

SUCU Emergency General Meeting Minutes 30 March 2020, 1pm

Via Zoom

Chair: Sarah Staniland, VP

Minutes: Lauren Selfe, Branch Secretary

1. Welcome and introductions
The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. COVID-19 Updates
 - 2.1. Learning and Teaching
 - There is a COVID-19 response sub-group that SUCU is feeding into, chaired by Mary Vincent. Members referred to recent University communications re: change in Easter holiday dates and exam provisions. Students can now also self-report extenuating circumstances (temporary change to TUOS policy/procedure).
 - The question of how WFH is resourced is ongoing. SUCU is working with SU on PGR matters. GTA contracts will be honoured for rest of semester.
 - 2.2. SUCU meetings with HR (twice weekly)
 - Chair encouraged further comments and questions from members to SUCU account - this helps branch reps feed back to management.
 - Topics under discussion: extensions to FTC; pay for casual workers (TUOS currently promising to pay 80% of wages in line with Government scheme; staffside pushing TUOS to make up other 20%); PhD sick pay; WFH resources; Annual leave (staff encouraged to take annual leave as normal); casework (blanket pause but continuing on specific cases if critical to do so); promotions/ACP (branch reps working on a revised timetable and other issues Covid-19 will affect with management). Further updates to follow after today's meeting with management in all member email on Tuesday.
 - Questions/comments from the floor included: confirmation that Unicus is involved in these staffside talks, cancelling holidays due to extra workload, that teaching contracts (and indeed all types of contract) are being considered in extensions to FTCs and that staffside are also questioning management on recruitment policy, as a blanket freeze will have negative impacts on the institution. Also noted was the complete lack of contingency planning for any kind of staff absence (even prior to a pandemic!)
 - Branch committee also confirmed that discussions around ACP had been postponed due to committee illness and absence (rather than HR delays).
 - Following a comment from the floor, branch reps will:
 - continue to raise the issue of staff wellbeing as a significant H&S issue. Stress and workload monitoring/supporting varies greatly across the institution. Ask management about addressing this.
 - Issues with supply chains for equipment to work effectively from home
 - Highlight that "simplifying" assessments as directed by management represents an increase in workload, and questions around how to ensure consistency across modules and departments.
 - 2.3. [SUCU Branch motion](#) presented by Mark P and seconded from the floor.

Branch notes:

- That the USS and four fights disputes remain unresolved, and that VC Koen Lamberts has consistently refused to discuss Sheffield's position in those disputes with both staff and students affected

- That our members returned +to work on 16th March following strike action and have since then worked tirelessly to help with emergency efforts to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on our community, including agreeing wholesale temporary changes to our working conditions and practices

- That our mandate for ASOS continues until the end of April, although certain items within ASOS are extremely difficult to sustain given the scale of the crisis we collectively face
- The collective effort that has gone into attempting to make these extraordinarily difficult circumstances easier from colleagues and students across our community

Branch resolves:

- To reiterate our request for a further postponement of salary deductions not yet made to the 2020-2021 academic year, in recognition of the fact that many of us are facing immediate financial difficulties caused by the impact of Covid-19
- To continue our emergency efforts around the impact of Covid-19 and to work constructively with the University on the longer-term challenges we are all likely to face together

Comments from the floor included:

- “Offensive” that HR is using a global pandemic as leverage in the disputes (i.e. as bargaining chip to call of ASOS). ASOS should not be undermined.
- Demand should be stronger and call to waive deductions, not just defer them. Other commentators were in favour of this, but felt a postponement would be more realistic.
- Chair summarised that the majority of comments called for a stronger line with management and called for a vote.

54 participants; 61% against. Motion falls.

3. Update on disputes. Sam Marsh [update on USS](#). Robyn O shared that further meetings for both USS and Four Fights disputes are scheduled to see if a resolution is possible before it is necessary to rebalot. Further updates in approx. 1 week.
4. AOB (none)