

CONTENTS

1. ICYMI – a win for PDRAs
2. Double standards for senior managers and staff members
3. Senior managers rewarding themselves
4. Career progression for PS and academic staff
5. Changed use of office space
6. Upcoming Decolonizing Lancaster University events
7. University arms trade links – sign the petition

1. ICYMI – a win for PDRAs

In a department, there was a serious case of abuse of contracts seeking to unfairly impose teaching workloads. PDRAs were having their ‘grey clause’ taken advantage of to impose non-negotiable teaching loads, without consultation or proper workload management. Working very closely with the RSA and departmental reps we were able to apply significant pressure on management, citing terms and conditions, while encouraging PDRAs under duress to refuse this additional teaching load.

The outcome was eventually wholly in our favour by January – with a new teaching policy for PDRAs drawn up requiring explicit consent for additional workloads (in line with contractual obligations and UKRI guidelines). While this was a win, it was a clear sign that senior management would take advantage if given an opportunity, we have been fortunate that other departments have not followed their example to create departmental disputes across LU.

This was reported earlier by our then researcher rep Erik Jellyman in his statement to the AGM, but it is worth repeating.

2. Double standards for senior managers and staff members

After questions were raised by the UCU, on behalf of members, about working conditions on our China campus, an external consultant was commissioned to investigate. Shockingly, but not surprisingly, two senior managers, enabled by HR, recently interfered with the consultant’s report. The submitted report included quotes from staff members that were not fully anonymised, and which may have been critical of the two senior managers. Putting our members at risk, the full report was immediately shared by HR with these managers, who then ‘abridged’ it before it was shared with staff members.

We have asked the University leadership for an inquiry into the failings of the review to hold those responsible accountable for the failing and the cover-up. We have asked for immediate reassurance that none of our members, who had engaged with the review in good faith, will face any repercussions. However, we have been met with complete silence. Apparently, protecting senior managers trumps protecting ordinary staff members!

3. Senior managers rewarding themselves

There is a restructure proposal involving the merger of CaM (Communications and Marketing) with RAID (the Recruitment, Admissions, and International Development) divisions. The senior managers who have put forward the proposal, are blatantly rewarding themselves by giving themselves expanded remits and more responsibility, which no doubt will look very good next time their pay and

rewards are discussed. Meanwhile, in professional services at the lower pay grades there are no regrades permitted currently and during better times staff struggle to access regrades and rewards. Another case of double standards!

There has been no clear rationale put forward to the 90 plus staff in these two divisions as to why this restructure should take place, which is reverting to the same structure that was disestablished just a few years ago. UCU has questioned all of this but have had little traction so far. Management and HR are hiding behind definitions of what a 'reward' means, and how 'mergers' are merely 'line management' changes. In fact, the Director of HR denied that it is a merger at all, when the proposal document had mentioned 'merger' at least twice!

4. Career progression for PS and academic staff

UCU, along with UNISON and Unite, have been pressing management for a discussion on professional services staff career progression, including regrades, since July 2020. Vacancy control has effectively shrunk the workforce, reducing opportunities for progression and imposing a moratorium on regrades, while workloads have been spiralling. Management have been dragging their feet on the issue, but under pressure from the unions have agreed to meet us next month to discuss promotion, regrades and career progression for PS staff.

UCU fed back our concerns to the Academic Promotions Criteria group led by Sue Black which has proposed a revised set of criteria for academic staff. While our concerns were acknowledged, management has decided to press ahead with the implementation, citing KEF as a reason for LU to 'develop' its engagement criteria due to which the implementation of the revised criteria was considered a priority for immediate action. While our request for a transition period was refused, management conceded that colleagues who have been preparing a promotion case based on the old criteria won't be disadvantaged, and would have the option to declare in their application that this applied to them. We also managed to get some further concessions, such as the inclusion of sustainability as a criterion, and a recognition in relation to regrading for Research Associates, which is now being looked at in a separate project.

5. Changed use of office space

The university is planning to change how we use office space, perhaps leading to fewer individual offices, more hot desking etc.

There are a number of 'return to work' programmes going on across the university. The campus trade unions have had an initial meeting with Andrew Barker, who is chairing the Staff Engagement Group (SEG) workstream which will feed into the broader RWP programme. But LUMS is pressing ahead with its own space programme, completely out of sync with the university. We have heard that there are structural issues with the Charles Carter building, but no further information has been forthcoming from the university. Trade unions have been asked to input into the LUMS programme, but only as an afterthought when we asked the centre whether we should have a separate formal structure for trade union consultation for LUMS. There is a 'pilot' project (or maybe two) going on for B-floor in University House for facilities and the HR building, where again there has been no formal consultation with trade unions.

In summary, no one seems able to give us a straight account of what is going on. Communication about the different projects is patchy and engagement with trade unions poor so far.

6. Upcoming Decolonising Lancaster University events

10th of June (10.00 – 12.30) Institute for Curriculum Enhancement - Facing in Seminar: *Why 'decolonise' the University?* [Registration via this Libcal link](#)

This seminar explores the topic and challenges of decolonising Lancaster University. We consider and grapple with how, as a community, we can support and develop teaching practice that is 'inclusive by design' and in doing so contribute to a student experience which is transformative.

17th of June (12:00-13:30) *Decolonising Medical Education*. To sign up email Dr Richard Budd: r.budd@lancaster.ac.uk

17th of June (17:00-18:30) *From Beirut to the Moon: A conversation with Naji Bakhti*. Flyer attached;

14th of July (12:00-13:30) *Decolonising Your Doctorate*. To sign up email Dr Richard Budd: r.budd@lancaster.ac.uk

7. University arms trade links – sign the petition

Several LUCU members created a petition a few weeks ago calling on the Universities of Lancaster and Cumbria to break their ties with arms exporter BAE Systems. BAE Systems produces combat aircraft, warships, tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery, missiles, small arms ammunition, cyber & intelligence, and nuclear missile submarines. Its third largest customer is Saudi Arabia, which has been bombing Yemen for years, contributing to a major humanitarian crisis there. BAE Systems (and other UK companies) are also likely to have supplied components for weapons systems that Israel has used to kill Palestinian civilians and destroy hospitals and other vital infrastructure.

The petition was submitted to the two Vice Chancellors last month, and their joint reply revealed that Lancaster University academics have received from BAE Systems a total of £1.14m in the last 7 years, for a range of research, engagement, training and careers fair sponsorship activities. There are apparently no plans to review the University's ethical criteria for research and other collaborations to reduce or exclude involvement with weapons manufacturers.

Lancaster is not the only University that has close links with the arms industry, and Emily Heath (working with Scientists for Global Responsibility) has recently launched another petition targeted at all UK universities. Please sign, comment and share it, at <http://chnng.it/phqXLdnYkj>