



Wolverhampton City & Walsall
Branches
Newsletter
June 2015

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

In this edition: redundancy threats... demotions threats... VC and Deans' response to survey of UCU UoW members... Outcome of reviews... Bye-bye to WOLF... Personal tutor policy changes...

First they came for the Professors...

The Vice-Chancellor announced to Professors on 19th May that a restructure of the Professoriate had started at the University. The "Professoriate capacity restructure" paper states that, following the REF results, **up to 19 Professors in 4 areas (Computing, Engineering, Built Environment, Law) will be made redundant by the end of July 2015**, as their units of assessments have been deemed underperforming. Professors in all other areas of the University who are deemed as not performing to a satisfactory level are also at **risk of demotion to senior lecturer** grade by the end of July.

This is a brutal attack on academic staff. The rationale for this restructure, and the criteria used to select the pool of people at risk, and to judge alleged "underperformance", are very unclear, arbitrary and unfair. Furthermore, the **OVC and HR appear to be ignoring the appraisal policy of the University** which would allow them to deal with potential capability issues of specific individuals. The planned restructure is also in **breach of the University Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy**.

UCU met with OVC and HR and made it clear that to them that there is no genuine redundancy situation, as the tasks the Professors do will not vanish after they are made redundant. We also met with the Professors and will offer individual support to each Prof who is a member. But **all members need to mobilise to denounce this ruthless action** against the academic body of the University. Threats of collective compulsory redundancies, with no offer of suitable alternative employment, have never happened at the University in institutional memory. Although the REF is being used by other institutions to attack academic staff and revise their contracts (for instance, to a teaching only contract), no University is targeting a specific body of people (i.e. Professors) with immediate compulsory redundancies. The UCU City Branch Committee voted the following resolutions on 19th May, and we would therefore encourage you all **to come and lobby the Board of Governors on 2nd July**:

City Branch Resolution 1: 'This branch requests that the OVC withdraws its plans to make up to 19 professors redundant and to demote an unspecified number of others. We ask that any genuine problems in this area are dealt with humanely and equitably according to existing and lawful procedures in the interests of all our members and the reputation of the University'

City Branch Resolution 2: 'if we don't make any progress under the motion previously passed, UCU will lobby governors in person at their meeting on July 2nd'.

The use of pseudo-scientific metrics such as REF results could easily spread as a management tool within the University (for instance, with NSS results or "good degree outcomes"), and we must therefore all unite to condemn this vicious move.

The VC and Deans respond to the UCU survey of staff

Last summer UCU members at UoW were surveyed following the Faculty restructure. Results were published in the autumn and were presented to the VC, asking for a response. The VC tasked the Deans to provide the response, which was given to UCU in May 2015 (attached to the email). UCU NC are struck by the spuriousness of many of the responses:

You said about workload:

This was your main campaign priority for 2014/15, and UCU lobbied at Faculty and University levels for the better recognition of various tasks such as module and course leadership and research hours.

The VC said the Deans are focusing on “harmonising” systems to “ensure consistency and fairness”. This does not address allocating a reasonable number of hours for each task.

You said about marking turnaround: 58 % of you said that the 2014/15 calendar was worse than previous versions.

The VC said that ‘an additional marking week’ was added to the calendar for 15/16. This is simply untrue, as initially we were given 4 weeks marking in semesters 1 and 2. However, UCU worked hard to make sure that in 15/16 there would be a week’s gap between end of sem. 1 and start of sem. 2 so that colleagues can focus more on marking. We were shown a revised calendar for 2015/16 which incorporates this, as well as making sure that most colleagues have 4 consecutive weeks in August if they wish to take summer annual leave in one block. This calendar is yet to be published on the website.

You said about Faculty Calendars: 62 % of you said that you had not seen a Faculty calendar incorporating SMRSA and annual leave. Despite the claims of Deans, no Faculty has produced such a document in 2014/15, even though it is part of the University’s contractual requirement. UCU have continuously reminded OVC and Deans of their responsibilities, to no avail.

You said about low morale: 66 % of you told us that you felt less optimistic than before, and 56 % less secure

The VC said: ‘there is no clear evidence that staff are feeling unduly pessimistic’ about the restructure.

You said about Staff Survey Action Plans: 62% of you said that they did not know about the Action Plan.

The VC said: the plans have been ‘shared’ and ‘implemented.’ A new staff survey is due in the autumn, please make sure you take part and ask your Faculty about its resulting action plan!

