

## Lancaster UCU newsletter 14 July 2023

Dear LUCU members,

Following our letter to the VC sent on 4th July (see attached); Julie Hearn, Jan McArthur and Sunil Banga met with the Director and Deputy Director of PoE yesterday. We reiterated that our members are angry, tired, and very disappointed in the employer's position of indefinite MAB deductions. We made it clear that the recalcitrance against constructive dialogue shown by the VC demonstrates Lancaster's hardline position; and continuing of MAB deductions after the exam boards, and asking staff to mark work for which pay has already been deducted, i.e. marking for free, is unreasonable and unacceptable. We clearly indicated that we remain open for constructive dialogue and to reset the damaged relationships. The Director of PoE in turn was keen to point out that the University is seeking a return by staff to full contractual duties and for all unfinished/pending marking to be completed, which shows that our action has had an impact.

**We asked for an immediate and complete stop of MAB deductions in the first instance**, for any constructive dialogue to begin on return of pending marks in a reasonable timeframe. The Director of PoE has promised to get us a response from the VC as soon as possible on our demand. We reminded the Director and Deputy Director of the new wave of strikes including on the forthcoming Open Day (tomorrow) and Graduation ceremonies, and that the VC may not wish the scenes seen at Edinburgh University to be repeated at Lancaster given the fantastic student support we have had from our brilliant students.

**We will call an Emergency GM on Monday 17th July if there is a breakthrough in our negotiations as outlined above, to discuss next steps, so please treat this as notice of the EGM.** Formal notice will follow if and when we hear back from the University senior management. Please, stay tuned and continue reading for updates on:

- **Open Day and Graduations Strikes**
- **Grievances**
- **Hold the line and share your MAB stories**
- **Annual leave and MAB**
- **PGR as Staff campaign leaders facing redundancies**
- **Solidarity with staff who work in local rail ticket offices**

Wishing you all a quiet Friday so that you get to finish work on time to enjoy your evening and get rested for the picket line tomorrow ☆(🌸\_🌸)☆

### Open Day and Graduations Strikes


During the EGM on Tuesday the 11th we took a vote about going ahead or not with a) strike tomorrow at the Open Day (15th of July); and b) strike next week during graduations (18th, 19th, 20th, 21st July). Members voted yes in both cases: 77% for open day and 49% for graduations. **This means that we will see you in the picket lines tomorrow!!!** 🌸(˘\_˘)🌸 **Pickets will run from 9 to 10.30 at the usual locations.**

**Remember, you do not have to strike to visit the picket line. And visiting for 15-20 min means a lot.**

## Grievances

You may have heard from colleagues in LU and/or other institutions that MAB deductions do not belong to the grievance process because grievances are about problems with colleagues, but that is not accurate. Grievances are about our contractual rights and obligations, and a 50% deduction for participating in MAB is, as you very well know, a disproportionate and punitive amount to steal from our salaries. So, let's continue submitting grievances. Let's put an administrative burden on the employer, let's make the deduction process as difficult as possible. All of this strengthens our position without costing us much financially. LUCU will offer a Q&A/training on grievances soon. We are organising this, please bear with us. In the meantime, please, find attached all relevant documentation along with Sunil's grievance template and advice from our regional office. Further templates from colleagues from other UCU branches can be found [here](#), and [here](#).

## Hold the line and share your MAB stories

Our sacrifices are not in vain! More and more universities are breaking ranks, but more importantly students continue to show their unfettered support as they graduate. If you haven't seen the videos of graduations in Edinburgh earlier this week, please [follow this](#) and [this link](#). They may bring you to tears, and for sure they will reassure you that our students have our back!  And we are working hard to have their back too! As you may have heard the Home Office is not ready to make any adjustments to student visas to minimise the impact of our MAB. This is outrageous, so Jenny Sherar - UCU Head of Equality - and UCU Migrant Members Standing Committee have worked together to draft a letter to the Home Office and Suella Braverman that Jo Grady sent on the 12th of July. [Read it here](#). You may also want to consider signing this [open letter](#) asking UCU and HEC not to suspend the MAB.

Share your concerns, stories and questions about MAB, strike action and ASOS to highlight the impact of our industrial action. **We know you have stories very worth telling.** We aim to collect them all and share them anonymously in our social media accounts, our blog, and use them as hooks to get local and regional press to cover our fight. Please send to both our general email account ([uculancaster.ac.uk](mailto:uculancaster.ac.uk)) and to our Secretary (Patricia Prieto Blanco, [p.prieto-blanco@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:p.prieto-blanco@lancaster.ac.uk)).

## Annual leave and MAB

Obviously we all want to make sure payroll does not impose the 50% punitive deductions on our salary when we are on leave (annual or sick). If you want to make sure no mistakes happen, then you could email your department administrator stating the dates you will be on leave and requesting the MAB deductions are stopped for those dates. Theoretically, this should be enough, as your department administrator will then liaise with payroll/POE. Your secretary, i.e. yours truly, had sought confirmation of the MAB deductions by emailing Rebecca Barrow (Head of Employee Relations & Organisational Change), so I emailed her directly with my annual leave dates. Becca answered me confirming she would let payroll know. Either or, keep an eye on your payslip because mistakes seem to be happening often at the minute. We wonder, maybe colleagues in POE are a bit overwhelmed?

## PGR as Staff campaign leaders facing redundancies

Many of you will remember the PGRs Against Low Pay [open letter](#) that secured 10% rise to PhD stipends from UKRI and many other funders last summer. Ellie Munro and Alex Kirby-Reynolds, the leads of this campaign are facing redundancy from their jobs at UCU. While we are fighting for UCEA to end casualised contracts, our own union uses and abuses them. We are speechless. It is time to

let our General Secretary know that we demand our union treats employees in the same way we expect UCEA to treat us. Make your voice heard by writing your thoughts on this to Jo Grady using this form; and sign [this open letter](#).

<b>Campaigns &amp; policy</b> 	<h2>PGRs as staff, not students</h2> <p>UCU has adopted a policy to campaign for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) to be recognised as members of staff.</p> <p>We held a launch event for the campaign in November 2020 which set out the aims of the</p>	
<b>Stamp out casual contracts</b> 		
<b>PGRs as staff, not students</b> 		
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PGRs as Staff campaign events 		
PGR campaign news 		
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<b>Making a difference</b> 		

### Solidarity with staff who work in local rail ticket offices

Probably you all have heard that our local rail ticket offices are threatened with closure. Please, show solidarity with staff who work in those! Their jobs are on the line. RMT and TSSA members are particularly impacted by this. And we are risking to lose the much needed human support, particularly when things go wrong. As our colleague Katie Walford reminds us: "Ticket Offices are a lifeline for those of us who don't use apps, who need more complicated journey information or who need assistance. Besides which, we want social interactions with real people when we're out and about (don't get me started on self-service checkouts....)".

So, [please sign and share this petition requiring train operators to keep ticket offices and platform staff at train stations](#). Take part in the [public consultation](#) and/or [write to your MP](#).

Solidarity,  
Your LUCU branch.