

University of Leeds University & College Union

Pay and equality



The Higher Education trade unions put in a pay claim for a decent pay rise and serious work on the important issues of the gender pay gap, workload and casualisation. The employers offered a 2% pay rise (below inflation, for the 9th year running) plus vague talks on the other aspects of the claim. After an initial e-consultation, UCU will be running an industrial action ballot in September, about taking extensive industrial action in the autumn term for a better deal on pay plus genuine action on the other issues. Locally, we're particularly annoyed that management are conflating increments (which you get anyway if eligible) with pay rises, trying to make the offer sound better than it is.

To see how much you've lost in the last 9 years of tiny pay rises, try this online calculator <https://unison.typeform.com/to/p9zsW9>

We're gearing up to apply all the energy, creativity and determination from the USS strikes for the pay and equality dispute – get involved! More on pay at leedsucu.org.uk/pay

Anti casualisation roadshow

Coming to our campus on **26/27 October** including speakers, workshops, mental health first aid and games! How can we fight this blight on universities? More info soon. Please help publicise it to PG students and early career staff.

USS Pensions



To save our pensions we were on strike for 14 days in February/March, picketing in the snow with great support from students. The employers wanted to change USS to a 'Defined Contribution' scheme, with no guaranteed pension benefits and lower retirement income. A typical lecturer would have lost about £10k a year in retirement and early career staff would have suffered badly (depending on vagaries of the markets, but that's the whole point of risk shifting). UCU won an agreement to continue a Defined Benefit scheme, where we know what we pay and what we will get, plus a Joint Expert Panel was set up to consider the scheme's highly disputed valuation.

The Joint Expert Panel will report its findings to USS in September. It hasn't been very transparent, but we suspect they won't reach agreement, and if so, that the employers may try to cut pensions again. So we're being vigilant and ready to resume the dispute if need be. Meanwhile, USS are proposing to increase our pension payments from April to cover the 'deficit' – we don't want that either! UCU will democratically decide what to do next in the autumn - watch this space...



A group of UCU members have come together as 'USSbriefs' producing excellent and easily understandable reports on pensions and related issues. Check them out at medium.com/ussbriefs They are also running a 'wildcat' panel in parallel to the JEP, called OpenUPP, hosting materials and debates in public.

More info at leedsucu.org.uk/pensions

Gender pay claim



Details of the gender pay gap at Leeds have been released. The mean gender pay gap is 22.5% (the difference between the average salary of men and that of women). There are more men in higher paid roles and more women in lower

paid roles. Just 24.2% of professors are female. Leeds UCU will shortly be submitting an **official gender pay claim** as this is clearly not acceptable! Some universities have already taken radical action to reduce the disparity and we want Leeds to. We also want to find out if it's particularly bad in specific areas, and what the gaps look like when other factors such as race, age, and casual contracts are taken into account. See leedsucu.org.uk/genderpaygap

International staff

Right to strike: we're delighted that, after pressure from UCU and others, the Home Secretary has said legal strike action will be added to exceptions to the absences rule for workers on visas. So strike days will stop being counted as unauthorised absences for visas. Thanks to everyone who wrote to their MP about this – the pressure worked!

Briefing for international members: If you couldn't make the legal briefing we organised in May, members can get free immigration employment advice from UCU nationally.

'Hostile environment' in universities: See a report on this from @intnlandbroke, and please fill in an (anonymous) survey from UnisResistBorderControls to help assess what's happening across UK Higher Education.

More at leedsucu.org.uk/international

Various Reorganisations

There are many of these going on at the moment, e.g. IT, H&S. Management are busily trying to centralise all services, and cutting staff through voluntary redundancies. We had a big dispute about redundancies and 'red-circling'

some years ago, which ended with an agreement to negotiate via a joint 'Employment Security Review Group' when redundancies are proposed. Management seem to be avoiding this agreed process and pushing changes through without proper negotiation. UCU has been supporting members through several difficult reorganisations and helping individuals get the best possible outcomes, either to stay on or to take voluntary severance. We also have serious concerns about the effects large staff losses will have on the teaching and research of the university.

Workload

Since university management doesn't think workload is a problem, UCU are beginning a workload audit in schools. Please get in touch with your rep to get involved with an audit in your school. Also, a survey called the 'People Management Framework' will come round soon – UCU encourages you to fill it in, to give an accurate picture of workplace stress etc. See leedsucu.org.uk/workloads

Hardship Fund

We were really grateful to everyone who made donations to the local Hardship Fund, over £10,000 in total, to support members who took strike action over pensions. This supplemented the national UCU Fighting Fund, and enabled us to help those in most need e.g. part time or hourly paid staff. Locally we made payments to over 50 staff. We understand that the financial pinch might not be felt immediately, so members who didn't claim at the time but now find they are in difficulty should email ucu@leeds.ac.uk asap with the subject 'hardship'.

Check your UCU membership!

Make sure you can vote in the pay and equality ballot – check on myUCU at ucu.org.uk/myucu that your address & other details are correct.

Next UCU Meetings

The next Leeds UCU General Meeting is on:

- Friday 19th October (lunchtime)

All members welcome. Watch your email for details, plus extra meetings on pay and pensions, And look out for social 'UCU lunches' outside!