

# REDUNDANCIES AND ALDGATE CAMPUS CLOSURE

## THE DISPUTE

On 10 December 2015, UCU recorded a dispute with London Met about redundancies and the closure of the Aldgate Campus, including:

1. Current proposals for the deletion of 93 staff posts (the majority academic) and the lack of a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies to achieve this in the following areas: CASS, FLSC, GFBL, and CELT. The cuts are ostensibly to reduce the percentage of overall university income spent on staff to a notional 60% by the end of 2015/16 (management have already indicated an intention to make further significant staff cuts to reduce this to 52).
2. The failure to allow sufficient time for consultation with the trades' unions. Management have allowed only the statutory minimum consultation period of 30 days, but within this period they have not provided sufficient information to allow UCU fully to contribute, particularly at faculty level.
3. The failure to consult staff meaningfully over recently-announced course closures. These rushed closures will, we believe, lead to further reductions in income and are now being used to help justify poor redundancy decisions.
4. The decision to shrink to 'one campus' and in so doing to move the CASS from Aldgate. This decision ignores staff submissions to the White Paper Strategy Review, surveys carried out by both UCU and Unison, and the formally declared position of CASS staff. It also ignores the 89% of CASS students who opposed the plan in a recent London Met Students' Union survey (83% of whom declared that such a move from Aldgate would have a 'big' or 'very big' influence on their decision to stay at London Met).



## THE BACKGROUND

UCU disputes that a strategy of shrinkage will do anything other than exacerbate the already difficult financial position the university finds itself in. It will continue the spiral of decline initiated by earlier management failures (the HEFCE fine and the loss of our international licence) and subsequent rounds of 'cutting to grow'. The latest destructive cuts follow those in summer 2015. As we predicted, those cuts were simply the start of further management-induced decline for the university. We are now being told that further cuts will follow this current round, and that frontline teaching staff will again be the main target. Reducing staff costs to an ever smaller percentage of income, whilst every major decision reduces that income further, is not a strategy for survival never mind one for growth and success.

The shrinkage strategy makes the university less attractive to future applicants and damages the experience of current students. In particular, the decision to close for new entrants many unique and well respected UG courses in the CASS (including BSc Music Instruments, BSc Music Technology, BA Jewellery and Silversmithing), and to remove significant numbers of PG courses across all four faculties, damages student applications, the standing of the university, and desperately needed fee income.

# We cannot shrink our way to success We must invest to grow



UCU disagrees that there is sufficient capacity amongst teaching staff to make the suggested staff cuts without further damaging the ability of teaching staff to deliver their existing teaching with integrity. In addition to the negative impact on the student experience we believe the cuts will further worsen the working conditions for remaining staff, increasing the pressure on members' physical and mental wellbeing.

The VC has disputed that this strategy is one of shrinkage. Yet these are his exact words as given in the letter notifying the trades' unions of the current proposed job cuts: 'Modelling shows that 10,000 is the optimum number of students (traditional delivery) for our Holloway campus. London Met currently has 12,000 students, so this will represent a decline in numbers. The research we have done suggests that a single campus will better serve our students, even if this necessitates a smaller student body'... 'London Met is aiming to be a smaller and more flexible university. It is likely that a reduction in staff, owing to a reduced student body and estate, will be needed as the University consolidates at Holloway'. It should also be noted that according to London Met's financial accounts for 2014/15, student numbers were reported as being 14,086 for academic year 2014/15 ending July 31 2015.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### **STAFF in FLSC, GFBL, CASS, CELT:**

- ◆ **vote YES to strike action**

### **STAFF in FSSH and STUDENTS:**

- ◆ **sign in support of staff and to invest in the growth of London Met**

### **ALL**

- ◆ **take a photo with the poster, send a copy to us and circulate widely on social media using the hashtags below**

## STAND STRONG TOGETHER

**#nojobcuts #nocoursecuts #dontmovethecass**

## OUR PROPOSAL

As confirmed in the 2014/15 Annual Report and Accounts, the university is not in debt. In fact, it had a surplus of £66.3m at the start of this academic year (2015/16).

The issue that needs addressing is the university's operating deficit, where current income is less than current expenditure. Actions taken in relation to this should minimise the risk to student enrolment and retention. Unfortunately, previous attempts at 'cutting to grow' suggest that the strategy of deliberately and significantly reducing student numbers to a planned 'optimum' of 10,000 on a single campus by 2017/18, and proactively cutting courses and staff numbers to accommodate and pay for that decrease, is a riskier prospect than the alternative of consolidating, creating a stable environment for staff and students, and aiming to grow on the basis of that stability.

UCU's proposed alternative is four-fold:

- 1) Halt frontline job cuts and fully review, and reverse where necessary, recent course closures;
- 2) Adopt a 'two-campus' solution that retains CASS at its Aldgate Campus, a site that has only recently received substantial investment in order to ensure that staff and students have a modern, fully fit-for-purpose environment;
- 3) Use the substantial capital-receipt surplus, and, where necessary, secured loans against current freehold property, to invest in both the Holloway and Aldgate campuses without the huge inherent risks of moving to one campus;
- 4) Consult on, and develop, a strategy to re-grow student intake over the medium term. Any capacity should be used to maximise student support rather than undermining staff-to-student ratios, helping to improve the student experience and London Met's attractiveness as a university of choice. As the university's new fee regime establishes itself over the next couple of years the average fee income per student will also increase significantly.

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