

University of Leeds University & College Union

USS Pensions



There seems to be no comfortable end in sight for the USS dispute. USS have proposed three options as solutions to the ongoing valuation, all of which mean members and employers paying more, and none of which implement the

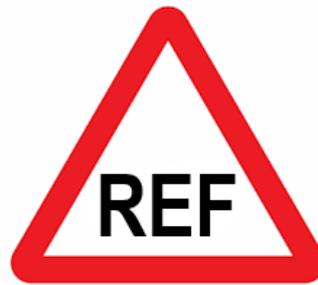
Joint Expert Panel's recommendations. Employers prefer option 3 which would increase member contributions to 9.6% with possible imposed additional increases after later valuations. It has recently been revealed, after whistleblowing from a USS trustee, that USS misled employers and members about the 2018 valuation, claiming wrongly that The Pensions Regulator had said the JEP recommendations would be too risky.

UCU believes we can't trust these people any longer, has called for the resignation of USS CEO Bill Galvin, and is exploring the possibility of legal action against the USS Trustee Board. We reject any members' contribution increases, we call on UUK to pick up any imposed extra costs, and we plan to ballot on industrial action in September if they do not agree. See leedsucu.org.uk/pensions

What's happening on pay?

2019 pay negotiations with the employers began in early May and the Universities & Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) offered 1.8% (increased to 3.65% for low grades), but no significant action on gender pay and precarious contracts. This fell well short of our claim. At UCU Congress in May, delegates expressed profound dissatisfaction, particularly after years of below-inflation pay rises including 2% in 2018. Congress resolved to campaign to win an industrial action ballot on this next academic year, with equality and anti-casualisation at the heart of our claim. See leedsucu.org.uk/pay

REF 2021



After formal negotiations with Leeds UCU, the University Executive Group has revised the REF2021 Code of Practice. They stopped short of the full range of improvements we

wanted to make but UCU secured a no detriment clause, to make clear that staff should not be negatively affected by the university's preparations for this invidious and incommensurate national auditing process. We have also won UCU oversight over the appeals process and equalities monitoring. We remain concerned that some managers are pressuring staff into Teaching & Scholarship roles in an attempt to game the REF.

Get in touch if you or your colleagues are in this situation (ucu@leeds.ac.uk).

Augar review

This long awaited review of post-18 education and funding was published on May 30th. Crucially, whether it is adopted will be dependent on who ends up leading the country. Nonetheless, we are concerned about the suggestion to reduce funding for HE which will be particularly detrimental to arts and humanities subjects. An emphasis on HE meeting the requirements of business is evident. The harsher repayment terms mean the worst off would end up paying more. This, together with withdrawing financial support for foundation years, is dangerous for widening participation.

Head of School appointment process

Up till now most schools have appointed their new Heads by involving academic staff who can question the applicants on their plans and research. University management are changing this, to appoint externally with little if any staff

involvement. UCU are not happy with this for many reasons, not least that part of the rationale may be to appoint anti-union managers. We are challenging this change, see www.leedsucu.org.uk/hosprocess

Anonymous discussion boards for in-course feedback

We had serious concerns about this plan, including the potential for bullying of staff and students, increased workload and potential use of comments for other purposes. We have heard that, after significant resistance at Faculty Taught Student Education Committees, the plan will not now be going ahead. We hope that ways of addressing student concerns will now be sought which are inclusive, are respectful of staff and students' rights, and which draw on existing good practice around the university.

Workload and stress



Recent staff survey results reported only 77% felt their work allowed a healthy work-life balance. We've raised workload/stress with management many times so we hope this survey

result will result in real action. The epidemic of stress and anxiety in HE has been in the news due to increasing staff referrals to counselling services, caused by workload, increased performance management, pressure to perform and precarity. Please get in touch if you have workload concerns (ucu@leeds.ac.uk). Remember UCU members can contact the Educational Support Partnership for support, see educationsupportpartnership.org.uk

UCU election news!

Vicky Blake, Leeds UCU President 2017-19, has been elected as Vice President (VP) of UCU nationally. She will be VP for a year then President Elect then President, with responsibility for chairing the decision making bodies of our union. Vicky will be brilliant! Many thanks to Vicky for her huge contribution to our branch over the years and good luck!

Jo Grady, a Sheffield lecturer and one of the 'USS Briefs' group who emerged from the USS strikes, has been elected as our new General Secretary. Read her inspiring speech at Congress: ucu.org.uk/article/10119/Address-by-incoming-general-secretary-Jo-Grady

Finally, at our AGM in May, we elected new branch officers and committee. See www.leedsucu.org.uk/about-us

Report from UCU Congress May 2019

UCU's annual Congress is its supreme policy making body, and it met this year over the May Bank holiday weekend. Leeds University UCU sent five branch delegates to Congress: Arunima Bhattacharya, Dima Chami, Laura Loyola, Megan Povey and Chloe Wallace. Lesley McGorrigan attended as delegate from the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Committee, and Vicky Blake as a member of the National Executive Committee (and Vice-President elect). Pay and pensions were important topics, but a highlight of Congress this year was the change we helped make to UCU structures to ensure that migrant members are effectively represented and that UCU is committed to protect and defend migrant members and campaign against harassment, prejudice and discrimination against them.

Overall, Congress was energising. Under the leadership of our new General Secretary, Jo Grady, we are united in fighting issues of pay and pensions, and are also mobilised to fight for equality and fair treatment, the end of casualisation, to act positively against the threat of the far right, and to prioritise campaigning and action on the climate emergency. More details at leedsucu.org.uk/congress2019report

Who's your local rep?

Most schools and departments have at least one local rep, who is your first point of contact with the union. Have a chat if you're interested in joining! See leedsucu.org.uk/about-us

Members please check your address

Please visit MyUCU www.ucu.org.uk/myucu to ensure UCU has your correct postal address!