

Dear LUCU Members,

Here's a round-up of what's been happening in the last couple of weeks.

Many of us will be taking a well-earned break in August so we intend to resume members' meetings and newsletters in September, unless anything urgent crops up before then.

## **Voluntary pay cuts**

On 13 July HR Director Paul Boustead sent an email to all staff about the response so far to the voluntary pay cut survey, which was extended for another week (perhaps to enable some groups of staff to act on the guilt of not responding as generously as others?). We know that some members found that email divisive, and the reference to 'minimising the need for involuntary actions' rather threatening.

The infographic (below) caused some head-scratching. The grey block worth £4.5m represents around 2.5% of the total payroll budget of £169m. We have hardly ever had an annual pay rise of 2.5%, despite inflation often being around that level. The 2020/21 pay award has not really been 'deferred' - it has been scrapped entirely - i.e. there will be no increase in pay in 2020/21. Everyone who is at the top of the spine for their pay grade will take an involuntary real-terms pay cut (again), in addition to any voluntary measures they may choose to offer.

In the last major financial crisis that Lancaster University went through in the mid-1990s, the VC committed in advance to no compulsory redundancies. Ultimately this was achieved. Managerialism has eroded goodwill and trust since then; 2020 feels like a very different era.

## **Government bailout for universities - with strings attached**

We don't yet know whether Lancaster University will be availing itself of the Government's financial help for universities.

What sounded at first like a welcome offer has turned out to be much more sinister - as set out in the Dept for Education document "[Establishment of a Higher Education Restructuring Regime in Response to COVID-19](#)".

The Government clearly isn't letting a good crisis go to waste, and is trying to push through further marketisation of higher education. Institutions and degree programmes that don't have high recruitment or retention rates, or that don't churn out lots of high-earning graduates, will be at risk of closure. Efficiency savings on 'administration' will be expected - and although this could include some measures that we would approve of (such as reducing excessive pay for senior managers), it is likely to put increased pressure on professional services.

## **Boycott of Values Survey**

We recommend that members do not engage with the PR exercise on the University's values, given the ongoing failure to tackle inequalities and the culture of managerial bullying.

We have drawn up our own statement on the University's values and the need for management action to reflect the positive values that the institution claims to espouse. [Read our statement here.](#)

## **#OurUniOurSay campaign**

We recently launched our campaign for greater transparency, consultation and equality at Lancaster University as we respond to the impacts of Covid-19 and beyond.

Thank you to everyone who helped to publicise our campaign launch and talk about values on Twitter using #OurUniOurSay. More (re)tweets and shares on other social media would be very welcome, to keep the campaign visible over the summer break.

## **Teaching workloads**

Teaching staff have had to complete a lot of new paperwork this month, setting out how they plan to meet the 'minimum expectations' for teaching next year, and the impacts on learning hours, learning outcomes, assessment and timetabling.

However, it seems that the goalposts are moving. Statements that appeared on the University's ['Our Promise'](#) webpages last week assure students that comprehensive remote teaching will be offered if they are unable to physically attend the in-person small group seminars and workshops that staff have been strongly encouraged to provide alongside online lectures/workshops. The implication is that staff will be expected to provide TWO versions of every module - blended and fully online.

Alongside this, budgets for employing GTAs to help with teaching and assessment may be reduced in some departments, and many staff have a lot of extra work to do to make teaching materials fully accessible for equality and inclusivity.

Workloads are a health & safety issue and need to be included in risk assessments for teaching. LUCU is preparing a statement on workloads and will be requesting a meeting with senior managers to discuss this soon.

## **Other health & safety issues**

The three campus unions' H&S officers are having weekly meetings with HR, the Safety Office and various managers to discuss risk assessments and plans for increased return to work on campus. There is now a meaningful consultation process which is working pretty well.

So far, we have had the opportunity to comment on plans for the re-opening of research labs, cafes, the library, pre-school centre, guest rooms on campus, and lecture recording rooms in Bowland North.

We have been pushing for more information about plans for resuming in-person teaching. Social distancing measures will be in place in all classrooms, and we have been assured that fresh air ventilation will be in place, including in rooms with no windows.

Our understanding is that staff who are particularly at risk due to age or underlying health conditions, or who are shielding or caring for vulnerable family-members, can request to not teach in person. We know that many other staff are also feeling anxious about the risks of catching Covid-19 from exposure to multiple groups of students, perhaps with increased contact hours due to having to repeat workshops and seminars to smaller-than-usual groups.

We will be pushing for individual risk assessments to be done where staff have concerns, and for comprehensive health checks, especially given that young people are more likely than older staff to be asymptomatic, but still capable of transmitting Covid-19.

We have had excellent support on H&S issues from national and regional UCU, and will continue to work with them closely as plans and risk assessments develop further. See for example this [UCU guide to Covid-19 hazards and possible controls in HE](#).

## **Fixed Term Contracts & Casual Working Policy**

The employer was slow to start discussions on implementation of the new policy on Fixed Term Contracts & Casual Working, which was adopted last November. Negotiations with the unions began a few weeks ago and are ongoing, though weekly meetings. Many staff on fixed term contracts have lost their jobs without benefiting from the new policy, and some still will. But there is now progress being made, with hope of improved contracts for many casualised staff members.

## **Emergency JNCC**

UCU requested the HR Director has refused the request from LUCU to convene an Emergency Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (EJNCC) so that collective bargaining can happen on issues that affect our members' terms and conditions of employment. The EJNCC was refused. However the three campus unions met with HR Director Paul Boustead along with unions' regional officials last Thursday to discuss the four issues, i.e. cost-saving measures, evening teaching, implementation of the Fixed Term Contracts and Casual Working Policy and postponing of Academic Research & Educational Leave (sabbaticals).

While we made some progress with evening teaching and sabbaticals (in terms of a commitment from HR to engage further with the unions on the two issues), and FTC&CW negotiations are ongoing as reported above, no progress has been made on cost-saving measures. UCU believes the proposed cost-saving measures are a matter for collective consultation and bargaining, however, the employer is not ready to concede this point. We will raise the issue formally again through our regional office, but in the meantime we have agreed with HR to revisit the partnership agreement to review the provision for calling an EJNCC by the unions.

## **Race Equality update**

LUCU President Sunil Banga and Equalities Officer Julie Hearn met with the Pro-VC (EDI) Prof Maria Piacentini and the Chair of the Strategic Race Advisory Group (SRAG) Prof Ram-Prasad Chakravarthi on Monday last week to discuss the composition of SRAG. We are pleased to report that Julie will be part of the SRAG in her capacity as a member of the LU Race Equality Network (LUREN).

We are pleased to see that Lancaster University has written to Dr David Starkey to inform him that his honorary degree will be revoked. An Investigating Committee set up by the University judged that comments made by Dr Starkey in a media interview were racist and contradictory to the values of the University. The investigation was prompted by an open letter to the VC, written and circulated by LUREN, which gathered over 460 signatures from students, staff, residents and alumni.

## **Four Fights ballot**

Don't forget to vote (by noon on Wednesday) in the consultative ballot on whether to accept the employers' (UCEA) offer on the Four Fights dispute. UCU recommends voting to reject the offer.