

SUCU General Meeting Minutes Thurs 27 February 2020, 1pm

Council Room, Firth Court

Chair: Caroline Metz, Branch Policy and Governance Officer

Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator

1. Welcome and introductions

Caroline welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous General Meeting held on 23rd January 2020 were agreed as a true record.

3. Brief round-up of news

3.1. Pay and related matters negotiations are continuing. The longer than expected negotiation meeting at the beginning of this week is a good sign. The status of talks are “without prejudice” and therefore bound by confidentiality.

3.2. USS Pension negotiations are running alongside tripartite talks. There was an unexpected meeting yesterday which may be related to the pay talks on Monday. Keep up to date via twitter which can be accessed without needing an account. We recommend looking at Jo Grady, Sam Marsh and Robyn Orfitelli’s twitter.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Some Departments are asking us to monitor what work has been missed.
Ans. This should not fall on staff.
- Are they concerned about research work that has been missed?
Ans. We think they are prioritising teaching at the moment.
- The deadline for strike forms is next Friday to ensure deductions are staggered.
Members should use the form on the HR webpage.
- Members are encouraged to apply to the National Fighting fund and if they are particularly hit by the deductions to also apply to the local Hardship Fund.
- What more can be done to end these disputes?
Ans. Pressure the Vice Chancellor. Use a petition that calls for the VC to; show leadership, publish his response to the recent USS consultation, and tell us what pay offer he will support, outline his concrete plans and committed resources to reduce workloads, provide more secure jobs and end equality pay gaps, and lobby other Vice-Chancellors, UUK and UCEA to work harder to resolve the disputes.

4. UCU Congress including branch motions

UCU National Congress will be held 27 to 29 May this year.

4.1. Multi-year pay bargaining Branch motion:

Proposed motion:

Multi-year pay bargaining motion

Conference notes:

- The major successes of our Four Fights campaign in bringing together issues of pay and equality, and crossing the anti-union threshold in many branches
- That, nevertheless, staff in HE have seen over a decade’s decline in real-term pay
- That timelines for annual pay negotiations mean that these almost inevitably extend into the next bargaining round, potentially limiting options and leverage

Conference believes:

- That there is a continued need to demand better pay and conditions and confront inequalities through UK-wide negotiations
- That a medium-term strategy would allow for improved flexibility in our negotiating and bargaining response

Conference resolves:

- that UCU should actively explore options around multi-year bargaining with the other New JNCHES trade unions, in advance of the 2021-22 bargaining round.

- That the baseline negotiating position should include sustained above-inflation pay rises and concrete benchmarks for addressing pay inequalities, workload and casualisation on a UK-wide basis

Proposed from the floor on behalf of SUCU Committee.

Seconded from the floor.

Discussion included:

- This gives us time as a union to organise more effectively.

A vote was taken and the motion was carried nem con.

4.2. #Metoo Truth and Reconciliation motions:

Two motions regarding the same matter were presented in turn to members, and a vote taken on each. A final vote was then taken to decide which of the two motions would be taken to Congress.

4.2.1. Proposed Branch Motion:

#Metoo Truth and Reconciliation

Congress notes:

- The importance of the #metoo movement globally in redressing gender inequality;
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence occur in progressive organisations, including trade unions such as our own;
- Rape culture is enabled by institutions and structures that harbour perpetrators and create an environment hostile to survivors.

Conference believes:

- There is an urgent need to address this issue within our union, our universities and the society more generally.
- The misuse of confidential processes can shield perpetrators from scrutiny, further traumatise survivors and enable further abuse to take place.

Conference resolves:

To support an independent third-party expert review of existing policies, practices and procedures in the union in order to:

- Improve structures for reporting;
- Improve support for survivors;
- Facilitate investigation of past practice to ensure a supportive environment for survivors;
- Consider what measures should be implemented to ensure that the union is accountable to its membership.

Proposed from the floor on behalf of SUCU Committee

Seconded from the floor.

The proposer gave background to the motion and a discussion followed. A vote was then taken and the motion was carried by a majority of hands, with one against and two abstentions.

4.2.2. Proposed member Motion

#Metoo Truth and Reconciliation

Conference notes:

- The importance of the #metoo movement globally in redressing gender inequality.
- Troubling cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence within the union, including cases of union leaders as perpetrators.

- Rape culture is enabled not just by perpetrators but by the individuals, institutions and structures that harbor them and create a hostile environment for survivors and enforce silence.

Conference believes:

- There is an urgent need to address this within our union, within our universities and within the society more generally, bringing these issues into the open.

Conference resolves:

- To support an independent third party expert review of existing policies, practices and procedures in the union in order to improve structures for reporting; improve support for survivors; end the use of gag orders of survivors by the union and employers; and facilitate investigation and accountability with respect to the hostile environment created for those who disclose abuse.

Proposed from the floor

Seconded from the floor

The proposer gave background and a discussion followed. A vote was taken and the motion was carried by a majority of hands, and there were five abstentions.

A final vote was taken on which of the two motions was to be taken to Congress. A majority were in favour of the Branch motion, and there were five abstentions.

6. Member Motion - Prof. Stefan Grimm

Proposed motion:

Prof. Stefan Grimm

Prof. Stefan Grimm was a toxicology professor at Imperial College London. In 2014 he killed himself as a consequence of the work pressure he was put under. Despite he was a very productive academic, he was threatened with dismissal, should he not manage to increase his grant capture. I argue that a core concept of our strike is to fight the sub-culture that led to Stefan's death. To remember Stefan, I propose to hold a minute of silence on the picket line on Wednesday 4th March at 10am; and to bring homemade placards with the text "I remember Stefan". I would like SUCU to help in publicising this event, also on social media using the hashtag #irememberstefan.

Proposed from the floor.

Seconded from the floor.

Discussion included:

- Have the family been contacted about the motion?
Ans. No direct contact. There is no means of doing so unfortunately. There are other examples of honouring people without the need to contact their families first.
- The Coroners Report is not published yet.
Ans. There is widespread documentation that this relates to workload.
- We should wait until the family have given permission.

A vote was taken and the motion fell by a majority of hands.

7. AOB

None.