

LUCU Members Update 7th September 2023

Dear LUCU members,

as we return to routines after the summer break, it's time for your branch exec to update you on latest local and national developments. Much has happened since you last heard from us, thus we are sending this rich newsletter. We hope you find the time to engage with it all.

- **Lancaster University chooses buildings over staff and student experience**
- **The end of MAB**
- **MAB grievances**
- **Annual leave, MAB, deductions**
- **LUCU Hardship Fund**
- **Remembering Dr Andrew Drummond**
- **Branch to branch solidarity**

Lancaster University chooses buildings over staff and student experience

The University continues to [spend millions on new building projects](#) while staff reel under the cost of living crisis with over 25% pay erosion over the last decade. The VC speaks of providing our students with exceptional facilities, but staff who deliver the exceptional experience for students are treated with ruthless contempt as clearly demonstrated by the VC's refusal to negotiate with LUCU, while LU degrees are handed out without following established QA processes in some departments. Vanity projects are prioritised, while professional services staff have been stagnating in their roles since 2018 with a freeze on re-grading, even as senior staff continue to rake it in (a rise of £2.5 million in senior staff salaries as the number earning over £100k has increased by more than 50% over the last 5 years). All the while, a vast number of staff who teach and research continue to be employed on insecure contracts, and Associate Lecturers / GTAs continue to be exploited with not even support for a subsidised bus pass, which the LUCU, led by its PGR reps, has been campaigning for throughout the last academic year resulting in promises but zero delivery.

On another note, in a [recent video shared with staff](#), Deputy CEO Nicola Owen says "People drive the organisation and make the University what it is"....but the senior leadership didn't think about this when continuing to 50% of our salary for taking legitimate industrial action. The subtext of this video is that if we don't comply with an authoritarian regime then the employer is prepared to be nasty.

Overall, a grim and shameful state of affairs which the VC would do well to reflect on. He should take the time to come out of his ivory tower and talk to staff unions who represent the majority of staff at LU.

The end of MAB

You will have seen that MAB has been called off (60% of the votes). This is a national decision based on the results of a consultative e-ballot many of you will have voted on. For information, the turnout was only 27% (not a surprise as it happened in the middle of prime-time summer holidays), and 62.7% of members who declared participating in MAB voted to keep it on. In extreme synthesis, this means the action is for now suspended, but there is an ongoing ballot (please vote!) to renew our mandate for action.

While so far the action has not obtained all that was aimed for, we should not forget that through the action we had a major impact. Universities responded to our action with quite unprecedented intransigence, rejecting our reasonable requests and instead going very far in order to undermine the action, at the expense of staff, students, and more broadly the quality and integrity of assessment and of our degrees. Locally, our senior management has been among the harshest ones, with continued draconian deductions throughout the summer and a reluctance to engage in meaningful negotiations with our branch.

So what happens now that MAB is over?

In the next steps, it is key that we do continue supporting each other and acting collectively, both to continue exercising pressure and to make sure we have a say on what the return to full service looks like, avoiding that demands to do the marking put members in stressful situations, keeping an eye on how managers handle it etc. etc.

- To do this, a reps meeting will take place Tuesday September 12th at 1pm - [LINK](#)
- Please, do organise departmental meetings and continue talking and supporting each other
- The branch will continue insisting in communications with university management to get the deducted money back
- Members are still invited to take the grievance route
- The hardship fund is still available – please apply!
- A GM will take place soon to discuss the situation and the next steps. We will send information about this soon. Monday 18th Sept, 1pm. See [link](#) here.

MAB grievances

National UCU is asking members to fill in a proforma form. However, this does not change the original advice about going through an internal grievance first because a successful local resolution is likely to be much quicker than a legal case. Note that some employers (e.g. UoManchester) have refused to hear any grievances on MAB deductions, leaving the legal route as the only possible remedy; while other employers (e.g. Chester) have heard grievances, reduced reductions accordingly and made balance payments to members. **Thus, please continue raising grievances at an institutional level.**

Find attached the information which is being released from National, via Regional, to branches regarding MAB deductions/grievances; as well as our own LUCU's grievance template kindly crafted by Sunil Banga. Please note that the dedicated email address for members to return the questionnaire, when completed, is asos@UCU.ORG.UK. That inbox is only accessible by the legal team and the barrister working on the cases so members can be reassured of confidentiality.

Annual leave, MAB, deductions

Many of us have seen strike deductions on the July and August payslips. Sunil has kindly prepared an excel file to check if the deductions have been accurate (see attached). You just need to fill in the two highlighted yellow cells from your pay slip. This will give the number of days deducted in the last cell. **Check that the number of days of deducted is what you were expecting. There should be no deductions for annual/sick leave etc.** Remember that each day of deduction would account for 2 days of MAB (@50%) or 1 day of strike action. If there is an error, contact HR and payroll straightaway.

LUCU Hardship Fund

As you are aware, MABbers all over the country have sacrificed thousands of pounds for months now. Fellow LUCU members' donations have been key in keeping the pressure. Although the MAB is no longer in place, we need you to keep donating as we continue to receive hardship claims. Remember that our impact has been felt. Many universities have not met their recruitment targets this year, and the extraordinary measures put in place by VCs will soon result in further problems, e.g. re progression.

Please, do let the whole of UCU support you by applying to both the national and the local Hardship Funds. , email our treasurer, Michele, m.luxon@lancaster.ac.uk. **Solidarity is key to our work!**

Remembering Dr Andrew Drummond

It is with sadness that we share the news of a committed, active UCU branch member, Andrew Drummond's peaceful passing at the age of 77. Andrew taught Educational Psychology. His commitment to publically-funded and accessible higher education was shown when in his mid-60s he was prepared to get on a freezing 6am coach for a 10 hour round trip to London to protest against the marketisation of universities for the 10 November 2010 national NUS and UCU demonstration against the hiking of tuition fees from £3,000 to £9,000. He was a true intellectual, rest in power, comrade.

Branch to branch solidarity

Lancaster UCU provided University of Brighton UCU with a practical donation of £1,000 whilst it is out on indefinite strike over a remaining 25 redundancies.