



**Wolverhampton City & Walsall
Branch
Newsletter
December 2013**

www.wlv.web.ucu.org.uk/

To our UCU members,
This is an update of what UCU have been up to this semester. The negotiating committee, Branch officers and school reps hope that you will have a relaxing Christmas break, and would like to wish you all a happy new year.

Who are your school reps?

SAD

John Clementson
Callum Ives

SHaW

Rachel Clarke (City)
Veronica Grant (Walsall)

UWBS

Lee Crofts

Academic Related

Ben Andrews

LSSC

Mike Cunningham
Jennifer Hulme
Frank Wilson

FSE

Ruth Fairclough
Sue Gill
Adrian Priest
James Vickers

SEF

Catherine Lamond

SSPAL

Anne-Marie Beaumont

UCU Negotiating Committee

Chair: Jim Davis (SAD)
Vice Chair: Ben Andrews
(SEF & Academic
Related)
Secretary: Cécile Hatier
(LSSC)

Don Adamson (SAD)
Pauline Anderson (LSSC)
Aidan Byrne (LSSC)
John Chorley (SEF)
Lee Crofts (WBS)
Mike Cunningham (LSSC)
Ruth Fairclough (FSE)

Jane Harvey (SHaW)
Mike Haynes (WBS)
Manuel Hernandez (LSSC)
Julie Hughes (SEF)
Catherine Lamond (SEF)
Penny Welch (LSSC)
1 vacancy (Walsall)

UCU City Branch Officers and other representatives

Chair: Mike Cunningham
Vice Chair: Mike Haynes
Secretary: Aidan Byrne
Treasurer: Alan Apperley

Membership: Karin Dannehl
Equal Opps: Penny Welch
Health and Safety: Gill Outterside
Auditors: Chris Fullwood and John Dale

UCU Walsall Branch Officers and other representatives

Chair: John Chorley
Secretary and Membership: Ben Andrews

Equality: vacant
Women: Julie Hughes

Other staff reps

Members should know that the two Academic Board teaching staff reps are Julie Hughes (j.hughes2@wlv.ac.uk) and Carol Bailey (c.bailey@wlv.ac.uk).
On the board of governors, the staff rep is Aidan Byrne (a.byrne2@wlv.ac.uk) and the Academic Board rep is Gaby Steinke (g.steinke@wlv.ac.uk).

Defend fair pay in HE: strike actions this semester

UCU members at Wolverhampton University were very active in taking part in the two days of national strike on 31st October and 3rd December. Campuses were quiet on these two days, students expressed their support, and we had good local media coverage, via the BBC local radios and an article in the *Express and Star*. Many thanks to those who got up early to join the pickets at 7 am with our Unison colleagues, and to hand out leaflets to staff, students and passers-by. Walsall members below still looked a happy bunch after 4 hours of standing in the cold, didn't they?



As part of our pay campaign, UCU members are **working to contract**. If you haven't done so already, please read the national guidance:

<http://fairpay.web.ucu.org.uk/working-to-contract-what-action-is-the-union-asking-me-to-take/>

We would urge you not to be tempted to do the following, as these are outside your contract: work more than 37.5 hours a week, teach more than 18 hours a week, teach on more than two evenings a week, cover for a colleague who is off sick (even if this is a friend). We'd like to remind you to make sure that you take your holidays and self-managed research and scholarly activity time, and that there is no contractual requirement to request authorisation to work from home. If you think you have been asked to carry out a task that has not been agreed prior, please talk to your rep about it before you decide not to do it.

A question for all members – Should UCU restructure?

The recent trend at our Institution has been to restructure absolutely everything, including our minds, thanks to a great list of core “values” which we are now all endorsing (rest assured that the list includes being “ethical”, which, in UoW jargon, means the very profound moral duty of consuming fair trade tea and coffee).

Should UCU follow suit and restructure its Branches in the New Year? There will be no risk of demotion, no contradictory email from HR sent two days after the deadline for application, no splitting of groups who like to work together, no merger of huge groups for no particular reason. And we will have two separate Branches!

*Our restructure would simply be what all restructures are about: a mere rebranding of our Union, but this time with only positive effects: there would be opportunities for promotion, as each branch will be in search of **brand new “Faculty reps”** (do you think it sound much better than “school rep”?). Current reps could apply, and new applicants may be tempted by the possibility of getting a very colourful (pink and purple) mug and badge, as well as the opportunity to meet fellow members and their Faculty dean on a regular basis. Contact the Branch Secretaries (Aidan or Ben) if you’re interested, and they will organise an election among UCU members in the faculty if there are more candidates than posts. **Failing that, if you would prefer your representation to be at School (or virtual institute) level, in preparation for the next restructure, let us know!!***

Faculties restructure: Episodes 2, 3 and 4

Episode 1 in the faculties restructure (the setting up of the **Faculty of Science and Engineering**) was a massive success for UCU: after long negotiations, no member of staff was demoted at PL level, and huge departments (now renamed schools) were given a second PL. The University has so far been wise enough to avoid confrontation with the other three faculties, with enough PL posts for every current PL.

