

UCU Branch Member Meeting 08/12/21 – Key points raised

59 Members and 2 guests attended on line meeting

Apologies

Barry Turner, Jane Chapman

Goldsmiths

Tamar Steinitz from Goldsmiths college addresses the meeting, giving details of the industrial action taking place, now in its third week. The action is against proposals to make 52 staff redundant (of which 32 are in professional services).

Tamar outlined the background / history to the current situation and how they had arrived at where they were now. The situation was due to restructuring proposals which management claimed were necessary due to lack of funding. Staff had resisted the restructuring plans. However, there had been three rounds of voluntary severance, pay progression had been stopped. A large number of fixed term and associate lecturer contracts had been terminated. Accountancy firm KPMG had been brought into audit and their proposals did not advise redundancies. Staff held a vote of no confidence in management where 87% of academic staff voted in the ballot, however, management took no notice of this and pressed ahead by making an agreement with banks for a loan using college buildings as security. One of the conditions of the loan made was reduction of staffing. The dispute is on going and 3 more weeks of strike action are planned for the spring term.

Tamar was thanked for her contribution

National Four fights re-ballot

Dr Annie Goh from the University of Arts, London attended to update members on what had happened at her University. In the first ballot in 2019, they had had a 34% turnout but members had been very active in the re-ballot and raised this to 54% turnout and took 14 days of action in Feb / March 2020. Casualisation of staff is a big issue at UAL although financially the university is in good health with strong student numbers. Branch officers had mobilised the membership using thurtext and emails. The structure of the union was different to Lincoln with 4 union branches spread across 12 sites. They are always keen to recruit school reps. They often held branch forums rather than formal meetings with a set agenda, this involved more discussion among members. Questions were taken and Annie was thanked for her contribution.

Workload model dispute

Nothing much to add, branch officers had set out the case and were waiting to hear from Management.

College of Arts reorganisation

This was a reorganisation and not a restructure as no redundancies were involved. The school of English and Journalism is to cease to exist with English moving to school of History and Heritage, Journalism to LSFM and Creative writing to either LSFPA or LSFM or LSHH. Other changes involve Architecture and Design, Animation and Photography. There are to be **no** job losses as a result but there will be some staff movement into different roles. This is subject to consultation and the branch have asked for no job losses, that affected staff are broadly in favour and stress risk assessments be carried out on the proposals.

Health and Safety

Rob Dean – branch Health and Safety Officer (RD) gave members an update. The government may or may not be announcing details of plan B later in the day (8th December), this may involve making mask wearing mandatory and working from home. Since the university had changed the wording of the operating procedure that wearing of masks is expected there had been a change in attitude among the students. Members were reminded that they can ask their head of school to make masks readily available and staff can take a box of masks to hand out to students where necessary. The JCHSC meeting had been moved to mid January, but the issue of stress risk assessments, well being measures previously brought up and the availability of mental health first aiders would be on the agenda.

The issue of mask wearing on open days was brought up as in previous open days some parents / visitors had refused to wear masks on campus, the university should encourage all visitors to wear masks and RD to take this forward.

Any Other Business

Ballot papers should have arrived at members home addresses, any problems with this, contact branch admin. Members request for local marketing materials to be followed up.

Members reminded that they can encourage and recruit colleagues in their school to join

Next Meeting(s) – Wednesday 16th February 2022, Wednesday 23rd March (AGM) 2022, Wednesday 25th May 2022.

Meeting closed 14.56