

*Stop the retreats, defend education...*

# Vote for a fighting union

**UCU members face the most sustained assault on post-16 education for generations. While pay for VCs and Principals has shot up, our pay and pensions are under unprecedented attack. We have suffered huge real terms pay cuts since the crisis began in 2008.**

Like workers elsewhere in the UK and across Europe, we have faced thousands of redundancies, pay cuts and rising workloads, more bullying from managers and the growing threats of privatisation.

This cannot be allowed to continue, for our sakes and for the sakes of our students and our communities.

But these attacks can be fought. Across Europe millions of people, including no doubt most UCU members, welcomed the triumph of hope and resistance over despair represented by the electoral victory of the Greek anti-austerity party Syriza.

Greek workers organised 32 general strikes and widespread industrial opposition to cuts, including in defence of the Greek education system. They have stood up against racism, an evil which is unfortunately a major feature of the general election campaign in the UK.

## Purpose

But fighting back is harder if our union is not fit for purpose – and UCU is in crisis. We have seen the union beat a retreat over the USS pension scheme in the pre-92 universities but also over pay in both sectors.

This has led to an entirely unnecessary series of setbacks and defeats. It's crucial that we turn this situation around, and we can. We need to organise in every university, college and UCU region to build resistance to the attacks from government and employers. That means voting for a national leadership prepared to fight back.

**UCU members now have the chance to vote for that fighting leadership in NEC elections, running from 2 -27 February.**

Time and again members have shown their willingness to resist the attacks on education and our union.

In the HE pay dispute York and Liverpool universities members responded to the threat of 100 percent pay docking with votes for all out action.

At Lambeth College UCU members took over 40 days of strike action to successfully beat off the imposition of a draconian new contract. Barnsley College and Sheffield College UCU members have been on the picket lines against attacks on contracts and job cuts.

## Local

But all too often we're told by the union's leadership, backed up by the "Independent Broad Left" grouping, that local successes such as Lambeth cannot be translated to the national stage.

But what is achieved locally could be achieved nationally if the political will was there, if UCU's leaders were campaigning and mobilising among members and branches.

Instead, the Higher Education Committee majority recently suspended planned industrial action in defence of USS pensions and put a poor 'offer' to members without recommendation.

The negotiating process was kept under wraps. It was only due to the principled opposition of the one UCU Left USS negotiator that members were made aware of what was really happening.

Eventually with no national lead the majority of members voted 2:1 to accept an offer that means serious detriments to the scheme and will cost members many thousands of pounds.

The failure to build on the strongest ballot mandate in the union's history is a glaring indictment of the present leadership.

This latest retreat comes in the wake of the collapse of the HE pay campaign. Then the same group on the NEC failed to prepare for the threat of 100 percent

punitive deductions for partial performance issued by some universities – and then called off the assessment boycott, our strongest weapon, for a minimally improved offer.

In FE the special sector conference on 13 December requisitioned by IBL supporters narrowly voted (34/40) to ditch the current pay campaign, and then the majority of national officers decided to cancel the pay ballot just two days before completion, without a count.

This has sent very damaging signals to the FE employers (AoC), particularly as the decision included a determination to retreat from pursuing national action for national pay scales in favour of, effectively, local campaigns on pay and conditions.

Such unnecessary retreats have weakened the union's potential to defend the post-16 sector.

## Defence

Our ability to organise future action in defence of pay, pensions, jobs and conditions has been undermined.

Employers must now be convinced that under the current leadership UCU is incapable of organising any effective action nationally in either HE or FE.

This can only embolden them in their efforts to undermine and weaken our branches and drive through the attacks they want to implement.

**The question now facing every UCU member is how we start to reverse the self-inflicted damage caused by the majority on the current NEC.**

We can make a start by voting for principled NEC candidates, UCU Left supporters and others, who genuinely support the need to build a democratic fighting union – and develop a leadership which will in practice stand up for members and implement democratic mandates.

**Election runs from 2 to 27 February**

## Candidates supported by UCU Left in the coming NEC elections

**President Scotland**  
Carlo Morelli

**North West FE**  
Nina Doran

**North West HE**  
Jo McNeill,  
Chris Sheehy

**UK-elected HE**  
Marion Hersh,  
Carlo Morelli,  
Jeff Fowler, Eleni  
Michalopoulou

**Trustees**  
Alan Whitaker,  
Angie McConnell

**UK-elected FE**  
Mandy Brown

**LGBT HE**  
Pura Ariza

**Midlands FE**  
Rhiannon Lockley,  
Allister Mactaggart

**Casually Employed members (HE)**  
Vicky Blake

**Casually Employed members (FE)**  
Amy Jowett

*Please note that all members can vote in the elections for Equality, Casually Employed members' and Trustees seats*

For a lay leadership that will:

- Fight to defend post-16 education
- Defend members' pensions, pay and conditions
- Respect democratic mandates
- Seek to build a campaigning, member-led union