However, the **restructuring process has still been very hectic and stressful** for many of us. The communication from HR, and in some instances from Faculties, has been poor, with late and contradictory information circulating. This has been a particularly stressful time for those whose jobs were not automatically matched and slotted, and for members of staff managed by them, who are still unsure what will happen to their area of interest. Despite what management argue, many things have been put on hold in the past few months, such as taking action to improve the poor results of the University-wide staff survey, as well as our students’ satisfaction and retention. Some colleagues have experienced difficulties in carrying out research and other scholarly activity due to budgets being put on hold.

UCU have been active in defending the interest of our members in this process of huge change, both at University and at Schools level, despite the Offices of the Vice-Chancellor only being prepared to give us four days of formal consultation. Pressure on Deans has resulted in the composition and names of departments being changed, number of PL posts increasing, and clarification sought when HR did not appear to follow their own policies on organisational change.

The changes are far from over, and we all need to remain vigilant in the New Year. The new faculties will involve the development of common practice and procedures, so reps and members need to be alert in making sure that it is best practice in schools and not worse practice that becomes established.

UCU are fighting for Demonstrators

Following a meeting with the Head of HR, Steph Harris, and Alex Hopkins, AD Culture Change, we have learnt a paper will go to December's CMT meeting claiming that the current demonstrator role in FSE is not fit for purpose and giving staff the opportunity to progress to UW9. Each will be taken on a 'case by case' basis and will need to 'meet the professional standards framework.'

Although 'no promises can be made' at this stage, the paper will recognise that 'this is a discrete group of staff in a very specific role not needed'. Clarification will be sought with the Dean and Ann Holmes, what is meant by technicians, technical demonstrators and demonstrators. Those current demonstrators with current teaching and research loads, will, it is proposed, progress up.

The Head of HR will report back the response to their paper to the scheduled union meeting of the Combined Unions Committee on the 20th December

REF 2013 submission

Following multiple complaints from members, UCU invited everyone to tell us their REF stories. From the many accounts we received, Negotiating Committee sent Prof John Darling an extensive list of questions relating to process, appeals, equality and transparency. Our questions were dismissed out of hand in a very unsatisfactory fashion. UCU intends to respond strongly, and will of course support any member who wishes to challenge their REF outcome on a case-by-case level. In the meantime, we eagerly await the result of the equality and diversity REF review, which promises to be very revealing.

International Travel Policy

The University has a working group writing a policy on this (at last!), chaired by David Sheldon in Finance. Issues raised by UCU Rep, John Chorley include:

- Personal insurance for staff when involved in extreme situations
- The entitlement of members to refuse to undertake international travel if their personal beliefs or circumstances may bring them into conflict with the laws in the country that they are expected to visit – this is particularly significant for LGBT Members
- Clarification of leave entitlement, rest time and working time directive issues surrounding travel – International Travel should not be seen as a 'privilege' or 'holiday', but as work with appropriate time to rest and family commitments should be considered.

Policies around the university ensuring that members travel on the correct -visa and advice about cultural issues in specific countries were also raised. If anyone has other thoughts about international travel, feel free to e-mail j.chorley@wlv.ac.uk although he is not sure when the working group will meet again.

University's new advertising motto: "grab my balls"

Some of you may have spotted at the Bull Ring in Birmingham, late last month, another grand idea from our Marketing and Communications department: the "grab my balls" game. Passers-by were asked to enter a glass cage full of purple balls which were being

blown around: each ball caught represented an “opportunity” for the lucky person. Some of us are in such state of despair that they have started to miss the previous ungrammatical motto of “a University to be proud of”.



Bin and gone

Despite UCU’s best effort in 2012/13 to convince management that asking staff to empty their own bins is not the best use of their time, and will not improve the recycling strategy of the University, cleaners in all buildings have now been told not to empty our bins. We’ll be campaigning for an increase in our non-specific duties as a result: if it takes 2 min every day to clear a bin, it’ll come up to a total of about 400 min a year, which amounts to 6.6 hours. And we should probably also add the time it takes to print attendance registers and drop them in the relevant place after each session...

UCU Negotiating Committee, December 2013.