

VOTE 'YES' TO REJECT THE 1% OFFER

Ballot closes on 10 October

Fight for decent pay and to stop the attack on HE

The pay ballot for UCU members is our chance to vote against the government's attack on the sector through an erosion of salaries and conditions.

It is our chance to signal that the market – in this case for the determination of pay rates – is not the way to manage a complex educational sector. The ballot is open from now until 10th October.

We have an opportunity to fight back over the erosion of salaries that has been in progress since the 2006 pay settlement.

The UCU HE department conservatively estimates that we have lost 12% of our incomes, in real terms, in the last three years. That is almost certainly an underestimate of what has been lost overall, and since 2006.

Some estimates put the loss at closer to 16%. If this is allowed to continue we will soon have lost one fifth of our salaries!

Some say that this is to be expected in a time of austerity. Others say that the preservation of jobs is a higher priority in a time of crisis. These are understandable but mistaken arguments.

Pay versus jobs?

All the evidence shows that there is no zero sum game between the defence of jobs and the defence of incomes. The reverse is the case.

An effective defence of jobs requires the UCU to demonstrate that it has the capacity to fight over pay and conditions, and will not be intimidated, cowed or misled by the rhetoric of austerity.

A decision to sacrifice our salaries will not ensure that universities divert the saved costs to keeping open threatened departments or schools.

The sector managers will not use the savings to keep struggling institutions from going to the wall. University governing bodies will not use the savings to enhance the incomes of those in our institutions worse off than academic and related staff.

What, in fact, will happen is that the government will use these savings further to reduce public subventions to the universities, allowing them again to reduce the marginal tax rates on the rich donors of its major party.

It will signal to local managements that the UCU is weak, and need not be considered when they engage in their restructuring exercises.

It will signal to the government that the UCU constitutes no major obstacle to its commercialisation drive, the preliminary to a move to full-scale privatisation.

Not to fight over pay is, in effect, a green light to the government to press ahead with its destructive plans for the sector.

Pay and productivity

Much is made by the government and by managers about the need for pay to match performance. On that basis there could be no justification

for VCs' salaries.

Despite presiding over an economic sector that earned £8.3 billion in 2010 for the Exchequer from overseas student fees (forecast to rise to £17 billion in 2025), the sector's managers have failed to divert the government from its attack on the sector.

They have largely acquiesced in the face of the government's determination to commercialise education, and to individualise sector finance through increased fees.

They have failed to mount any resistance to the crippling effect of the points-based immigration system, which threatens not only the future of London Metropolitan but also a raft of other universities. They have done nothing to defend higher education as a social good.

In contrast, the workloads of staff in universities have increased exponentially.

At the same time as we are put under pressure to produce for the REF, we face the reduction of sabbatical leave; while we are urged to increase the quality of our teaching, we are faced with increased teaching hours and larger classes (or smaller but more classes); as we strive to

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hold on to the academic ethos and standards and standing of our courses, we are told to make our teaching more 'student friendly'. Infotainment replaces education, and the National Student Survey becomes the measure of academic excellence.

It is not just the cost of living that is rising as fuel and food and clothing and transport bills rise.

The double insult is that this reduction in real incomes is being pressed on us even as pensions contributions are rising dramatically (and pensions benefits are cut for new joiners, threatening the future viability of our pensions schemes).

What is the claim, and what is the offer?

The joint union claim in HE is for 3.7% to cover inflation, and 3.3% to make a partial rectification of real incomes lost over the past period.

It also includes a demand to address the 15% gender pay gap in the sector, to undertake to pay all staff a Living Wage, to assimilate all hourly-paid staff onto the national contract (fractionalisation), and to establish national terms for leave arrangements for disabled staff.

The employers' response was to offer 1%, and to make no concessions on the other elements of the claim. All of the unions in the HE sector have now either rejected the offer, or are consulting their members on it.

Pay and sectoral strategy

However unfair it may be, pressing down on salaries does make sense for the government.

It is keen to see the break-up of national bargaining. Local or regional bargaining are themselves only a staging post to the long-term aim. That aim is for a system of individual contracts and personalised bargaining, with no role for trade unions.

The strategy for the attainment of that end is a series of zero, or close to zero, pay settlements which will encourage some universities to break away, and to pay more, at least to some staff.

Thus national bargaining will be broken, and the long-term effect will be a major structural shift of university income, in an increasingly privatised sector, away from salaries

and towards corporate surpluses.

That, together with the reduction in pensions liabilities from the attack on our superannuation schemes, is the chief encouragement for private capital to enter the sector, and thus to enable the state to withdraw from the provision of public universities.

If we wish to resist such a spectre, and to preserve Higher Education from this dystopian vision, as well as

to defend our living standards, then we must fight over pay.

We owe this fight not just to ourselves and our families, and to our own sense of self-respect as tutors and scholars, we owe it to future generations.

- **Vote 'Yes' to reject the offer.**
- **Fight for the sector.**
- **Fight for pay, and for the future.**

Building a campaign for a 'Yes' vote

Members and branch offices will be a little bemused at the absence of a campaign for a 'Yes' vote from the UCU leadership over the summer.

Many members will have been unaware of an impending ballot even as the ballot paper arrives through their letterbox. All will want to know what the details of the offer are, and what the unions are claiming. Many will want to know what the implications of a 'yes' or a 'no' vote will be.

There is some information available on the UCU website, though it requires a search, since it dates from June. At the time of writing no new material was available. What exists can be found at:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/k/c/HE_pay_leaflet_June_2012.pdf

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/l/8/Stop_Squeeze_poster.pdf

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/m/t/Stop_Squeeze_flyer.pdf

Branch committees are urged to print off and distribute and display this literature, or to ask for bulk orders from the Campaigns Team at UCU Head Office.

Branches should also hold meetings to discuss the pay claim and its implications, and then send information to all members.

For further advice, branches should contact their NEC member for HE, and should seek a report from discussions at Region from their representative on the Regional Committee.

If branches would like a speaker from the UCU Left, which holds the minority position on the national HE Committee, please contact Laura Miles on lauram2913@talktalk.net

The Tories want to wreck our lives...

MARCH FOR A FUTURE THAT WORKS
SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER



- **Fight the cuts, no privatisation**
- **Stop the Con-Dem wreckers**
- **Unite the resistance**

London: Assemble 11am, Victoria Embankment. Called by the TUC
Glasgow: Details at www.stuc.org.uk/20-oct