

Sheffield UCU Annual General Meeting, Thursday 4th June 2020, 1-2pm

Via zoom

Chair: Sam Marsh (outgoing President) and Sarah Staniland (incoming President)

Minutes; Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator

1. Introduction and welcome to members
Sam Marsh, SUCU President welcomed all members to the meeting
2. Minutes of previous General Meetings
The minutes of the last AGM held 6th June 2019 were agreed as a true record, and there were no matters arising. Minutes were also agreed for the General Meetings held on the 30th April 2020.
3. Local subscription for 2020/21
Annual changes to the local subs rates to reflect annual changes to the UCU national subs (as agreed at our 2013 AGM) were noted. The changes take effect from 1 September each year. The change from 2019/20 is graduated from +3.1% for those on £60k+ to 0% for those below £30k.
4. Annual Reports
 - 4.1. Sam Marsh introduced the [Annual Report](#) which had already been circulated to members. This contains reports on Branch finances, Health and Safety, Membership and the President's overview.
 - 4.2. Pablo Stern, our Treasurer talked through his Branch finances report. The local Hardship Fund is working well and there are no problems with finances generally. The largest Branch expense is for the Branch Administrator. Contributions to the local Hardship Fund have come from members, other trade unions and from the Branch general funds.
 - 4.3. Sam gave an overview of his report and reflected that we had hoped for a year of change for other reasons. Sam highlighted that the power dynamics in Higher Education are in a state of flux and we should capitalise on this. This Branch is seen as strong in the Sector and by management here too. We achieved a mandate for strike action in all four of the most recent industrial action ballots. We did not win all that we wanted in either dispute but the Four Fights national frameworks are now up for discussion, and a lot has been happening behind the scenes with regard to USS. We would do well to consider these disputes as unfinished. The University turned to the trade unions for help in the COVID-19 pandemic and we achieved close to the best terms in the Sector for our members. We are now returning to outstanding issues which we were working on prior to Christmas. These include; Academic Career Pathways, and the use of ten month teaching contracts. Sam also expressed thanks to the following people who are leaving SUCU Committee: Gillian Brown, Rob Stanton, Miriam Miller, Grace Whitfield, Lauren Selfe and Emma Naggouse (who left several months ago).
5. Elections
 - 5.1. SUCU Branch Officers 2020-21. This was overseen by Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) who acted as Returning Officer. Jane read out the nominees to the Branch Officer positions. Only one eligible candidate was nominated to each Officer vacancy. Jane declared each candidate for Branch Officer roles elected.

<u>Branch Officers</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Dept</u>
President	Sarah Staniland	Chemistry
Senior Vice President	Sam Marsh	Maths
Vice President × 2	Robyn Orfitelli	English

	Eda Yazici	Sociological Studies
Branch Secretary	Mark Pendleton	School of East Asian Studies
Treasurer	Pablo Stern	Retired member
Membership Secretary	Katy Fox Hodess	Management School
Equalities & Diversity Officer	Themesa Neckles	Education
Anti-casualisation Officer	Steffan Blayney	History
Communications Officer	Jess Meacham	Journalism
Education Officer	Craig Brandist	Russian and Slavonic Studies
Health & Safety Officer	Mick Ashman	Nursing and Midwifery
Pensions Officer	Moty Katzman	Maths
Personal Cases Secretary		
Post Graduate Researcher Officer	Will Hornet	Philosophy
Policy and Governance Officer	Simon Stevens	History
Environmental Officer	Elena Simon	Politics

- 5.2. SUCU Ordinary Committee 2020-21. This was overseen by Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) who acted as Returning Officer. There was only one eligible candidate for each of the six Ordinary Committee vacancies. Jane read out the list nominees to the Ordinary Committee member positions, and declared the candidates elected.

Ed Yates	Management School
Caroline Metz	ICOSS
James Cranch	Maths
Andrea Genovese	Management School
Lisa R Stampnitzky	Politics
Jane Simm	Retired member

- 5.3. We received one late nomination for the position of Ordinary Committee Member, and another for the position of Personal Cases Secretary. Branch rules allow the Annual General Meeting to co-opt up to five Ordinary Committee members, and to fill any vacant Branch Officer position. Jane Rodger asked if there were any objections to Tim Herrick being co-opted to the position of Personal Cases Secretary, and Vicky Crewe (from APSE) being co-opted as an Ordinary Committee Member. None were raised, so Vicky and Tim were co-opted.

