	25,696.17
Net Income/(Expenditure):		10,479.37

3.a.2. Balance Sheet 2014-15

Fixed Assets

	0.00	0.00
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Current Assets

Cash	25.00	
Alto Card	14.94	
Bank Account	37,312.71	37,352.65

Current Liabilities

Creditors and accrued income	2,334.32	2,334.32
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Current Assets less Current Liabilities:

35,018.33

Total Assets less Current Liabilities:

35,018.33

Long Term Liabilities

0.00

Total Assets less Total Liabilities:

35,018.33

Accumulated Funds

B/fwd	24,538.96	
P&L Account	10,479.37	35,018.33

3.b. Interim Income & Expenditure Account 2015-16
Year to date September 2015 – February 2016

Income

Subscription Income	30,940.79	30,940.79
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Expenditure

Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	12,280.07	12,280.07
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Gross Profit/(Loss): **18,660.72**

Administrative expenses

Travelling Expenses	155.40	
Printing and Stationery	105.91	
Catering	585.60	
Donations	300.00	
Subscription Collection Charge	336.98	
Subscription	761.75	
Repairs and Renewals	463.20	
General Expenses	211.20	
Branch Administrator	10,251.59	
Pension	1,025.84	
Admin/Insurance cost	47.52	
Audit and Accountancy	300.00	
		14,544.99

Net Profit/(Loss): **4,115.73**

Equality and Diversity Officer – Wendy Michallat (Equality & Diversity Officer), Sarah Staniland and Jane Simm

Disability

After reading through last year's report it is clear that many of the issues from last time are still ongoing. It is completely unacceptable that, rather than be resolved, the situation with Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) has deteriorated (see the President's report for more details), but this has particularly impacted on those with disabilities. We are continuing to press for a review of the inappropriate use of PIPs, and to make sure that the guidelines on the use of this management tool safeguard our members, and inform our line managers, many of whom may be in UCU. Meetings with HR are being scheduled.

The University is proving to be inconsistent with its attitudes to disability. There is some very positive work being done jointly with the Unions such as the disability leave policy and the relaunch of the Staff & Disability network that happened this year. It was particularly interested and heartened to hear the network is placing emphasis on support for staff members with mental health issues and/or staff members caring for family with mental health issues. There were some very brave and poignant contributions made by staff members suffering mental illness. There is much more we can do in this area to be more visible as a source of support for members with mental health issues. This also relates to issues such as disclosure where reasonable adjustments could be made for staff, but fears persist around the consequences of such actions.

The inconsistencies and particularly the disparity between the treatment of staff compared to students, especially procedural and financial, has been highlighted this year when we passed a motion expressing our concern with the situation which has given us a mandate to work towards remedying it. HR are now reviewing how reasonable adjustments and learning and mental health diagnosis and adjustments are paid for.

This step is welcome as it is essential that our University is consistently supportive of those with disabilities.

Gender

A further continuation from last year's report is the Athena SWAN activity. The University was this year awarded a Silver award, and the departments of chemistry and Materials science and engineering were also awarded silver awards, making a total of 6 departmental silver awards. This is an excellent achievement for all the staff concerned in making this happen but also a fantastic mechanism to hold the University to account, to ensure it puts these statements of intent into practice. Key issues include: work/life balance, i.e. not holding meeting outside core hours and ensure a sensible working week, addressing recruitment/ retention and promotion of female staff, and new for this coming year the submission will require an equal pay review that is most welcomed by the UCU. One of our key campaigns is for Universities to address the gender pay-gap.

Gender reassignment

I was invited to input into the inclusivity policy for Transgender staff. This was not contentious/ controversial as the provisions are broadly in line and in the spirit of UCUs own guidance which is available on the union's web site. The drafting of this policy is welcomed by the UCU.

-----UCU Equality & Diversity Conference in Eastbourne, 12-13 November 2015-----

Motions discussed and passed at the Women's Conference.

1/ It was agreed that Branches should be encouraged to support members suffering domestic violence, encouraging their institutions to deal sympathetically with requests for leave from members trying to manage (and extricate themselves from) domestic abuse. It was recommended that the Union set up a Working Group to look into this matter. Jointly with the Unions, our University has already formulated such guidance and advice for managers that is available on the HR pages

2/ A motion called to oppose the proposal to limit child benefit eligibility to 2 children. The proposer called upon the Union to research the extent to which this and other austerity measures are damaging mothers' prospects of studying and working in the HE sector. The motion was passed

3/ A motion called to keep the cuts to FE/Adult Education on the national agenda by collating data about job losses and the closing of courses and the disproportionate damage being suffered by women by the shrinkage in this sector. This was passed without opposition.

4/ A motion urged the Union to look at itself and its own culture when examining E&D issues. Much more could be done to ensure that the Union adheres to its own best practice in branches nationwide. The focus of this motion was retired FE/HE workers who were still members of the Union. What could be done to ensure the contribution of retired members was sought and valued. This was passed by the meeting.

ACTION: The Branch to consider ways to better integrate retired members.

Getting minority Groups involved in UCU activities

A workshop on how to integrate E&D into the Committee profile and practice of Branches was very useful. Black, disabled and LGBT members gave very interesting presentations detailing the challenges they have faced and overcome in the Institutions in which they have worked. I was particularly interested in hearing the Black speaker say that it was not so much getting black members involved in Committee work (although positive of course) but that it was very important that they be actively encouraged to take key positions; that the potential for advancement be clearly flagged to them. The LGBT speaker (the UCU national coordinator) offered useful advice about how to encourage LGBT members to join committee. There is a very active central UCU LGBT committee with the know-how and resources to help. They encourage Branches to make use of it.

Action: We need to do more as a Branch to encourage BME and LGBT to have an active role in UCU activities, a role on committee with clear possibility of progression.

Conclusion

In general terms, I feel that we must do more to diversify the composition of the Committee and we should try to actively reach out to Black/LGBT/Disabled members. We could do much more around mental health.