

# Pay briefing: Get organised for a member-led campaign

**H**igher Education staff have seen our pay slide backwards in value over the last decade. UCU calculates that like-for-like, measured against the Retail Price Index, our pay is now worth 14.5% less than in 2009.

Even if it is 'only' by a percentage point a year, we are all getting poorer.

To put this in an historical context, the only comparable post-war period that saw a real-terms decline (1975-79) comprised a real-terms fall of 8%.

The Labour Government that brought in that pay freeze collapsed in the Winter of Discontent – and paid the price for three more elections.

We are not alone. Across the public sector, workers have had cuts of around 20% in wages since the self-destructing banking crisis of 2008.

Yet cutting wages has not boosted the economy. Osborne missed his own targets, and the Tories have more austerity planned.

The banking-led housing bubble has re-inflated, and the Chinese economic crisis threatens overseas student recruitment.

If we don't fight now, it will be harder to fight next year.

Unlike most of the public sector, UK Universities are not poor. Indeed, they are increasingly banking on below-inflation pay rises. Many are actively siphoning funds into speculative capital projects. They want to expand teaching to compete for high tuition fees.

Not everyone is suffering. The conspicuous consumption of greedy VCs highlighted by UCU rightly grabs headlines.

But it is the voluntary expansion of corporate capital expenditure (up 8.2% in five years) and the expansion of annual surpluses (by a whopping 74.7%) that explains the overall decline in the proportion of turnover spent on pay. Defending members pay means pushing back against the corporatisation and privatisation of HE.

## We need to get organised

Within the UCU, the pay campaign stalled since the last set of consultation meetings last summer.

It is good that materials are going out to branches over the next couple of weeks, but HEC

unanimously agreed on 13 January to immediately launch a campaign amongst members!

This is becoming more urgent with the potential that the infamous Trade Union Bill will become law.

Ballots that take place before the enactment of the Bill will be subject to existing legislation, at least regarding notice and time periods. Delay will mean a much more difficult national dispute.

The conclusion has to be that we need a member-led pay campaign. We need to build the campaign amongst our members in branches.

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## UCU NEC elections: STV voting system

Please note that all members can vote in the elections for Equality, Casually Employed members' and Trustees seats. To maximise votes for progressive candidates we ask you to do the following:

- Please use your votes to **first endorse all UCU Left candidates** and only after that use lower preferences for other progressive candidates in each relevant list
- Give your highest preferences in the UK-elected list to UCU Left candidate(s) **from your region**

## UCU Left supports the following candidates in the NEC elections. Voting is from 1-26 February

### Vice-president FE

Mandy Brown

### London & the East HE

Sean Wallis, Ioanna Ioannou, Rachel Cohen, Mark Campbell

### London & the East FE

Sean Vernell, Julia Foster

### North East FE

Lee Short

### UK-elected FE

Margot Hill, Sarah Foster, Allister Mactaggart

### UK-elected HE

Mark Campbell, Pura Ariza, Julie Hearn

### Women members FE

Rhiannon Lockley, Elaine White

### Women members HE

Sue Abbott, Saira Weiner

### Black members

Dawn Livingston

### FE members

(casual vacancy)

Elaine White

### 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

More election materials can be found at the UCU Left website: [www.uculeft.org](http://www.uculeft.org)

Find out more: [www.uculeft.org](http://www.uculeft.org)

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We need to rebuild some confidence in our organisation and our arguments.

We need to campaign together, ballot together and strike together.

From the point of view of gathering feedback from members, these 'consultation' meetings are premature.

But we should use them to talk through what we need to do.

### Build the campaign

We need to win an argument that we can and should fight over pay. To do this we need to build the campaign from the ground up.

Members are angry about pay but they don't necessarily get the chance to express it.

It is not uncommon for members to think they are alone.

A recent UCU survey of members at University College London received more than 200 lengthy responses detailing the sheer unaffordability of living and working in London.

In areas of high unemployment some members say they are privileged compared to others in their community.

This is true, but workers have long discovered that their pay sacrifices don't lead to improved benefits for the low paid or unemployed – or students. Sharing poverty is not solidarity.

Our demand to raise pay also means challenging inequality inside our institutions.

Making the argument the employers need to pay staff properly allows us to expose the gender pay gap and resist casualisation.

A pay campaign can unite the union and connect us with everyone else in society frustrated at low pay – from junior doctors to transport workers and cleaners.

From Jeremy Corbyn's election to public support for the BMA, there is widespread support for resistance to 'austerity'.

## What we need to do

- Agitate over pay. Use the UCU's 'rate for the job' tool and get the posters up. Get the leaflets out and about. We need a visible campaign in our colleges.
- Use old-fashioned face-to-face campaigning. Use a paper petition and stalls to find members who want to help build the campaign. Don't rely on email, but use email to follow up contacts to get them involved. Integrate the pay campaign into the Recruitment Week.
- Organise branch meetings promptly. Make sure there is plenty of opportunity for members to debate. Invite representatives from other campus trade unions and student union activists.
- Set up a "pay campaign committee" to build the campaign. Members will get involved if you ask them to do one thing they are interested in.

Finally, come to the **Second Convention for Higher Education** on 27 February. Go to [heconvention2.wordpress.com](http://heconvention2.wordpress.com) for more information.

Advertise the event among members. The issue of pay, the tuition fee market and the longer-term future of HE are closely interconnected.

Reps need to be able to challenge management on their expansion plans and the 'affordability' of pay increases.

# Convention for Higher Education

**Saturday 27 February, 10am-5pm**  
**University College London**

The Convention is a grass-roots initiative led by union activists working with the Council for the Defence of British Universities and the Campaign for the Public University in opposition to the Tory policies in the HE Green Paper.

It is officially backed by UCU and the CPU and a growing number of union branches. This event is a must for all those who want to defend HE.

[heconvention2.wordpress.com](http://heconvention2.wordpress.com)

Sessions on:

- Teaching quality, social mobility & the TEF
- Opening the market to private providers – easy come, easy go?
- Measure anything, fail everyone? – the rise of 'performance management'
- Deregulation, the attack on governance & statutes: academic freedom under threat
- The future of research
- Strategies to win: How can we defend the Public University?

## Join UCU Left today

Fill in the form below and send to UCU Left, c/o 17 Barfield Rd, Leytonstone, London E11 3AF Or join online at [www.uculeft.org](http://www.uculeft.org)

Name .....

Address.....

..... Postcode .....

Email.....

Phone.....

Institution & UCU branch.....