

# Don't let employers use the pandemic to attack us

Election runs from 29 January - 2 March

## *UCU NEC elections: Vote Mark Abel for HE South*

I am Senior Lecturer in history and politics in the School of Humanities at the University of Brighton. My research is in the aesthetics and politics of music.

Since 2014 I have been Chair of the UCU Coordinating Committee at Brighton and have led a series of disputes in defence of local agreements and against redundancies.

As a result of strong local organisation, Brighton UCU has negotiated an effective workload agreement which protects contracted time for research and scholarly activity, and an opt-in lecture capture policy which enshrines lecturers' rights.

### **Negotiator**

In recent years I have served on the NEC, the Commission on Effective Industrial Action, the Democracy Commission, and as a national pay negotiator.

Covid dominates everything in HE at the moment. On one hand, universities have been key drivers of the spread of the virus by



encouraging students to move back to their accommodation and by pressuring staff to maintain unsafe in-person teaching.

On the other, the pandemic has been used by our employers as an excuse to launch a wave of attacks on UCU members.

### **Lockdown**

Since the first lockdown, as well as leading a local dispute against redundancies, I have been very active in building solidarity for UCU branches resisting job losses and unsafe workplaces, helping to organise a series of online rallies and coordinate action.

Building links with students protesting against their treatment is a crucial part of this solidarity work.

But we need a national response to these attacks. We need to emulate the NEU teachers' union in

collectively resisting unsafe working conditions and we need to fight nationally to stop employers picking branches off individually, imposing mass redundancies and worsened working conditions.

There is no separation between the problems facing our members as education workers and wider political issues.

Black Lives Matter has given a new impetus to efforts to end the systemic racism embedded in our universities and to decolonise the curriculum.

### **Climate**

I have worked to link our union with organisations like Stand Up To Racism to challenge racism on- and off-campus, and organised joint action with the youth movement demanding effective action on climate change.

If elected, I will continue to seek to strengthen our union by supporting initiatives which empower our members to take action against all the corrosive effects of the marketisation of higher education which have been so exposed by Covid.

For more information about the UCU Left platform and candidates [click here](#).