

# Strike Action

Thursday the 31st of October, Tuesday the 3rd of December and Thursday the 6th of February saw combined industrial action taken by UCU, UNITE and UNISON staff at the University of Leicester. In addition there have also been three separate two hour strikes held by the UCU.

Strong pickets were seen from all three unions. All main entrances to the university were picketed and participation was generally strong.

The strikes have been called because university staff have received a 13% real terms pay cut since 2009. The unions believe that employers, with £8bn already in reserves and more expected by 2016, can afford to pay more than a 1% pay rise which is well below current inflation rates. Furthermore the unions have drawn attention to the fact that, unlike De Montfort and Loughborough Universities, the University of Leicester refuses to pay the living wage to all of its staff.

Leicester's UCU Branch chair Chris Talbot commented: 'Strikes were called at relatively short notice, yet were well observed by UCU members. I would like to thank all members for their support. The way government and management are refusing to negotiate has been an absolute disgrace.'

UCU general secretary, Sally Hunt has welcomed a message of support from the NUS and said that: 'Students deserve both sides pulling out all the stops to resolve this damaging dispute. That is why UCU has welcomed the NUS's intervention and why we have written to UCEA today to ask them to urgently resume negotiations. 'UCU and our sister unions stand ready to resolve this dispute but it takes two sides to negotiate. My hope is that the employers will reflect on the message our students are giving us and come back to the table immediately.'



## STUDENT SUPPORT

In addition to a national message of support from the NUS, Leicester students union showed their own support with a number joining the pickets and others raising a banner of support for the unions from the Percy Gee building. UCU has written to UCEA, the university employers' negotiating body, calling for urgent talks to resolve the increasingly bitter pay dispute.

Until the UCEA agree to negotiate UCU will continue to take action.

A campaign of action short of strike is now in place. Members should:

1. Work no more than their contracted hours where those hours are expressly stated or where they are stipulated in a workload agreement and in any event not to exceed the maximum number of hours per week stipulated in the Working Time Regulations (48 hours a week);
2. Perform no additional voluntary duties, such as

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out of hours cover, or covering for colleagues (unless such cover is contractually required);

3. Set and mark no work beyond that work which they are contractually obliged to set and/or mark;

4. Attend no meetings where such attendance is voluntary on the part of the members;

5. Undertake no duties that breach health and safety policies or other significant employer's policies.

In addition there is also a plan for a complete marking boycott to start on the 28th of April if management continue to refuse to negotiate.

## LEGAL ACTION

The Leicester UCU branch has also noted its disappointment that the University is one of only a handful of institutions which are planning to deduct a full day's pay for each two hour strike taken by members.

The national organisation is committed to supporting Leicester and is planning to take legal action against the university as well as offering to reimburse any staff who lose more than two hours for these strikes. However it is extremely sad that the university of Leicester is choosing to be one of the most confrontational managements boards in the UK.

# supporting the strike action



# UCU campaigns

## **Atypical Staff and Unitemps:**

UCU has now fought for over 7 years to protect the employment rights of atypical staff; the term used in this institution to describe those who have been engaged on casual or fees contracts who are typically Associate Tutors, Demonstrators, Teaching Assistants and Hourly Paid Lecturers. The University has turned many atypical staff into agency staff by employing them through Unitemps.

University management continue to refuse to negotiate with UCU on important issues such as a comprehensive teaching rate, pension rights and procedures (e.g dismissal and grievance). It classes the staff it has transferred as workers, not employees and is only offering to consult/listen to UCU.

Unitemps was never intended to be the means by which atypical staff would be engaged. It was intended to be the means by which students could be engaged to boost their employability and fill short term University operational needs. Atypical workers can make a claim to be directly employed by the University, instead of Unitemps, and a link to this form is now on our branch webpage.

## **The REF:**

UCU has serious concerns about the way the REF may be used as part of performance management and the impact that this would have on staff.

