

71 Members attended on line meeting

Apologies

Emily Wilczek

National four fights ballot

The result of the disaggregated ballot for the branch is

Number of individuals who were entitled to vote in the ballot	423
Number of votes cast in the ballot	199
Votes cast in the ballot as a % of individuals who were entitled to vote	47.0%

ARE YOU PREPARED TO TAKE INDUSTRIAL ACTION CONSISTING OF STRIKE ACTION?		
Number of spoilt or otherwise invalid voting papers returned	0	
Result of Voting		
Yes	137	68.8%
No	62	31.2%

ARE YOU PREPARED TO TAKE INDUSTRIAL ACTION CONSISTING OF ACTION SHORT OF A STRIKE?		
Number of spoilt or otherwise invalid voting papers returned	0	
Result of Voting		
Yes	166	83.4%
No	33	16.6%

The ballot had been organised and conducted over a small time frame, the 47% turnout represented an increase for 43% turnout the last time a disaggregated ballot had been held. Given these circumstances, the increase turnout was welcomed.

Members were assured that checks on membership had been carried out and were as accurate as could be, however, the branch were in need of school reps in English and Journalism, Life Sciences, Design, National Centre for Food manufacturing, Psychology and Social and Political Science. In all

UCU Branch Member Meeting 10/11/21 – Key points raised

these schools there were a large number of union members and a school rep would be able to check data accuracy.

From the Thru text campaign and other anecdotal evidence, a number of members did not receive ballot papers. These had been sent to members' home address, errors could be due to incorrect data on the system. All members were encouraged to check data held by UCU.

There is a UCU delegates meeting on 12/11 and branch delegates from all branches across the country are to report back on feedback from members meetings on the following;

Action

Members voted overall by 70% to take action over Four Fights with 51% of all members voting. 54 individual branches passed the threshold to take industrial action (although 5 of these branches voted not to take action).

The union is proposing a day of strike action in November for those branches that passed the threshold and a day of action for those branches that didn't. The day will run subsequently to the USS day of action making two days of action in all universities.

Reballots

If the ballot had been aggregated, a turnout of 51% would have enabled us to call action in every university workplace. The union is therefore proposing a complete re-ballot of all HE members on an aggregated basis in the New Year. This will enable us to take sustained strike action in all universities in the spring. The campaign will prioritise the injustice of casualisation and the intersectional impact of precarious employment

A continuing strategy

The union's Four Fights strategy has been clear - to put pressure on individual university leaderships to, in turn, put pressure on their collective organisations to engage with UCU in meaningful negotiations. Industrial action is part of that pressure. The overwhelming feedback from members is that casualisation is the key issue which underpins the Four Fights dispute - it directly impacts on pay, pay equality, and workload. The union is proposing that we re-focus the Four Fights campaign with a clear focus on casualisation. This would form the basis of a national aggregated re-ballot in the New Year and an aggressive programme of industrial action in the spring

The branch did not meet the threshold for strike action and so cannot take this in November, It was not clear what the day of action for other branches means, no one commented on this.

Regarding the re-balloting, mixed views were expressed with more general support for an aggregated ballot but no vote or poll was taken.

In terms of the continuing strategy, all comments were in favour of concentrating on one issue with comments in favour of that being casualisation as that encompasses workload, pay and inequality. However, some schools don't have any Associate lecturers and members here felt that this would detract from the cause.

Other members were in favour of concentrating on workload as this has led to high rates of stress and ill health in the sector.

UCU Branch Member Meeting 10/11/21 – Key points raised

For staff who teach on Arts and Humanities, the biggest current threat is the government's suggestions that either fees for those courses might be reduced or numbers that can be admitted to those courses may be capped and that the union's strategy of strike action & the issues on which that is based will do nothing to combat those threats and may in fact strengthen the government's hand in seeking to implement them.

There was also support for reducing fees for students although this may have unwanted implications such as Universities increasing accommodation costs to generate more income. This assumes that any loss of fees income could be made up via that route whereas there is a significant risk that there would simply be a significant loss of income which could not easily be made up. Given that fees income is the key thing which pays salaries across the sector that would be likely to have an immediate impact on members jobs.

Everyone agreed in general that concentrating on pay was not a wise thing to do at this stage.

Health and Safety

Rob Dean – branch Health and Safety Officer (RD) gave members an update. Members were encouraged to contact him (H + S officer) with any issues as a number of meetings including the H+S JCC are coming up and issues can be raised. HR had asked UCU if there are any ideas of how staff / university can encourage students to wear masks. Anecdotally, mask wearing is less prevalent among students although consistent approaches within some schools where masks are / were handed out to students proved successful.

RD had previously reported that rooms without access to open windows had been removed from the timetable, in fact rooms without any windows but with a working ventilation system were still in use. Members finding any problems with this or with these rooms to contact estates who can check if the ventilation system is working effectively and can test for levels of CO₂.

There is a Health and Safety meeting (JCHSC) in the near future and if any member wants RD to raise an issue on the agenda to contact him, The points RD is to raise, so far, are;

UCU should be copied into any reports to the University pertaining to Health and Safety, as currently this does not happen.

Fire Alarm provision – following a recent fire drill, some students were apparently left in a refuge area and no one checked on them

Occ. Health Assessments – Members have been referred to Occupational Health and have also had a risk assessment taken following an OH report, this has supported the idea that they, as vulnerable staff, should teach on line only. However, there have been a number of cases where the respective head of school has not followed the guidelines and has not supported the individual member of staff. OC and CR to query status of OH reports with Ros Simpson.

RD has obtained an amount of material and information pertaining to well being and reducing stress in Higher Education and will be asking Lincoln to implement these.

The number of covid cases on Campus used to be reported in the HR newsletter, however, it has not been so in the last editions. RD to chase this up.

Workload Model Dispute

Officers met with management last week (05/11). Officers outlined the issues with the main points being;

The previous model was not perfect but was considerably better than the new model, the main problems with the old model was that some tariffs were not realistic and some schools did not implement the process properly, however, the new model has issues around;

- Implementation of new system
- It is too vague
- Inconsistently applied across schools
- Lack of Transparency
- Tariffs vary from college to college as tariffs too be decided locally
- Consultation
- No contingency for absence cover and staff turnover

Generally, UCU are looking for a workload process with more granularity, consistency in tariffs across schools, a transparent process that has parity and clarity across the university and for the whole process to be completed earlier in the year so that it can be properly linked to AAPR.

Management listened and took the points away and will come back to UCU

Members commented that this year had been a mix with some schools using old model and some implementing the new process, this had caused extra problems and would not want a repeat next year.

The new model is not fair in that the tariffs are decided locally and this inevitably leads to inequality. There are also errors in the data with members highlighting cases where figures sent onto them by HR as part of the process, don't match the reality of their individual situation, it is a concern that errors in data passes on yet more responsibility to staff who have to check their individual data.

Any Other Business

None.

Meeting closed 14.56