

## SUCU General Meeting, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Present: 18

Chair: Mick Ashman (Branch President)

### 1. Minutes from the last meeting

Accuracy was agreed and there were no matters arising.

### 2. University of Sheffield staff survey v. UCU stress survey

Gill Brown (Branch Health & Safety Officer) reported that SUCU has compared the results of the University Staff Survey and the UCU Stress Survey. Both surveys were run concurrently. The UCU survey questions were based on the Health and Safety Executive's workplace stress management standards. A PhD student has been commissioned by SUCU to carry out the analysis, and produce recommendations for the Branch. One finding was that most staff on grades 6-9 felt they could not cope with the demands of their job.

Mick Ashman reported that despite assurances to the contrary the University has decided not to release the Department level results of the Staff Survey to the trade unions.

A number of comments were made from the floor that described an inconsistent response to the survey across Departments. Some Departments have held meetings with staff whilst others have not communicated about the survey at all. Members were reminded that they can ask their Head of Department for a copy of the survey and the Department's action plan.

Members discussed workplace stress. SUCU will raise this issue as a Health and Safety concern with the University. Gill Brown reported that Committee is still looking at the outcomes of the analysis and member consultation sessions will be organised soon.

One member commented that stress is a workplace hazard in the same way as risks to physical health. Also, organisations are required to carry out risk assessments for all new activities. The pressures faced by research active academics were also discussed. The Workload Allocation Model should be used to challenge these.

### 3. Workload Allocation Model

Mick Ashman reported that the purpose of WAM is to ensure that workload is managed and managed fairly. There are ongoing discussions with the University regarding the principles of WAM with a view to seeking agreement. SUCU's position is that not only should Departments have a WAM that is used in a meaningful way, but also Departmental practice should be reviewed effectively. The matter will also be raised as a Health and Safety concern.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- A risk analysis should be undertaken when a research grant is won, so a means of managing workload is identified.
- Workload relief for new staff should be part of the negotiations. One department assigns 75% of normal load for new staff.
- One member asked about the timeframe. This is a slow process – the next meeting is in May, but SUCU will take up individual concerns from members.
- The emphasis should be on finding positive solutions to prevent stress.
- There is a time breakdown for teaching and administrative tasks, but no itemisation for research - only a nominal number of hours is allocated.
- SUCU's position is that staff should not be required to routinely work more than 35 hours per week, but people can choose to do so.
- Research should be linked to the strategic objectives of the Department.

- There are implications for family friendly employment practice and can be challenged under Equality Law.
- Recruitment of graduate students is needed to build the strength of the union.

#### 4. REF

Pablo Stern (Branch Secretary) reported on behalf of Daragh O'Reilly:

Some members are now being informed about whether or not they are to be included in the REF, may be included, or are definitely not included. Recommendations are being made to the REF Strategy Group (RSG) relating to their provisional inclusion in REF2014. The University is having to trade off between impact case study and researcher output submissions. A recent communication to staff in one department points to the production of impact case studies of sufficient quality as being "critical in determining the overall UOA submission strategy". Management are at pains to stress that inclusion/exclusion is not a judgement on individuals. A no detriment clause has been posted on the University of Sheffield web-site saying "non inclusion within REF will not of itself be used as a measure of research performance, lead to any contractual or workload changes, nor will it be detrimental to the career prospects of an employee at the University of Sheffield". While this may be reassuring, members are asked to be alert for any indications to the contrary and to let the committee know.

One member commented that an informal message has already been sent out, that the "no detriment" clause will not be implemented. Another commented that even if 'no detriment' worked within a department it could not be effective across institutions. Mick Ashman stated that SUCU will hold the University to the statement that they have made.

#### 5. Pay Claim 2013

Mick Ashman reported that the Branch needs to agree 3 delegates to send to a Special Sector Conference on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013. SUCU and other Branches requested this Conference at which a viable strategy for the 2013 pay claim will be discussed. Gill Brown and Pablo Stern were proposed as delegates, seconded and their attendance carried. Members also agreed to a third delegate should they volunteer.

#### 6. Halesowen case

Mick Ashman reported that this is a case of trade union victimisation and urged members to support members by signing the petition. UCU members were dismissed for students not achieving high enough standards.

#### 7. Recruitment

Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) reported that the Branch recruitment mail shot will soon be sent out in hard copy to all eligible non UCU members. Two members volunteered from the floor to be part of the Branch's Recruitment sub group.

The recruitment of hourly paid workers, post graduate teachers and graduate students is also a priority for the Committee. All hourly paid members will be asked to disseminate a mail shot amongst colleagues. All members will also be asked to email hourly paid colleagues. Two members volunteered to help with recruitment of students and post graduate teachers.

#### 8. Academic related network

Jane Rodger asked Academic Related members to consider acting as a point of information exchange for the Branch with the National Academic Related Committee.

#### 9. AOB

Geoff Turner Secretary of Sheffield Anti-cuts Alliance gave an update regarding proposed local cuts to Council services, and grass roots campaigns. The next rally will take place on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February outside the Town Hall. A comment was made that some organisations facing cuts are strongly linked to University outreach activities. Another comment was made requesting support for striking NHS workers in Wakefield.