

SUCU Extraordinary General Meeting 18th Sept 2014, 1 – 2pm

Chair: Craig Brandist

Minutes: Jane Rodger

1. Welcome and introductions

Craig Brandist welcomed all to this special general meeting about the threats to the USS Pension Scheme and introduced Roger Brooks UCU National Executive Member.

2. Guest speaker – Roger Brooks, UCU National Exec Member

2.1 Roger explained that he is a member of the UCU negotiators/Superannuation Working Group (SWG). A Special USS Conference of delegates from pre 92 institutions will meet in Manchester tomorrow (19th September 2014) to discuss the threats to the USS Pension Scheme and consider the recommendations of the SWG. Note that the Teachers Pension Scheme at the post-92 universities, eg Hallam, is already better than USS, and would be far better than USS if we accept these cuts.

2.2 Roger talked to a presentation written by Malcolm McNeil (UCU Head of Higher Education) much of the information in which can be found in UCU circular [UCUHE228](#). The presentation included: how the fund is valued, the USS financial management plan, changes under discussion, challenge to the figures used to define “the deficit” (USS is actually a healthy and growing scheme), how the proposed new scheme would work, the likely effect on the costing of the scheme, the effect on members, the UCU timeframe, and negotiators recommendations.

2.3 The changes under discussion include the closure of the final salary section of USS, the move of all members into an inferior career average scheme, a £40,000 earnings cap above which these benefits will not apply, and a new defined contribution pot above that the income from which would depend upon investment performance and would not be guaranteed.

2.4 The Special USS Conference tomorrow will consider the negotiators recommendations which include a timetable of industrial action should an agreement through negotiations not be reached:

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| Special pre-92 branch decision-making conference | Friday 19 September | To discuss SWG/negotiators’ report and decide on next action. |
| <i>USS Board</i> | <i>24 September</i> | <i>Important valuation assumptions and technical provisions for consultation</i> |
| Ballot period | Wed 1 to Mon 20 October | |
| Ballot closes | Mon 20 October | Action could start end Oct/beginning of Nov |

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| <i>USS JNC</i> | <i>22 October</i> | <i>Proposed scheme design formally tabled</i> |
| <i>HEC</i> | <i>24 October</i> | |
| <i>USS JNC</i> | <i>13 November</i> | <i>USS likely to want scheme design settled?</i> |
| <i>USS Board</i> | <i>20 November</i> | <i>Finalise technical provisions, agree terms for formal consultations (60 days) on changes</i> |
| <i>USS Board</i> | <i>Jan 2015</i> | <i>Refinements following consultations</i> |
| <i>USS Board</i> | <i>Mar 2015</i> | <i>Final/implement (note some are suggesting that the changes would take effect from October 2015)</i> |

2.5 Further recommendations are:

- Conduct a statutory industrial action ballot opening on 1 October and closing on 20 October.
- Members to be balloted for action short of a strike (ASOS) and strike action.
- ASOS ballot should indicate clearly to members what action will be covered (ie student assessment and examinations activity, covering for absent colleagues, call-out cover, staff appraisals, job evaluation).
- Members should be informed that should an employer implement punitive deductions this will result in a national response and the calling of national strike action.

A full list of recommendations can be found in UCU circular [UCUHE228](#).

3. Q&A

Questions and comments included:

- Q: What information has been given to non-members of UCU about the potential changes?
A: Nothing. Members need to tell colleagues and publicize the threats. Recruitment will build UCU's strength.
- Q: Will the final salary scheme end for everyone if the proposals go through?
A: Yes this will close on a specific date and everyone will move to the new scheme. The final salary will be based on the date when it closes and your further increments or promotion **will not** be reflected in your pension.
- We must fight the closure of the final salary scheme, and the new hybrid scheme that introduces "defined contributions" ie what you pay in is defined, but not what you will get.
- Bogus figures have been used to define the "deficit".
- Q: If the employers do get away with this will it stop there?
A: No. If the employers get away with introducing the 'defined contribution' element over £40k it is almost certain they will want to keep increasing that element and eventually the career average scheme will go the way of the final salary one. The reality would be far worse than the current projections. Absolutely essential we stop this.

- These changes will have a more detrimental effect on younger members.
- Q: What will happen to flexible retirement?
A: This is not affected at the moment but the changes will reduce the pension benefits in retirement.
- We shouldn't forget that successive pay decreases have also reduced the value of our pensions.
- There has been political pressure to remove the final salary scheme – the timing is not accidental.
- Strategy for potential ASOS affecting all student assessments was discussed. Significant damage to the University's functioning could be achieved.

4. AOB