

Lancaster UCU newsletter May 22 2023

We hope this email to provide with you a bit of hope, and/or a silver lining to a Monday, because we have some news about escalating our local action.

What we have done so far

We have seized all opportunities to talk to management about the threatening 50% deductions for MAB. We wrote a letter, brought up the disconnect between the cost-of-living crisis and cutting our salaries in half at the JNCC last week, and met with the HR/POE director to explain why UCU believes the deductions are illegal. We are still waiting for a promised written response from the VC.

Interestingly, our VC did have time to answer local MP Cath Smith to describe our current action as “isolated and low impact”, but the recent announcement of extraordinary (and highly damaging to the quality of our degrees) measures to be implemented with regards to marking and awarding of degrees strongly suggests they believe otherwise. They are afraid because we are giving them good reasons to be. Luckily, MP Cath Smith and another 19 MPs continue to support UCU and make clear that the employers’ approach is only prolonging this dispute unnecessarily thereby harming students’ experiences. Their latest action was the submission of the University and College Union marking boycott Early Day Motion on the 15th of May 2023, which you can read [here](#).

Against this background, and after discussing with UCU’s regional office, your exec decided to use the AGM to gauge support for potential escalation of Industrial Action at the Local Level. Please, note that our local branch rules clearly stipulate agenda for AGM has to be circulated at least 7 days before the meeting, which is why potential escalation was introduced under AOB. Your exec hoped for a response from the VC before the AGM, but that didn’t happen. The AGM voted in support of preparing for possible strike action.

What will happen next

We will now prepare for a possible strike action, which will include an online **poll** of members to gauge support. Any strike action would also need approval from national UCU, and we would need assurance of their financial support.

Also, University management has claimed as part of information provided to students that UCU members do not have to report their MAB participation. See this [link](#), and the attached screenshot. This suggests that management don’t know what they’re doing and make it up as they go along. See instead our new [blog post](#) aimed at students.

We need to make something very clear: we will win this by standing together and our local fighting fund is a fundamental tool of solidarity at this point. If you are not marking, and/or if your salary allows you, please donate generously. **We need substantial donations to sustain and even increase our pressure and deliver an outcome that will benefit us all.**

Regarding hardship funds, we will prioritise casualised staff and migrant members, but will look at claims from all on a case-by-case basis. Contact our Treasurer, Michele Luxon (m.luxon@lancaster.ac.uk) – though note that Nils Markusson (n.markusson@lancaster.ac.uk) is covering for her this week.

On a related note, many of you have asked about **the timing of deductions**. Well, the HR/POE line with regards to deductions is: "deductions to pay will be made in the next available pay period following the declaration made by the member of staff". We are unsure about the exact payroll deadline for May, but we are over it now.

If you have any questions, get in touch with your departmental rep in the first instance.

In other news

At a risk of being repetitive, please allow us to **welcome new members**. The strikes and MAB have propelled colleagues to join, and we want to make sure to make them feel at home. Part of that is to sign post the branch rules, our website, our blog, our social media presence, and our very newly elected committee.

And on that note, we still have 1 vacancy for Health and Safety Officer, 1 vacancy for ordinary committee member, and up to 5 members can be co-opted too. So, if you are interested in **taking a more active role in the branch**, this is one way to do it. Get in touch!