

Lancaster UCU e-Bulletin (20 March 2015)

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Welcome to the first edition of what we hope will be a regular e-bulletin to fellow UCU members at Lancaster University. It has been a difficult term, dominated by the decision to wave goodbye, forever, to a substantial part of our pension. As a trade union, we did this without a single day of strike action! We lost the battle without fighting. On 26 January 2015 it was announced that 67 per cent had voted to accept the offer and 33 per cent had voted to reject it. This was a sharp turn-around from the ballot we had had in October where 78 per cent of members voted to take strike action to defend their existing pensions on a turn-out of 45 per cent (the largest UCU has seen since its inception in 2006). What happened and where we go from here are some of the questions we now face.

Here at Lancaster we have responded in the following ways:

- *Last week a quorate general meeting overwhelmingly voted to submit a motion to our annual national Congress in May calling on the union to investigate taking legal action against the trustees of the USS pension scheme.*
- *A few weeks ago, Andrew Lucas and Julie Hearn attended, as Lancaster delegates, a recall conference, called for by over twenty UCU branches nationwide, to learn the lessons for future national strategy.*
- *We have continuously and publically lobbied the Vice-Chancellor to retract his threat of legal liability to staff for taking industrial action, which he has now done.*

This week the formal consultation stage of changes to the USS pension scheme began and you should have received a personalised letter via the internal mail (from USS), that contains instructions on how to register on the consultation website. Your comments will feed into Lancaster University's institutional response which will then go to USS. Please make your comments sooner rather than later. Pension changes will come into effect on 16 April 2016. UCU are flagging up the following problems with the changes which you might wish to include.

- 1. Problematic valuation method.*
- 2. Dangers of transfer from equities into low growth investments, such as gilts.*
- 3. Introduction of 'individual defined contribution' pension funds for salaries above £55,000.*
- 4. Decrease in value for money of the scheme.*
- 5. Negative effect on members in the 'final salary' section.*

More detailed information here.

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/7447>

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/7448>

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/7449>

Perhaps the most important lesson to take away with us from this term and the pensions dispute is that if we don't fight we certainly won't win, we will only lose, and in this case, we lose a significant part of our pensions. We need to be a fighting branch and a fighting union! Feedback and input welcomed.

CAMPUS NEWS

New Branch Exec Committee

The new branch committee was elected on 21 January 2015. Vacancies and co-option opportunities exist so please get in touch. All UCU reps are welcome to attend exec meetings. See-

http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/ucu/ucu_committee.htm

Local Reps on University Committees 2015

Our branch is made up of individuals who are willing to give up their time to represent the interests of all UCU members at Lancaster University – see: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/ucu/ucu_repstocommittees.htm.

Annual Congress Glasgow 23-25 May 2015

Andrew Lucas and Paul Levy are the Lancaster UCU delegates for Congress this year and members will have seen the Motion to Congress which was approved at the General Meeting on Wednesday 11 March (emailed to members 12 March 2015). Find out about Congress and UCU's decision-making structures – see:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2177>

Ethical Investment Campaign – Result!

We've received a big thank you from campaign members for circulating the Lancaster University Ethical Investment Campaign petition to UCU members. There was a significant increase in signatories after the email was circulated which indicates this to be an issue of real significance to UCU members. We're pleased to report that the Finance and General Purposes Committee have committed to the development of an Ethical Investment Policy (subject to official ratification from University Council). Campaign organisers are planning an open meeting (23.04.15) to which all staff are invited – see: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1540220759576633/>

REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

Salford Redundancies and Ballot for Industrial Action

LUCU has sent the following message of support to Salford UCU.

"In solidarity with your current struggle against the victimisation and sacking of two of your members and in full support of your ballot for strike action we wish you every success. An injury to one is an injury to all!"

See: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7430&from=1676>

North West Regional Committee

UCU's North West Regional Committee meets on Saturday 21 March at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester. Jackie Hughes will be attending for Lancaster and if anyone else would like to accompany Jackie please let us know. Travel expenses paid by National UCU.

The role of the Committee is to foster closer contact between members in FE and HE in the Region, to co-ordinate discussion and activity between branches/local associations, in particular on industrial relations matters, to provide assistance, circulate information, communicate with the General Secretary and NEC, and send delegates to other relevant trade union bodies. See also: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/3084>

NATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Decimation of FE budget – 24% cuts

Please sign the 14,500+ petition <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7420>

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

University of Amsterdam Occupation

Protesting against the marketization of universities - students occupy the University of Amsterdam for three weeks – see: <http://roarmag.org/2015/03/occupation-maagdenhuis-university-amsterdam/>

University of Cape Breton, Canada, calls on other Canadian Universities for Tuition Fee Rethink –

see: <http://www.zerotuitioncanada.org/>

Best wishes from your editorial team here at Lancaster UCU