6. Dispute Update

- 6.1. At this point the new Branch President Sarah Staniland took over the chair. She thanked Sam Marsh for his hard work as Branch President and members gave a round of applause. Sarah also welcomed new Committee members.

6.2. An overview of the disputes was covered in the Presidents Report. UCU's Higher Education Committee is meeting next Monday where important decisions need to be made. We will try to represent the position expressed by members at our recent Extra Ordinary General Meeting.

7. Covid-19 response update

7.1. So much has happened since March and the COVID-19 pandemic affects every aspect of our working lives. At first the trade unions were meeting with the University twice a week and now we have one meeting each week. We are going to send a very detailed update on all matters relating to COVID-19 to all members very soon. We have made positive progress in our discussions with University Management, but there are some outstanding issues, particularly those relating to staff on Fixed Term Contracts. The majority of contracts that were due to expire soon have now been extended. Nine and ten month teaching contracts also remain an issue and we will hold a separate Extraordinary General Meeting soon about this.

7.2. A separate Health and Safety meeting has been called to discuss return to work risk assessments. The University requested that the trade unions have oversight of the process. An extensive risk assessment is being developed mainly covering the risks of being exposed to Covid. We are scrutinising the control measures to check that they are feasible, workable and appropriate. The University is also concerned that some Departments will make their own independent mini risk assessments in an attempt to open up. Members are encouraged to contact SUCU if they are aware of any instances.

7.3. Discussion included:

- Workload has increased in light of blended learning. There has been no training, no workload assessment and no consultation
Ans. We have had many emails from members about workload. We are pushing for the recommendations of the Workload Working Group to be implemented as this has been delayed. Pressure also needs to be applied in Departments as modeling is done at this level. We will include the workload issue in our comprehensive email to members.
- The management direction to start blended learning is happening now, and is causing concern.
- The Covid risk assessment should include stress and workload.
- How do we make sure that Departments are following the central risk assessment?
Ans. Ask your HoD or manager what risk assessment they are using. The trade unions want to ensure that those responsible for risk assessments are supported, and that risk assessments are workable and appropriate.
- What are Management planning?
Ans. We do not know the data but there may well be a surplus this year. We have been pushing for no knee jerk reactions from Management. There will be an update on financial modeling at our next Covid meeting with Management.
- Concern over the new semester work commitments if schools are not back
Ans. concerns like this and all areas of EDI affected by covid are being discussed with management. The childcare/trying to work issues is at the forefront of minds, as many people (both management and TU) in the covid meetings are in that situation.
- We are not hearing about what plans are in place to deal with a second and third wave of the pandemic, and how transitions will be managed.
Ans. The University is looking at plans over the short and medium term and we are pushing for this too. We are also concerned about returning to normal with regard to SRDS and promotions.

8. Branch Motion

8.1. Proposed motion on behalf of SUCU Committee:

Sheffield UCU Endorses Citywide Twinning Initiative with Nablus

Branch notes

1. The long-standing support of our national union for the Palestinian solidarity movement.
2. The importance of international solidarity for the Palestinian people.
3. The unique and important role played by twinning initiatives in cultivating international linkages with Palestine.

Branch believes

1. That the current initiative to develop a citywide twinning program with Nablus in the West Bank is commendable and deserving of our support;
2. That as a union of university workers, we have a powerful role to play in building institutional relationships with our counterparts in Nablus;
3. That international linkages for Palestinian academics are particularly important given the restrictions placed on them by the Israeli state and the difficulties they face in engaging in academic activities outside of Palestine.

Branch resolves

1. To formally join and support the citywide twinning initiative;
2. To take steps to develop linkages with university workers in Nablus with an eye towards developing institutional linkages between the University of Sheffield and An-Najah University, the largest Palestinian university;
3. And to provide additional forms of solidarity, as appropriate, to our university trade union counterparts in Nablus.

The motion was proposed and seconded from the floor. The proposer gave background. No comments were made and the motion passed by a majority vote.

9. Branch priorities meeting

We will soon be calling a Town Hall style meeting for members to discuss their Branch priorities.

