



University of Lincoln UCU

Branch Newsletter

February 2018

If you are absent as a result of sickness, should you catch up on missed lectures and seminars?

This is something that was raised at the last branch meeting, where staff in LIBS appear to be automatically timetabled to deliver sessions that they had missed due to sickness absence. Other schools also raised this as an issue so we thought that we would clarify the union's position. Firstly it is important that staff are familiar with the [Postponed Classes Policy](#) (an academic policy) and the [Sickness Absence Policy](#) (an employment policy). Secondly UCU is unequivocal in its stance that there is no obligation for a member of staff who has been off work because of sickness to cover the work that they missed. The university's Sickness Absence Policy states that:

- 3.1 Sickness absence will be managed positively and sensitively by managers in line with this policy, with the support of the Human Resources Department. The University's **duty of care to all employees*** will be at the centre of this policy.
- 3.2 The University will treat employees who are absent due to a medical condition, **sympathetically and supportively***.

Additionally ACAS guidelines state that the employer has 'a legal responsibility to protect the wellbeing of ... employees at work. This duty of care, of course, includes the health and safety laws, but also goes beyond those. It might involve: **emotional and psychological pressures** - make sure that they are not exposed to some of the causes of stress, such as too much work, too little control themselves over their jobs and poor working relationships'.

It is the union's view that being asked to cover work missed through sickness absence could cause staff to return to work before they are fully fit because of the worry of work mounting up whilst absent. This exposes them to causes of stress, i.e. too much work (having not only their usual workload but additional duties on top). This is not good for the member of staff, their students, colleagues or the university, as it may lead to further absences due to the member of staff not being fully recovered. It is also a health and safety issue, given that there is a duty of care on the employer to protect our wellbeing.

If a member of staff does wish to reschedule missed teaching sessions this is of course their prerogative, however there should be no pressure to do so.

If you have been required to reschedule teaching missed through sickness absence please can you contact Andy Yeadon, the Branch Administrator with details so that we can get a measure of how widespread this practice is.

* Emphasis added

USS Pension Strike Action by UCU

Most staff at Lincoln are members of the Teacher's Pension Scheme, however, a few members of staff are in the USS. As you are aware a series of strikes will begin at USS institutions on Thursday 22 February. There will be an escalating wave of strikes over a four-week period that will begin with a five-day walkout either side of a weekend. There will then be four days of strikes from Monday 5 - Thursday 8 March and a full five-day walkout the following week (12 - 16 March). For the latest detailed information on this please follow this [USS Link](#)

Lincoln is not a USS institution and so members cannot take part in the action, however, **we can support colleagues in these institutions** by contributing to the UCU fighting fund, which will include the provision of strike pay where appropriate. If you are able to contribute, please follow this link [UCU Fighting Fund](#)

Report on the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)

The UCU branch meets the University management in the JCC (Joint Consultative Committee). The most recent meeting was held on 26th January and the issues raised by the UCU on behalf of members were the following.

LIBS

A high number of staff in LIBS have left the university and have not been replaced, and the remaining staff are being asked to cover teaching. In some cases staff have been asked to do this outside their area of knowledge, and are being given no time to prepare. Sometimes staff are not fully aware of what they may be asked to teach in the week ahead!

MODULE EVALUATION

Data from Module Evaluations are not informing staff how to modify/improve a module but are being used to censure individual staff members. Of particular worry is the inclusion of the question relating to Student Reps being included in the overall score for the module, it being outside staff control, and furthermore, linked to a programme rather than an

individual module. We were reassured when we raised this with management (Sue Rigby) on the introduction of the new module evaluations that this question would not be included in overall module calculations.

MARKING

Part time and hourly paid staff are often still given a full allocation of marking with a 15 day turn round deadline. The 15 day deadline is the same deadline for full time staff as the 15 days are being taken as University days and not the individual working days of the p/t staff. E.g. a staff on 0.6 contract – 15 working days would be 5 University weeks. The marking volume is also dependent on the size of individual seminar groups. The comprehensive rate paid to hourly paid staff does not cover the volume of marking if the seminar group is large.

In some schools, staff are been told that they must mark on line. The way this has been introduced has caused staff considerable concern. Staff complained there was no consultation about the change and there has been no support for the move i.e. training on how to use the system. There was no stress risk assessment of the impact that such a change might bring.

ADA

The university had failed to inform the branch of planned changes to ADA in the form of a change of platform. As ADA is a matter for negotiation we were somewhat concerned.

ROLE POFILES

A number of managers at the University appear to be unaware that Nationally Agreed Role Profiles (and corresponding grade descriptors) exist or that staff roles should be matched with the descriptors. Additionally in some schools staff at Grade 5 and 6 (Technicians and Demonstrators) are being asked to prepare, teach and mark students' work. Staff at Grade 7 (Lecturer) are being asked to undertake programme leader roles.

The branch need members to bring such issues to the attention of officers so that they can be raised with management. Members can raise these issues either through their [school rep](#), at a [branch meeting](#) or through the branch administrator (ayeadon@lincoln.ac.uk)

New Software for ADA

As mentioned above, there is a plan to move away from SharePoint to a new platform. The university's HR department have demonstrated the new software to a number of Branch Officers and the software is being piloted in the School of Education. The feedback on the software so far is very positive and represents a big improvement, hopefully signalling a

return to the principles UCU expected from the appraisal process. As what happens in practice is not always what is supposed to happen in theory, when members go through their own appraisal, the branch would be grateful for feedback on how the process has worked for you. Please send it to the Branch Administrator (ayeadon@lincoln.ac.uk) We have not as yet signed it off as we need to see the results of the pilot in the School of Education. We will also have to contact the Regional Office for their advice/approval as ADA is part of our Terms and Conditions.

UCU day of action against workplace racism: 28 February 2018

Members are encouraged to support the [UCU campaign](#) to raise awareness of racism in the workplace. For example:

- Watch the Film [Witness](#), available on YouTube, chronicling the lived experiences of UCU black members.
- Consider or discuss the findings of [our survey of BME staff](#)
- Read the ['Black Voices' blog](#) on the UCU website.

There is also a national demonstration '[March Against Racism](#)' on Saturday 17th March. This is organised by Stand up to Racism. Further details of the march can be found [here](#) and further information on the movement is [here](#)

Develop your academic career with UCU webinar

The repeat run of the CPD lecture 'Building your academic career' with Dr Steve Joy, is now sold out for this Monday but you can [watch the lecture online as a series of webinars here](#). This is a lecture by Dr Steve Joy, specialist careers adviser for PhDs and post-docs, Early Career blogger and former member of the University of Cambridge careers service. **It is aimed at PhD** students or those who would just like help applying for academic jobs. Also please be aware that UCU delivers many CPD events for members. Attendance is free, although you will have to cover travel expenses. Details of events can be found [here](#). Look under the UCU courses tab for details of what is available and where.

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