The VC said about Appraisal: ‘the majority of staff will have had an appraisal by the required deadline of June 2015’.

We will remind Deans and OVC that appraisals are a contractual requirement, and must occur prior to negotiations on workload, a clear indication of which must be complete by 30th June 2015.

Bye-Bye to WOLF, welcome to the Digital Campus innovations

Those of you who have attended the various Digital Campus-related talks would know that the Directorate of Academic Support has made the decision to replace WOLF with a yet-unknown system which will hopefully work in “synergy” with our other University electronic systems and processes. The move will be progressive, and colleagues will carry

on using WOLF in 2015/16. As many of you mobilised two years ago when WOLF was put under threat, UCU will make every effort to ensure that an appropriate replacement is found for it and that staff are adequately consulted and trained.

Some interesting statistics about the University

The data that follows has been culled from University Reports and especially the University Financial Accounts.

Table 1 Full Time Equivalent University Staff

	FTE Staff			
	Total	Academic	Tech/Admin	Manual
1999-00	2052	902	895	255
2000-01	2049	882	913	254
2001-02	1981	869	884	228
2002-03	1977	867	891	219
2003-04	2046	874	889	256
2004-05	2126	905	963	258
2005-06	2175	910	997	268
2006-07	2289	890	1042	287
2007-08	2206	893	1028	285
2008-09	2220	870	1036	314
2009-10	2064	807	973	284
2010-11	1975	791	910	274
2011-12	1960	770	924	266
2012-13	1999	758	935	306
2013-14	2077	759	1,018	300

NB it is important to distinguish in any university statistics between the staff headcount and the full-time equivalent numbers.

Table 2 FTE Staff Student Ratios By Staff Type

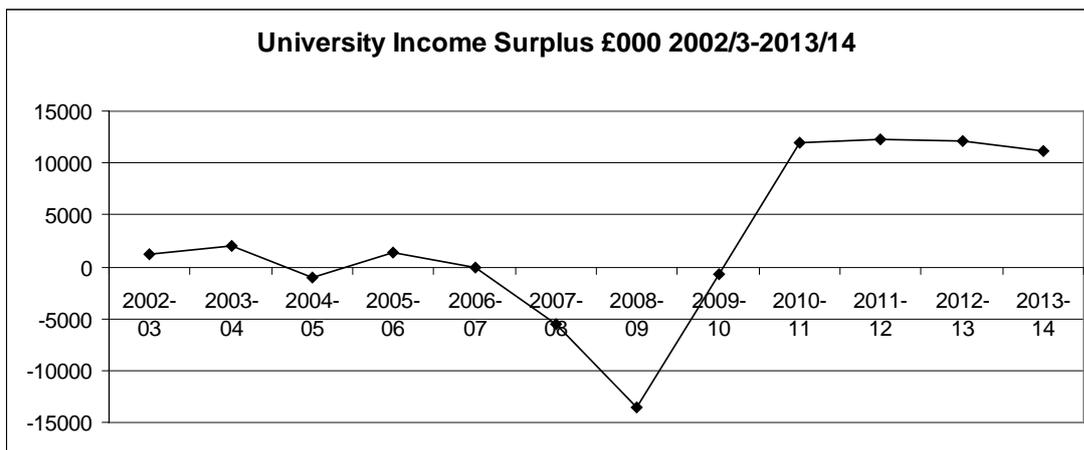
	Academic	Admin	Manual
1999-00	25.4	25.6	89.8
2000-01	24.9	24.1	86.5
2001-02	26.2	25.7	99.8
2002-03	26.5	25.8	105.1
2003-04	26.0	25.6	88.9
2004-05	25.0	23.5	87.7
2005-06	23.8	21.7	80.8
2006-07	23.9	20.4	74.0
2007-08	25.1	21.8	78.6
2008-09	27.1	22.8	75.2
2009-10	29.5	24.4	83.7
2010-11	28.7	24.9	82.8
2011-12	29.1	24.3	84.4
2012-13	27.8	22.6	68.9
2013-14	27.3	20.4	69.1

NB this data tells us nothing about the composition of the staff within a group. So, for example, any increase in the hours devoted to academic administration or research for FTE staff will increase the real classroom

SSR. Similarly if there are more senior administrators/ manual staff 'planning' then this too may be reflected in more intensified student facing work for those at the bottom.