10. Any Other Business

Following the killing of George Floyd in America and the subsequent global protests, SUCU Committee endorses the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest planned in Sheffield for this Saturday, and would like to propose donations to relevant organisations.

10.1. Discussion included:

- The demonstration starts at 1pm on Devonshire Green. We need volunteer stewards.
- There is significant concern that the University did not issue a statement condemning the incident. Can SUCU raise this with management?
Ans. Yes we will send an email in advance of the covid meeting on Monday.
- There should be a rapid statement from SUCU to condemn the incident.
Ans. A statement will be sent as a matter of urgency.
- We should hold an EGM on BLM. A vote was taken on holding an EGM and a majority voted in favour. This will now be organised.
- A concern was raised about the current Police powers, how fines are being disproportionately suffered by BAME people, and risks faced by visa holders.
Ans. We understand that the organisers have taken this into consideration and issued guidance.

SUCU Annual Report 2020

President's Report

Sam Marsh

Many of us hoped this would be a year that changed higher education, but few expected what unfolded. Our university has ended the year locked-down. The future has many unknowns. And while the heaviest industrial action in higher education history didn't yield the results we expected it to, the sector's underlying power dynamics are in flux. The UCU membership has shown it is prepared to stand up to injustices, and the collective strength shown in Sheffield is taken seriously by those in charge of our university.

Until the emergence of COVID-19, the year had been dominated by 22 days of strike action straddling the two semesters. Yet again this branch showed that it can beat the thresholds set by those seeking to muzzle trade union activity, crossing the 50% turnout here for the fourth time in as many local ballots. Judging by our results, members had little doubt that a robust response was needed, and delivered with strong picket-lines throughout the action.

We have had the better of the battle over the narrative in both disputes, yet we have not secured all of our aims in either. Progress has been made on casualisation, workload and pay inequality in the "Four Fights" dispute - finally now being discussed at a national level - but employers have resisted firm commitments and have outright refused to part with cash. On the USS pension scheme, there is a huge amount of activity and some big steps forward on matters at the heart of the dispute, but our increased contribution levels remain unchanged. There may be questions to be asked about strategy on UCU's part, but it seems likely that the employers' decision to buckle-down and ride out the strikes was motivated by fear of a future in which members were confident that heavy industrial action would always deliver results. As such, we would do well to consider these disputes unfinished business. Those in national roles must continue to do everything possible to make sure that members' efforts so far, and in the future, lead to significant improvements in the matters that precipitated the action.

At precisely the point that our second wave of strike action came to an end, our university closed its doors due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The sector was underprepared for the emergency response required, but we were pleased to see those in charge at this university turning to the unions for help. We have managed to secure something close to the best terms in the sector for our staff, particularly for those on insecure contracts, and continue to meet weekly with management to identify necessary actions.

The strike action and pandemic response eclipsed some of the progress we were making locally on other issues. We hope to resume discussions around the unjust 10-month teaching contracts that cause financial hardship and scupper development possibilities. The newly implemented Academic Career Pathways promotion framework has resulted in a deluge of appeals, highlighting clear problem areas that will need to be addressed, and we have started pressing for a promotion route for our professional services staff. There are also important issues around representation of our postgraduate student members that need addressing. And with our newly created Environmental Officer role, we hope to do more on environmental issues, building on the climate strike movement that many of us have supported over the past year.

