

DEFEND PAY * VOTE YES TO STRIKE ACTION * VOTE YES TO ASOS!

No more pay cuts

Since 2009 we have lost at least 13 per cent of our pay. Add to this the hike in pension contributions and year on year our members have had a real and substantial cut in pay. The recent consultative ballot showed a resounding rejection of the employers' miserly 1 per cent pay offer.

Employers have used austerity as an excuse for holding down wages in higher education while building up reserves for pet projects. The last three years of pay cuts have also seen further casualization, unprecedented use of zero hours contracts and increasing workloads. It is telling that staff costs have fallen as a proportion of total costs; 2001/2002 58 per cent, 2011/2012 55.5 per cent. And of course we are not all in it together – those at the top end have pay packets that have continued to rise.

What sort of action?

Members need to vote for both Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) and strike action. They are a package in terms of the industrial action plan. It is understandable that the sell-out of the massive joint strike action on pensions by some trade union leaders after November 2011, and the UCU pension dispute, has clearly left some members questioning the effectiveness of simply having one day strikes.

However, escalating action on ASOS means that members need to be prepared to take strike action in the event of punitive and disproportionate deductions for partial performance and without a clear vote for strike action, the union will not call action short of a strike. But we need to also need to argue that strikes have to be part of a wider campaign - not one off events – that are linked to a comprehensive industrial and political strategy.

A ballot we must win

We must win this ballot with a large turnout and a decisive majority. Not to take action on pay this year would demoralise our members and have a negative impact on the union's recruitment drive.

UCU needs to be seen as an active union prepared to lead action to defend members' living standards, particularly in the light of year-on-year pay cuts. But there is another threat. Some employers would like to see an end to national bargaining – this would be disastrous and create divide and rule within the sector. Now is the time to fightback.

Fighting alongside other workers

Unison & Unite have rejected the offer and they are also balloting on it with a recommendation for strike action. In October teachers from the two largest teach-

ing unions (NUT/NASUWT) will be taking regional strike action on pay, pensions and workloads with planned national strike action in November/December. Lecturers in further education may also be balloting over pay. The demonstration in defence of the NHS at the Tory Party conference on 29th September will be enormous. It has the support of the TUC and all the major trade unions and will be a lightning rod for the deep seated anger about austerity. Other groups of workers are moving to strike action: post office workers against privatisation; firefighters against pension attacks and cuts to the fire service. As all these workers start to fightback in defence of jobs, pay, conditions, and our public services we need to send a clear message that we will be fighting back alongside them.

Defend pay, defend education

It is vital that we defend members against further pay cuts. But this is not a narrow sectional dispute – it is about defending education and valuing what academics and academic related staff do. Winning the ballot would strengthen the hand and confidence of UCU branches and members in resisting the creeping privatisation of the sector, fighting increased workloads and zero hours contracts and rampant managerialism. More broadly it will be part of a wider struggle against the punitive austerity of the current government.

Get the vote out

UCU activists must work energetically to get the vote out and explain the arguments to members. Please ensure that your branch:

- * Actively distributes all the UCU campaign materials
- * Prepares your own local leaflet recommending action
- * Holds a meeting on the pay dispute
- * Sends out reminders to vote
- * Forms 'get the vote out teams' which talk to members about the importance of voting
- * Explains to members the need to vote for both sanctions
- * Contacts branches in local HE institutions to co-ordinate with them

We need a good turnout and a large majority for both forms of action!

See this video from London Metropolitan UCU and Unison

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNyXE4qOHsM>