Table 3 UoW Surplus

The surplus is basically income – expenditure. In the last decade income has been a product primarily of student recruitment (which has been limited nationally) and student fees. With rising student fees and the last fee hikes most universities found themselves with larger surpluses so the surplus that Wolverhampton has is fairly typical.



From 2014/15 student recruitment will be much freer and the results could be expansion or further contraction. University management has had some time to reposition the university to succeed here. It is a moot point how much it has done and whether the other developments that have been widely publicised detract from or add to the shift that will be necessary.

University Policies and Processes

A review of the **Personal Tutor policy** was presented at Academic Board. The document, which was approved despite reprobation from UCU colleagues during the meeting, states that “personal tutors will comprise of members of academic staff and those others designated to undertake personal tutoring by the Faculty”. In other words, the role of personal tutor is no longer limited to academic staff. This is a worrying development which takes academic and welfare responsibilities away from academics, and which may have a negative impact on our students. Members should lobby their Deans to make sure this is not implemented in their Faculties in 2015/16.

The **Organisational Change and Redundancy Policy** has now been revised after consultation with the Unions, and the new version is on the HR website.

The **Dignity at Work Policy** (incorporating the Bullying and Harassment policies) is currently being designed and UCU have given comments at the People Strategy meetings.

The **Appraisal** documentation is also under review, and UCU have pointed out a few issues. The newly proposed documentation will not be used for this round of appraisals. UCU (and Unison) discussed at People Strategy meetings the document “**Our Shared Expectations**” which highlights all sorts of great values and ethical behaviour that staff should follow. This is a classic corporate social responsibility device, and it would be great if our managers could lead by example and implement it by showing more respect for Professors by treating them more fairly. The document is not on the website yet.

HR have introduced a **Shared Parental Leave Policy** recently to comply with new regulations. The document has been shared with Unions but is not yet available on the HR website.

Finally, UCU successfully lobbied HR to make sure that staff who are also students and going on parental leave whilst doing a **PhD are entitled to take leave of absence** beyond the usual 2 years.

Media and Computing Reviews

Members in Computing and IS (FSE) and in Media (Arts) and related unit have had a difficult past 6 to 8 months since they were told that their units were under review. They were left in the dark for a long time, then consulted in a rushed manner before hurried reports were presented to Academic Board in May. It was decided at the Board that the two respective Faculties need to produce an action plan urgently, to be ratified by Academic Board in June. There will be more on this story in the next Newsletter.

Policing of “lesson cancellation,” Episode 2

You will recall that at the instigation of the Dean of Students, staff who had allegedly “cancelled” their classes in week 11 and 12 of semester 1 were asked to justify their actions. UCU took the matter to the Deputy Vice Chancellor and called into question the data on which the inquiry was based, as many of you had not cancelled their classes. The matter appears to have been “parked” and hopefully forgotten, and no such exercise was repeated at the end of semester 2.

Support our national campaigns, join the fights!

Prior to winning the 2015 general elections, the Tory government had already announced a further 25 % cuts to Further and Higher Education this year, following 5 years of reduction to these sectors. Our colleagues in FE and Adult Education, who already have worse terms and conditions than us, need your support. The cuts will also have an impact for Universities like ours, as many of our students come from these institutions. So please **sign the petition:** <http://fefunding.org.uk/sign-the-petition/> and join the rallies below:

- **Tuesday 16th June**, National Lobby of Parliament 2-5 pm, Parliament Square
- **Saturday 20th June:** People’s Assembly demonstration, London: Assemble outside Bank of England at 11.30 (EC2R 8EJ)

Colleagues at **London Met** have already lost half of their staff over the past 6 years, and are threatened by a **further 165 redundancies**. You can sign a petition to show your support to an institution with similar widening participations goals as UoW:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/7509>

Warwick University is promoting casualization of academic staff in its worst form, with the creation **“Teach Higher”**, based on Warwick campus, which is effectively an outsourced recruiting agency. It recruits hourly-paid staff, independently from Academic Departments, and colleagues contracted by this business will have no union rights and poor terms and conditions. Warwick has made it clear that it wants to spread this concept to other HE institutions, so we are not protected. Please show your opposition to this by attending a demonstration on **Friday 19th June, 12 pm, at Warwick campus**.

Please complete our short survey:

<http://survey.wlv.ac.uk/survey.asp?s=01190084009118155174>

UCU Negotiating Committee, June 2015