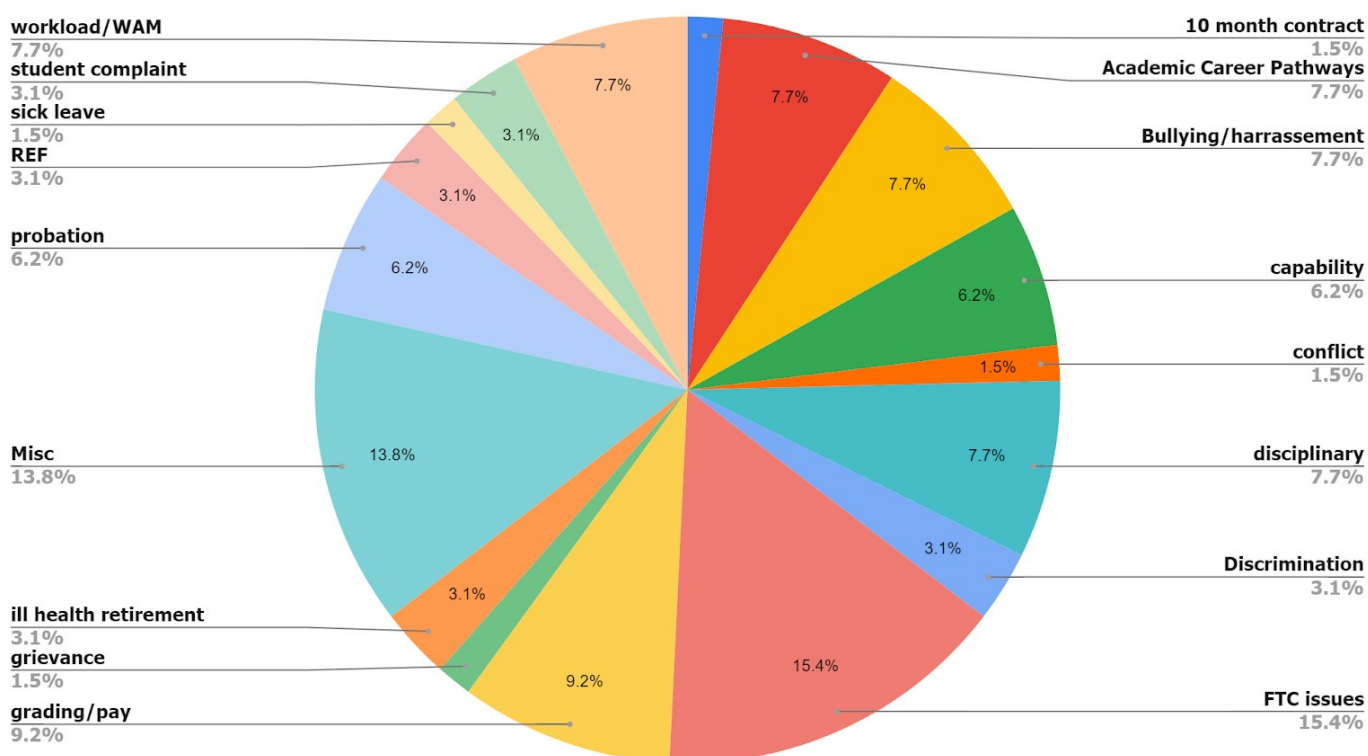
Sheffield UCU has built a reputation as one of the union's strongest branches, and continues to be represented in UCU's national structures. Members of our committee now serve the National Executive Committee and on both sets of national negotiation teams, in addition to representation on some of the national equality standing committees and special employment interest groups, including the Migrant Members Standing Committee which this branch was instrumental in establishing.

We have some changes to our committee for the coming year. Gill Brown, who has had a hugely important role in overseeing our casework in recent years, is stepping down as our personal cases secretary. Rob Stanton who has kept well on top of our membership records is also leaving committee, along with Miriam Miller, Grace Whitfield and Emma Nagouse, who started the year as one of our vice-presidents before taking on a role at UCU's head office in the autumn. Lauren Selfe will also be vacating her role as branch secretary, albeit we hope only temporarily. My thanks to all of them for their efforts on behalf of members. Others will be joining us, and we look forward to welcoming them onto committee. I will be stepping down as branch president, and am delighted to be handing on the baton to Sarah Staniland who will, I'm sure, continue to make sure that the committee listens to this branch's membership and presses the issues that need our action.

The coming year may not be easy, but with the bonds of solidarity formed over the recent years, and remembering that we are stronger together, we will be in a good position to support each other through whatever's coming our way.

Trends in personal casework:

SUCU Personal Cases Sept 2019-May 2020



Treasurer's Report

Pablo Stern

I am pleased to report that the branch finances continue to be healthy. Our income comes from the 'local' element of your monthly subscription, graduated according to income (see below), plus donations to the Hardship Fund.

Our branch funds have seen a modest decline this year due to the extensive industrial action, which required expenditure both on direct costs, such as supporting picketing, and for the Hardship Fund (see below). Such expenditure is of course why it is so important to have local funds. The formal accounts reported below only run to the end of February 2020, but for information the branch account stood at about £2,000 lower than the February figure at the end of April.

