

For a united fightback to defend education

The assault on services and living standards

Workers in Britain have seen an unprecedented fall in living standards. This is alongside huge attacks on the welfare state in terms of slashed public spending and privatisation.

Post-16 education faces a deluge of redundancy threats, cuts and attacks on conditions. Both sectors are suffering cuts to funding streams, increasing privatisation and the growing scourge of casualization, poverty pay and zero-hours contracts.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) itself is suggesting that between 50 and 100 FE colleges could go to the wall in the next few years.

The retreat on HE pay has given the green light for a number of Vice-Chancellors to go on the offensive with redundancies threatened at Dundee and Kings College.

In addition, a new attack on the Final Salary section of the USS in pre-92 institutions has also emerged in recent days. These attacks demand nationally coordinated and robust responses.

The brilliant 89 percent vote for indefinite strike action on a 71 percent turnout in the rebalot at Lambeth College has drawn a line in the sand in defence of jobs and contracts.

The fight at Lambeth shows the willingness of members to fight back when given a clear lead and has to be a cause celebre for the union as a whole.

All of us can help deliver a victory through active solidarity such as regular collections and inviting strikers to speak in our own workplaces.

When we fight we can win – as we saw with the victory of EIS members at Edinburgh College recently. They won as a result of the threat of escalating strike action.

UCU Left fringe meeting

Building a campaigning union, building national action, building the fightback

Thursday 29 May, 7.30pm

@ Mechanics Institute,
103 Princess Street,
Manchester M1 6DD

Chair: Liz Lawrence
UCU president elect

Speakers:

- Mandy Brown
Lambeth College UCU and UCU FEC
- Lesley McGorrigan
Leeds University UCU and UCU HEC
- Carole Duggan
Justice for Mark Duggan campaign
- Egyptian Solidarity Initiative
- Care UK UNISON striker
- NUT speaker

Speakers appear in a personal capacity

National action and solidarity

The situation across the whole of post-16 education is urgent. The union desperately needs an effective national strategy to fight austerity and defend our members, our students and our sectors.

We cannot beat the national austerity assault college by college or university by university.

We need national action that puts us at the centre of the growing labour movement resistance to growing inequality and impoverished opportunities.

Motion 33

The importance of national responses to attacks like punitive pay docking is emphasised in Motion 33 from Manchester Met, and should be supported, unamended by the NEC amendment 33A.1.

Motion 11

We need to leave Congress determined to link up the local resistance being mounted by UCU branches in both sectors into a strategy that can enthuse and involve members nationally and harness the willingness of university and college staff as well as our students to stand up for education.

It is important therefore that Motion 11 (Importance of National Campaigns) and its amendment 11A.1 are carried.

Motions 12 and 13

The fight against casualization and poverty pay at SOAS is also important for us all to get behind. We must deliver the kind of active solidarity that ensures victory.

Motions 12 and 13 and their amendments are important in building action against casualization.

Fighting alongside other workers

Unions in local government and health have named 10 July as strike day if their current ballots deliver Yes votes. The NUT has announced it could join this. Other unions like the firefighters and civil servants may well join in.

Such strikes will also be the best antidote to the worrying surge of support for the far-right racist populism of UKIP in the local and European elections.

Our members in FE should also

decide to join in as there is a live ballot and we have just received an insulting 0.7% offer from the Association of Colleges (AoC).

The developing situation provides a new impetus for the HE campaign on pay. Industrial action is finished for this year in HE but we will be discussing how to build a new campaign for pay catch-up.

Being part of wider struggles

There are opportunities coming up for UCU to be part of developing the resistance to Tory austerity.

The Peoples Assembly demonstration on 21 June is an important focus, as is the TUC demonstration demanding fair pay in October. Our delegations and banners should be part of 'defend education' blocs on these demonstrations.

Motion 24

We should support Composite Motion 24 on affiliation to the People's Assembly and its amendment 24A.1 on affiliation to Unite the Resistance.

We must make sure that our branches link up with and offer solidarity to unions taking action and argue for joint activity with other groups of workers in education and across the public sector.

UCU Left has produced specific sectoral guidance on Conference motions that addresses re-building the pay campaign in FE, how we can campaign for HE pay catch-up for 2015/2016, building national action against casualization and education cuts, and developing the collective fightback we need.

A democratic, member-led union

What we don't need, however, are more attacks on activists in the union, the very people who represent and lead in our branches, on regions and nationally. It would seem there are some in the union who do not understand who the real enemy is.

We don't need, for example, new branch model Rules and regional standing orders to be foisted on us by the majority Independent Broad Left faction on the National Executive without proper discussion.

Motions 35, 41, 42 and 58-60

Delegates should therefore reject these proposals at Congress and vote for Motions 35, 41 and 42 in the Rules section, and Motions 58-60 which assert a more democratic process.

Motion 37

Delegates should also vote against Motion 37 from the NEC in the Rules section (on Prioritisation of Congress motions). Last year Congress dealt with all the business. Good chairing and a return to a three-day Congress from 2015 would obviate any necessity for this sort of prioritisation which seriously undermines the democratic process in the union.

Calls for a return to a three-day Congress from next year should therefore be supported.

Building networks of UCU activists

It is doubtful that there would even have been pay campaigns in FE and HE without UCU Left activists elected as negotiators or to the HEC and FEC.

UCU Left activists threw themselves into delivering the strike action in the branches and the work-to-contract in HE. Liz Lawrence, current President Elect, played a key role in arguing that conference policy was carried through.

However, electing candidates sympathetic to the policies that the UCU Left argues for is not enough in itself.

To prevent a repeat of the HE pay debacle next time around we must build strong and vibrant branches linked to networks of activists in branches, cities and regions.



Strikers at University College London in January

Building the UCU Left

IT HAS NEVER been more important to build networks of activists within and between institutions and in regions to build solidarity and to organise a fight back against the unprecedented attack on the jobs and working conditions of those in universities and colleges.

More widely, we are engaged in a struggle to defend our institutions against an assault on public education.

Join the UCU Left and come to our conference in October where we will debate; Where now for pay? How to fight casualization? Strategies for defending public education.

For further details contact Jane Hardy at janeannhardy@gmail.com

UCU official fringe meeting

After the Euro elections...

Fighting racism and anti-semitism

Friday 30 May, 1pm
@ Exchange 4 & 5

Speaker: Weyman Bennett
(Unite Against Fascism)

Join UCU Left at www.uculeft.org

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