The union was part of an equality impact assessment on the policy and procedures for

selecting staff for the REF. The analysis shows that the selection for REF did not affect adversely any of the groups protected by the equality legislation. A number of actions have however been proposed, notably in light of the personal circumstances that have been raised (for example on considering how staff can be made more aware of flexible working when personal circumstances change). UCU has also asked internally that actions taken post REF, in relation to staff who are not submitted, should be monitored in terms of equality.

## **Redundancies:**

In 2009/10 union members voted on a new set of ordinances. Within the process the UCU wanted to ensure that those individuals employed on a Fixed Term Contract are treated the same as any other employee. This is what the unions understand they had negotiated.

There were many problems with how the Redundancy Ordinance was used in practice and this issue was one of the reasons UCU entered into dispute. To add to the problem when this dispute was ongoing the law on redundancy changed. The new law changed the statutory notice periods and consultation (for the worse) and said collective consultation for Fixed Term Employees was no longer needed. Despite this the University agreed in the Dispute Resolution meeting to "undertake no change to the current practices until Ordinances renegotiated".

Discussions are still ongoing on changes proposed by the university.

## **Dates for your diaries:**

Mon 17th March - University of Leicester UCU Annual General Meeting in the Garendon Room in Charles Wilson

Mon 7th April - Branch meeting, 1pm Fielding Johnson Council Room 1

Thu 29th - Fri 30th May - UCU Annual Congress and special conference, Manchester

# What do Leicester UCU Reps do?

Representing and supporting members is a significant element of the Branch's work. The cases we deal with are varied and can range from providing advice and practical support to major representation in cases which can last months.

The areas in which we represent colleagues include:

- Performance management.
- VERVES - the University's voluntary severance/early retirement scheme.
- Redundancy – both fixed term contract and where there is a reorganisation of posts
- Disciplinary Hearings and grievances and actions short of a grievance - representing members subject to disciplinary allegations, witnesses called in as part of the process and members taking out a grievance.
- Capability and ill health - we have represented staff subject to both the University's formal procedure and to informal meetings out with the procedure

- Reasonable adjustment requests in relation to the Equality Act
- Collective grievances on behalf of whole departments or on behalf of a number of departments relating to their treatment or to air concerns where they are receiving no response from management
- Settlement agreements - negotiating an appropriate deal for a member.

We have also provided advice and support individually to staff on practical matters relating to how they engage with management or pre-empt action they anticipate by management.

There are currently 3 representatives who are involved in representing members at personal case level available to the wider UCU membership. We may deal with around 100 enquiries over a year. We would welcome more colleagues being involved in this area of UCU's work.

## UCU departmental representatives

Administration	Steve Rooney	sgr3@le.ac.uk
Archaeology and Ancient History	Deirdre O'Sullivan	dmo
Cardiovascular Sciences	Emma Chung	emlc1
Chemistry	Paul Cullis	pmc
Criminology	Tracey Dodman	tld4
Economics	Sebastian O'Halloran	sdo2
ELTU	Jenny Warren	jmw35
Engineering	Andrew Norman	nja
English	Mark Rawlinson	mjr1
Health Sciences	Alun Evans	te45
Infection, Immunity and Inflammation	Shaun Heaphy	sh1
Institute of Lifelong Learning	Malcolm Flaherty	mtf3
IT Services	Nicholas Adkins	nja8
Law	Steven Cammiss	sc293
Library	Andrew Dunn	ad158
Management	David Harvie & Jo Grady	dh98 & jkg10
MRC Toxicology Unit	Kelvin Cain	kc5
Museum Studies	Viv Golding	vmg4
Politics and International Relations	Steve Hopkins	sh15
Psychology	Todor Gerdikov	tv3

If you're willing to be a departmental representative in a department that is not currently represented then please contact Sebastian O'Halloran [sdo2@le.ac.uk](mailto:sdo2@le.ac.uk).