

SUCU General Meeting 16th May 1-2pm

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Simon Renton future President of UCU – State of the Union

Mick Ashman introduced Simon Renton President of UCU 2013/14. Simon explained that he works in the History Department of University College London as an academic and in an academic related role. He gave an overview of the following:

2.1 The National Pay Claim

Initially the other trade unions representing the sector wanted this year's claim to be only about pay. UCU wanted extra issues included, and the trade unions agreed to pursue two claims:

- Pay

The trade unions are asking for RPI plus an element of catch up, London Weighting, and a guarantee that no one working in HE will be paid below the living wage. The Employer initially offered 0.5% which has recently increased to 0.8%. A final offer is expected before Congress.

- Other issues

The gender pay gap: The Employer has proposed to work jointly with the trade unions to look at this. Simon specifically mentioned that there are already signs of significant inequality in the REF.

Casualisation: The Employer has agreed to look at this.

Disability leave: UCEA indicated that they were unwilling to negotiate a national agreement but offered further discussions involving the Equality Challenge Unit and the collation of case studies from employers in the sector.

Workload: The Employer is not willing to move on this.

Redundancy avoidance: Subscribers to UCEA do not wish to talk about this. There have however been good local agreements negotiated, as in Sheffield.

Extension of the pay spine to include Professors: Again, UCE subscribers 'do not wish to talk about this'.

2.2 UCU finances

Simon explained that UCU's expenditure now exceeds income. Previously, there was a trend of declining membership in the FE sector and increases in HE. This is no longer the case – the rate of loss in FE has slowed and has increased in the HE sector, particularly in the post 92s. This is due to casualisation and contraction. Nevertheless some universities [like ours] have increased membership. There is a likely shortfall of £2M that needs to be resolved over the next 3 years.

The options may be:

- An increase in subs. This may have a limited impact.

- Recruitment although this could not realistically fully make up for the loss.
- Expenditure cuts

3. Simon Renton – Q&A

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- How is UCU dealing with the staff union? UCU has a good redundancy avoidance agreement for staff.
- Could there be more subs bands for the more highly paid? This and other subs options are being looked at.
- How many staff work for UCU? Between 320 and 330.
- Increases in post grad recruitment are a good long term strategy for increased income for UCU. Why are there no motions regarding this at Congress? There will be a number of pilots across Branches to have an additional lowest band of subs to attract post grads that have paid work.
- Are reminders to pay the correct subs rates sent out nationally? No, these are sent out at a local level.
- There is a risk of individuals or specific groups of staff being exposed if the forms of ASOS chosen do not impact on many staff roles.
- ASOS should be linked to other industrial action.

4. Statutes review

Mick Ashman provided an update regarding Statute negotiations. Statutes set out broad entitlements for academic staff, and there are concerns that the University will dilute these protections. We have so far negotiated to extend the protection of Statutes to include teaching and research-only staff, and some aspects may be extended to include all staff groups. SUCU has had significant help from Regional and National Officials and there has been real positive progress. Current sticking points include dismissals, and appeal panels. The University is drafting version four of their proposals.

5. SUCU Recognition

Following the Extraordinary General Meeting on the 28th February Management withdrew their initial proposals, that included de-recognition of SUCU for academic related staff. The campus trade unions have also now agreed to leave the current collective bargaining groups as they are. There will be a joint campus union meeting next Monday to agree a proposals for a united Recognition and Facility Agreement with the University. SUCU has representation for the professoriate in the current agreement and SUCU's position is to maintain that in the new agreement.

6. Research Excellence Framework

Craig Brandist (Vice President) reported that SUCU has had a number of meetings with the University. There have not been major problems so far, apart from for people seeking to hand in their notice. Some people are being held to an eleven month notice period, due to how the semesters fall. SUCU Committee are also keen to hear from any members who have experienced any difficulties regarding 'complex circumstances' or the no detriment clause.

7. Congress and the 2013/14 Pay Claim

Delegates from the Branch are Pablo Stern, Mick Ashman and Jane Simm. Contributions and ideas from the meeting today will be very helpful to SUCU delegates.

8. Recruitment and membership

8.1 Jane Rodger reported that the SUCU recruitment mailshot has now been sent to all eligible non members in the University. Members are asked to speak to colleagues about the mailshot and encourage them to join.

8.2 Jane Rodger reported that she is conducting a membership audit ahead of any future ballot. It is important that members' details are accurate, and an email will shortly be sent that includes a link for members to check their own records.

9. AOB

9.1 A member asked if the University is reviewing promotion criteria. Nothing yet has been tabled by the University. Casework has identified issues and it is important that members give feedback on this issue to SUCU Committee.

9.2 Mick Ashman encouraged members to get more involved in the union by putting themselves forward for SUCU Committee in 2013/14. Nominations must reach the SUCU office by 22nd May and the AGM is on 19th June, 1pm in the Council Chamber of the Octagon Centre.