

SUCU General Meeting, Tuesday 15th May 2012

Fulwood Room, University House 1 – 2.30pm

Chair: Gill Brown

26 members attended.

Apologies: Kaye Carl

Gill Brown introduced the new Branch Administrator, Jane Rodger and thanked Jack Windle for his hard work in the role. GB also introduced Mark Oley the Regional Official who was also present at the meeting.

Agenda

1. Pay Claim

Pablo Stern reported that UCU national negotiators have had two meetings with the Employers. The derisory pay offer was increased from 0.5% to 0.8% and both have been rejected. The next negotiating meeting is to be held on 22nd May and there will be feedback at the Conference on 8th June. PS reported that there would need to be a pay increase of 13.5% to attain a standard of living equivalent to that of 2009. The claim also includes the gender pay gap, assimilation of hourly paid staff, disability leave, and professorial pay. The HE Sector is healthy compared to others and spending on staff is at an historic low (including University of Sheffield), at a time when the pay of VCs has risen.

2. Teachers Pension Scheme

Pablo Stern updated members that there is nothing to report on the USS negotiations. The result of the TPS dispute will inform progress in the USS dispute in particular the CARE scheme, which will be replicated in the USS.

Mike Henderson (Branch Secretary at Sheffield Hallam University) was introduced and spoke about the TPS day of action on 10th May. He reported that the SHU Branch had run a successful day of action and had received support from students and UCU members in other branches.

SHU Branch will be sending feedback to HQ that, if there is to be further action this must be in conjunction with the NUT and NASUWT, and be at a higher level than a one day strike.

Mark Oley reported that the overall impact of the strike within FE is yet to be known and shared Mike Hendersons view that joint action with other TPS member unions would be the best way to pursue the dispute

There was a question from the floor about why a unified day of action was not taken. There were issues of when action would have had the greatest impact for individual unions. There is also a delay in USS action due to the decision that was taken at

Conference in February ie to put further action on hold. This may change at the Conference in June.

3. Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Daragh O'Reilly reported that in spite of the fact that the deadline to submit the University's REF Code of Practice to HEFCE is 31st July, SUCU was given an early draft and only two weeks in which to comment. A SUCU sub committee was formed which consulted widely. SUCU learned that other stakeholders had been given four weeks in which to consult, and when this was raised with the University the same deadline was agreed.

DO had attended a Regional seminar at which REF Codes of Practice and approaches to this by other Institutions were shared. SUCU then met with Management on 3rd May at the Joint Committee to raise four key areas:

- The need for a no detriment (if not REF returned) clause.
- Transparency in appeals process
- Transparency in assessment
- Equality Impact Assessment.

At the JC meeting Mike Hounslow informed SUCU negotiators that there would be no further consultation regarding the Code.

MO commented that REF is an institutional mechanism of control. There are also other possible repercussions for performance management/monitoring of academics, and change of contracts to "teaching only". He advised that there may be challenges on equality grounds.

SUCU Committee will submit amendments to the Code to the University.

Comments/questions from the floor included:

- A member has been threatened with a 'teaching-only' contract if they did not meet certain targets.
- Another member had asked his manager about not being returned and was advised that there would be no detriment.
- Many members are concerned about not being returned.
- There have been some Personal Cases handled by the Committee where members have sought to change their contracts ahead of REF. Those present were reminded that a change of contract from a 'research-active' to a 'teaching-on' contract of employment transfers employment away from protection of academic freedom through statute.
- There have also been some Personal Cases that have involved members being taken through disciplinary procedures. There is a view this is could be part of systemic and institutional bullying.

MO suggested that a message is sent to all members warning of the risk posed by REF, and asking members to contact the Committee if they are being pressurised, or have concerns about equality imbalances.

4. Change Management Policies

GB reported that SUCU has been seeking to negotiate a new set of Change Management Policies to protect the interests of members, but there have been long delays. MO explained that the University of Sheffield is the only pre-92 university without a Change Management Policy in the Region. MO has asked Management for a day set aside to work together to agree a full set of change management policies. He advised that it is

imperative for this is done by the end of June, as the University is already creating research active fixed-term-contract posts within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, in response to what the University believes to be uncertain demands.

5. Any Other Business

- 5.1 GB reminded colleagues that it is important to complete the Staff Survey, as SUCU will be working with Management on their response to the outcomes.
- 5.2 UCU Conference is on 8th 9th and 10th June. SUCU delegates are Daragh O'Reilly, Pablo Stern and Jane Simm. Jane Rodger will attend as an observer.
- 5.3 GB invited colleagues to take copies of the latest Bulletin away with them to give to members and non-members.
- 5.4 GB invited colleagues who are interested in becoming a member of the Committee to get in touch.

The next meeting is the AGM which is on 13th June between 1 and 2pm in the Abbeydale Room.