**LANCASTER UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE UNION**

**NOTES FROM THE GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 26th March 2014**

**Joe Thornberry (Acting President) welcomed members to the meeting which had been called primarily to enable members to discuss the forthcoming marking boycott, and if time allowed, to consider the proposed new local branch rules.**

**Marking Boycott**

Roger Grigg (UCU Regional Support Officer) was welcomed to the meeting and invited to address members.

Roger provided an overview of the HE industrial pay dispute and the context for why UCU members were taking industrial action in response to the employers' failure to make HE members a proper pay offer. The action to date had included one day and two-hour strikes, working to contract (ongoing) and a marking boycott which was due to begin on 28th April if there was no break-through in negotiations.

The forthcoming marking boycott included:

* Coursework and exams (ug, pg, all assessed courses) - Note: can give formulative feedback to students preparing coursework but no feedback on assessment of coursework
* Not communicating marks (written, online or verbally)
* Not attending exam boards (including exam board pre/post meetings)
* PhD upgrades (MPhil to PhD)

Members were reminded that the last marking boycott was in 2006 and the action forced movement by the employers which allowed the then pay dispute to be resolved.

**Comments/Queries from the floor**

**Support for academic staff from non academic members?**

Message to academic members is that they are not alone so non academic members should be actively visible, leafleting campus, talking to students and showing their support for the action. Local branch to put support mechanisms in place.

**What if your pay hasn’t been docked for previous action?**

Hold onto your pay – if colleagues and management know you were on strike, you have done all that has been asked of you. There may be a delay in the payroll system so check your March/April pay packet.

**Advice to members on temporary/casual contracts?**

Ask them to support the boycott and the local branch to take the position that they will be supported - branch can escalate dispute if such members are victimised as a consequence.

**Advice to PG Tutors (e.g. PhD studentships with teaching/marking as component of award of studentship)?**

If they don’t have a contract of employment with the university, they can’t be sacked. However, industrial action legislation only covers employees. Tutors such as this might have a service contract with the university and whilst they can refuse to discharge elements of their service contract, it is not known what the consequences might be locally for such members.

**Advice to External Examiners?**

External examiners have separate contracts with the institution and are not covered by the action. It is up to the individual concerned as to whether they wish to voluntarily withdraw from their contract. Enquiring external examiners should be asked not to undermine the action, reminded that they should conduct proper and rigorous scrutiny of academic standards and not sign off sets of marks if HEIs are trying to progress or graduate students on partial sets of marks, or marking teams have been changed without good reason. They should also check that exam boards are quorate.

**Advice to members involved in exams and invigilation?**

Exams should continue as normal as we are not telling people not to do exams, invigilation is the process of watching over an examination so should also continue – it is the marking that is being boycotted.

**Advice to members involved in PhD vivas/panels/upgrades?**

Formulative and summative discussions should be boycotted, vivas are boycotted, all upgrades boycotted.

**Advice to teaching staff?**

The action may have a greater impact on these staff but they should still participate in the marking boycott. If members suffer from full stoppage of pay then UCU national has a strike fund and UCU legal office will look at cases to pursue lost pay.

**Advice to members on declaring participation in marking boycott?**

Members should talk to each other. If asked by management or more senior colleague if participating in the boycott, answer honestly. If paperwork received for marking, don’t mark it – leave it where it is. Comply with reasonable instructions (e.g. if asked to hand marking to someone else).

**National publicity**

Comments on media coverage and strategy will be reported back to National UCU.

Roger Grigg and all members were thanked for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed.