

## STRIKE!

The decision of university staff to strike has not been taken lightly. The overwhelming vote in favour of action was a response to the cynical and contemptuous behaviour on the part of our employers. These people have no hesitation in awarding themselves huge pay rises whilst expecting their staff to carry vastly increased workloads with little or no financial recompense.

The University of Leicester AUT is confident that its members will reflect the national feeling of anger and present a solid front on March 7<sup>th</sup> to show the employers that their 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes are not acceptable.

### Contact us:

Departmental Reps and  
Committee Members:

See Back Page

### PICKETING ARRANGEMENTS

We are picketing the University at its main entrances for two periods: the first from 8.00 until 9.30 and the second from 9.30 until 11.00. We ask that pickets for each 'shift' come in the first instance to the Main Entrance, in order that we can allocate positions.

Mobile phone number to ring in the event of picket-line problems or queries: 0791 439 5332

Picketing will be followed by a Rally at 12.00  
(venue to be announced)

Some drivers react to pickets with fury/hysteria/fear.

Do not stand in front of vehicles or try to stop a determined strike-breaker.

Most drivers respond well to friendly discussion but there is always the odd 'rogue'.

### **NOTE FOR YOUR DIARY**

**AUT (Leicester) Annual General Meeting:  
Friday, March 16th at 12.30 in the University Film Theatre (Attenborough Building)**

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# .....and 'ACTION SHORT OF A STRIKE'

The one-day strike is a powerful 'statement of intent'.

We follow this with the hard-hitting action 'short of a strike'.

This involves four areas:

- 1. The boycotting of student assessment and examinations**
- 2. The boycotting of call-out cover**
- 3. The boycotting of staff appraisal**
- 4. Refusal to cover for absent colleagues**

The fine details of these areas can be found on the Leicester AUT web-site at <http://www.le.ac.uk/unions/AUT>.

Whilst carrying out this action, members should continue with their other duties that are not part of the action. The University may ask staff if they are taking part in the action. We are asked not to volunteer any information in advance of the action, but to give a truthful answer if approached individually by the University once the action has started. If there is any doubt on the matter, tell them to look at the AUT web-site as given above.

*This is ongoing action, and there is no scheduled date for negotiation.* As Rachel Hurley, Assistant General Secretary of the AUT, pointed out when she spoke to the General Meeting at Leicester on March 1<sup>st</sup>, we will not be tricked by the employers

into calling off the action on the basis of a promise of talks. She pledged that even if the employers made a concrete offer, such an offer would have to be considered by an Emergency Council. Only after this (provided of course that the Emergency Council didn't itself turn the offer down), members would be balloted on calling off the action.

We should encourage students, their parents, employers and others to write to the Vice Chancellor, asking him to contact UCEA to request that they make an early return to the bargaining table. The AUT has on its national web-site (<http://www.aut.org.uk/>) a draft letter that can be used by students.

*It is important to note that we have the full support of the National Union of Students in this action, as well as the support of unions on the campus. Everybody who has a sense of responsibility for the future health of the Higher Education sector is in support of our campaign.*

Nobody (apart, apparently, from the employers) wants to see the demoralised, underpaid and undervalued staff that will result from the short-sighted and contemptuous attitude of the UCEA.

**If you have any query about the action, please talk to your Departmental Contact (a list is on the back page) or e-mail the local AUT ([aut@le.ac.uk](mailto:aut@le.ac.uk))**

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## For Discussion.....

### AUT Needs a Strategy for the RAE

Deirdre O'Sullivan  
Archaeology and Ancient History

In spite of the formal policy of AUT 'agin it', the RAE looms large in the lives of members, affecting not just our current work/life balance but, potentially, our future careers and those of our colleagues, as well as the fate of our subject within the institution.

Out with any actual research activity, this involves soliciting space in journals perceived to be of international standing (however narrow their actual readership) and applying for every grant in sight. Now we have to identify 'marks of esteem' which will act as an index of our individual worth within the academic sphere (or stratosphere) although there is astonishing variety (from 5% to 50%) in the weighting attached to this index (surely a sign of its fundamental instability).

The emerging RAE agenda is undoubtedly a source of much subversive mirth. A new category of publication, the 'superbook' has been identified, which will count for twice as much as an ordinary book, but it could be a bit of a risk – criteria for superbookdom have yet to be revealed. A helpful chum recently discovered via Google that existing superbooks included:

*The superbook of amazing facts;*  
*The superbook of flags; The super-*

*book of tricks and puzzles . He also found: A Really Super Book About Squirrels and My Super Book of Stickers.*

Why should the RAE bother with shallow concerns about the quality and significance of research output, when it could-consider the enterprise or business initiative potential. 'Marks of Esteem' could be creatively developed as a board or computer game, putting Monopoly or Diplomacy to shame.

'Postcode Publication plc' could offer a service to weary RAE panellists – or anxious academics. Online commercial journals will guarantee that several hundred hits on an article are noted. If it is that popular, it must be 4\*...

Joking apart, there are important political and strategic issues here. Surely, at a time when we are seeking (quite rightly) for better pay for all academic staff, we want the real value of research to be recognised *outside* academia. It has always been difficult to achieve this: it will not be helped by the creation of further sets of self-referencing cliques validated by the 'marks of esteem' so curiously piled up by the RAE panels. I wonder what connections the press will make when we go on strike?

Commercial journals use academic labour to keep themselves in business, not the other way round. Research is not served by the expansion of 'prestigious' journals at ever-increasing subscription cost, carried wholly by the Higher Education sector, and the marginalising of others. We are reassured by the panels that papers will be read; if this is so, how important is academic branding? If it is not, then why set up panels of academics as assessors?

I feel that the response of AUT nationally is extraordinarily out of touch. We should be debating and confronting the RAE strategies as they are developed. Asserting a blanket opposition, and ignoring reality, is both insufficient and ineffective. Being 'agin it' may reflect a sincerely felt opposition, but it is hardly a strategy for the defence of jobs, careers and academic values, including good research, and the employment conditions that facilitate this.

At Leicester, we know that the outcome of the RAE will have serious consequences. In the interests of survival, the game has to be played in some way. The transfer market has resulted in the creation of new, research-friendly posts; it is a pity that not so much effort has gone into supporting this environment for existing staff. I hope that the University management is aware that the present system of recurrent and ludicrously premature auditing has done little to strengthen morale, or reassure members that their labours are valued internally,

AUT Office Room 207  
Attenborough Tower

## AUT Committee Members

President

**Nick James (njaj1)**

Vice-President

**John Constantinou (jc55)**

Treasurer

**Grant Denkinson  
(gd41@star.le.ac)**

Departmental Contacts

Organiser

**Nicole Fayard (nf11)**

Equal Opportunities

Representative

**Beth Shaw (ejs24)**

Communications Officer

**Tristram Hooley(tjh5)**

Bulletin

**Paul Henderson  
(paupol@cheerful.com)**

Other Committee Members

**Chris Talbot (cjt14)**

**Paul Sinfield (pks4)**

*(vacant: Secretary, Health and Safety  
Representative)*

## Departmental Representatives

<b>Academic Office:</b>	Molly Fleischer (molly.fleischer)
<b>Archaeology &amp; Ancient History:</b>	Deirdre O'Sullivan (dmo)
<b>Biochemistry:</b>	Christine Wells (cw19)
<b>Careers Service:</b>	John Constantinou (jc55)
<b>Chemistry:</b>	Paul Cullis (pmc)
<b>EDSC:</b>	Tristram Hooley (tjh5)
<b>Education:</b>	Rob Jones (rj27)
<b>Genetics:</b>	Chris Talbot (cjt14)
<b>Geography:</b>	Jenny Pickerill (jp109)
<b>Geology:</b>	Charlie Moon (cjm)
<b>Health Sciences:</b>	Beth Shaw (ejs24)
<b>History:</b>	Chris Szejnmann (ccws1)
<b>Labour Market Studies:</b>	Martin Quinn (mrq1) and Vanessa Beck (vanessa.beck)
<b>Law:</b>	Ian Snaith (isn)
<b>Library:</b>	Nick James (njaj1)
<b>Management Centre:</b>	Stefano Harney (s.harney)
<b>Museum Studies:</b>	Viv Golding (vmg4)
<b>Physics and Astronomy:</b>	Grant Denkinson (gd41@star.le.ac)
<b>Politics:</b>	Steve Hopkins (sh15)
<b>Sociology:</b>	Ellen Allandale (eca7)
<b>Staff Development:</b>	Rob Daley (rd103)

*Is your department not covered? If you are interested in finding more about being a departmental contact, get in touch with any of the committee members listed on this page and ask for more information.*

## AUT Activists

As the list of departmental contacts continues to grow, we are pleased also to have received notification that several members in Leicester have visited <http://www.aut.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=936> and indicated that they would like to become more actively involved. We hope that this trend continues, and we have begun holding regular activists meetings to help support people who want to become more active, in addition to the national programme (DAN- Developing Activists Network), which offers a wide range of training and support activities.

We have lost several experienced committee members in the last two or three years as people have retired and moved on, and there is a wide range of union activity that we could be undertaking if we had a sufficient number of activists pre-

pared to help out. This can mean anything from being a departmental contact (which itself can largely be what you make of it, from simply being a link on the occasions when one is required between members in your department and the local AUT committee, to being a proactive recruitment and activity campaigner) to taking on committee roles such as secretary and treasurer (currently both vacant).

There are many specific jobs to do, but which require the right person. For example, we need someone with a good grasp of finance and accounting who could help us interpret the university's overall financial situation and how it is impacting on individual departments and staff. We urgently need a health and safety representative (previous experience not essential!) to help us maintain an overview of the many issues which arise across the campus, to act on them accordingly, and to represent us on the relevant

university committees. We are also looking for a qualified person to act as honorary auditor for the local association. If you think you may be interested in fulfilling this role, please get in touch so that we can discuss terms etc.

Of course, we are all working under pressure, and it is always slightly unnerving to take the plunge and indicate an interest – what pressure may you find yourself under?

The answer is that we take care not to put any pressure on anyone to do anything they don't really want to do, and we ensure that support is available for anyone becoming active (we continue to support each other even after we've been active for 25 or 30 years!).

If you feel that you may be able and willing to help out in any way, please contact Nick James (njaj1/2033).