Overall though our funds continued on a sound financial footing, with normal income a bit more than normal expenditure. Our main normal expenditure of course is for our excellent Branch Administrator.

For the coming year we can expect our normal income and expenditure to be again roughly balanced, depending of course on future events. We would be able to financially sustain further industrial action if that were required.

Industrial Action and the Hardship Fund

Our financial health means we have been in a strong position to support campaigning activities and industrial action, in particular the extensive strike action from November 2019 to March 2020. As in 2018 we used the separate SUCU Hardship Fund, which sits alongside the core branch funds, to support members in particular difficulties. The national Fighting Fund was able to provide strike pay to a large proportion of the membership, with lower-paid members having a higher rate of support. However there have been members who have fallen through the net or have been in particular need, particularly 'casual' staff, and the local Hardship Fund has been used to assist those individuals.

The main Financial Reports below only cover September 2018 to February 2020 so I have also included at the end (3c) a brief financial report for the Hardship Fund up to mid-May for your information. We have had generous donations to the Hardship Fund from many members and also from other organisations (noted in the report). Their generosity is greatly appreciated. There is only a modest balance left in the fund at the time of writing, but Committee has authorised further funds to be transferred from the core branch fund if necessary as there are still requests coming in. Supporting industrial action has always been one of the key purposes of our branch fund.

Reports

Below are:

1. UCU national and local subs rates from September 2021
2. Donations and subscriptions since the last AGM
3. Financial Reports
 - a. The audited accounts for the last UCU financial year, to 31 August 2019, approved by UCU head office.
 - b. An interim financial statement for the first six months of 2019/20 (September to February).
 - c. An interim financial report for the SUCU Hardship Fund from November to May 2020.

1. UCU subscription rates 2020/21

The tables below set out the national subscription rates which will apply from September 2020. The change from 2019/20 is graduated from +3.1% for those on £60k+ to 0% for those below £30k.

The local subs change at the same rate as the national subs, as agreed at our 2013 AGM.

Subscription rates from Sept 2020			
	Monthly national subscriptions		SUCU local
	including political fund	excluding political fund	subscriptions
£60,000 & above	£27.38	£27.11	£3.65
£40,000-£59,999	£24.17	£23.94	£3.54
£30,000-39,999	£21.26	£21.06	£2.60
£22,000-29,999	£18.13	£17.96	£2.36
£15,000-21,999	£10.81	£10.71	£2.31
£5,000-14,999	£4.71	£4.67	NIL
Below £5,000	£1.00	£0.99	NIL
Retired/attached members	£2.91	£2.89	NIL

2. Donations and subscriptions June 2019 to May 2020

30/09/2019	Sheffield Trades Council	Donation to Youth Strike for Climate	£250.00
12/12/2019	Sheffield Trades Council	Donation to SYMAAG	£200.00
08/01/2020	Assist Sheffield	Donation	£200.00
03/02/2020	Cuba Solidarity Campaign	Affiliation for 2020	£40.00
06/02/2020	Hazards	Affiliation for 2020	£15.00
06/02/2020	NSSN	Affiliation for 2020	£50.00
06/02/2020	Campaign against Climate change	Affiliation for 2020	£25.00
06/02/2020	Sheffield Trades Council	Affiliation for 2020	£448.25
17/02/2020	Labour Research Dept	Affiliation and subscription for 2020	£257.25
17/02/2020	Justice for Columbia	Affiliation for 2020	£90.00
17/02/2020	CND	Affiliation for 2020	£25.00
18/02/2020	Tamil Solidarity	Affiliation for 2020	£50.00
06/04/2020	Sheffield Trades Council	Donation to Covid Action Committee	£50.00
16/04/2020	City of Sanctuary Sheffield	Donation	£250.00
22/04/2020	TUC General Purposes Fund	Memorial Day	£250.00

07/05/2020	Unis Resist Border Controls	Donation	£250.00
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3. Financial reports

The accounts for the UCU financial year ending 31 August 2019 follow, together with the interim I&E report for the current financial year, September 2019 to February 2020.

- 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 2017-18 have been signed off by UCU head office.

3.a.1. Income & Expenditure Account 2018-19

September 2018 – August 2019

Income		<i>Totals</i>
Subscription Income	67,199	
Charges on Income		
Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	17,464	
Subscription Collection Charges	502	
Total Effective Income:		49,233
Expenditure		
Travel	157	
Postage & Carriage	7	
Printing & Stationery	490	
Catering	2,109	
Donations	2,275	
Subscriptions/Affiliations	988	
Miscellaneous	118	
Clerical Assistance	25,030	
Pension	4,270	
Hardship Support	0	
Admin/Ins Cost	95	
Bank Charges	8	
Accountancy Fees	800	

Total Expenditure:		36,347
Net Income/(Expenditure):		12,886

3.a.2. Balance Sheet 2018-19

September 2018 – August 2019

		<i>Totals</i>
Fixed Assets	0	0
Current Assets		
Bank	71,583	
Bank – Hardship Fund	10	
Cash	25	
FX Card	189	
Debtors/Prepayments	1,504	
		73,311
Current Liabilities		
Creditors and accrued income	1,755	
		1,755
Total Assets less Current Liabilities:		71,556
Accumulated Funds		
B/fwd	58,670	
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	12,886	
		71,556

3.b. Interim Income & Expenditure Account 2019-20

Year to date September 2019 – February 2020

Income		<i>Totals</i>
Subscription Income	33,412	
Donations Received	3,180	
Charges on Income		

Subscriptions Payable to Head Office	8,209	
Subscription Collection Charges	229	
Total Effective Income:		28,154
Expenditure		
Travel	370	
Telephone	40	
Printing & Stationery	415	
Catering	4,668	
Donations	1,250	
Subscriptions/Affiliations	1001	
Miscellaneous	815	
Repairs & Renewals	79	
Clerical Assistance	12,968	
Pension	2,471	
Hardship Support	3,024	
Admin/Ins Cost	47	
Bank Charges	0	
Accountancy Fees	400	
Total Expenditure:		27,548
Net Income/(Expenditure):		606

3.c. Interim Hardship Fund Report 2019-20

From November 2019 to 21 May 2020

Income		<i>Totals</i>
b/f	10	
From Branch Funds	2,000	
Individual donations	5,147	
Hallam CLP	50	
Rotherham TUC	50	
		7,257
Expenditure		

22 payments to casual/short term staff	3,323	
8 payments to part-time staff	909	
17 payments to full-time staff	2,548	
		6,780
Current Balance:		477

Membership Report

Rob Stanton

Membership has increased by around 10% over the year indicating that the Union is rated as a beneficial asset by many members of university staff. A marked surge was noted at the start of the USS industrial action.

A more streamlined procedure for recording and maintaining changes in member's email addresses was introduced as well as a process for verifying the status of individual members.

Health & Safety Report

Mick Ashman

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). Previously these inspections have been used to focus on departments and workplaces where our members have raised health and safety concerns. Under normal circumstances we would aim to undertake at least one inspection each semester but regrettably the recent industrial action and COVID-19 pandemic have ensured this has not been possible.

This year the branch has:

1. Continued to work with HR and Safety Services on the issue of stress management. Stress is recognised as the biggest threat to the health, safety and wellbeing of higher education staff and we have always believed that suitable and sufficient risk assessments should be undertaken in all departments to identify its potential causes and establish control measures (in accordance with health and safety law). We have made slow but nonetheless significant progress in developing a standardised approach to stress risk assessment and will continue with this in 2020-21.

2. Requested that formal risk assessments were undertaken by the University as soon as the WHO declared the outbreak of COVID-19 to be a global pandemic in order to inform the decisions regarding the protection of the workforce. The University COVID management team did not provide these and instead closed

the campus in line with UK Government directives. However we have requested that the documentation relating to how the decision was taken is shared with us (in accordance with H&HS law).

We are presently working closely with Safety Services and HR to ensure that the opening up of the University campus is informed by appropriate risk assessments. These documents are currently being shared with us and we have made important (and valued) revisions to them where necessary. These risk assessments will need to be robust but the control measures that they detail should not put staff in a position where they cannot be complied with. We are also mindful of the responsibilities given to managers (many of whom are SUCU members), who may not be familiar with detailed risk assessments and will need appropriate guidance and support to complete them.

The forthcoming year is one of uncertainty but health and safety continues to be high on our agenda. We are already looking at ways in which we can be more effective in ensuring that the University complies with its health and safety responsibilities.