

Emergency Resolution: Solidarity with UCU – Support the Assessment Boycott

Passed 30 October 2014

Proposer: Liam Mccafferty (Postgraduate Education Officer)

Seconded: Chris Jarvis (Campaigns & Democracy Officer)

Union Notes:

1. Universities UK have stated their intention to make significant reform to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension scheme, which UEA academic staff are a part of.
2. These reforms would include a move from pensions based on career-end salaries to pensions based on career average salaries.
3. On October 20th 2014, UCU announced the result of its ballot for industrial action – 78% of members voted for strike action and 87% of members voted for action short of a strike.
4. This was on a record turnout in a national Higher Education ballot since UCU was formed
5. On October 27th, UCU announced that the result of the ballot would see lecturers taking industrial action short of a strike in the form of an Assessment Boycott at 69 Higher Education institutions, including UEA taking place from the 6th of November.
6. An assessment boycott would see coursework and exams not being set or marked.
7. Some UCU members are Postgraduate students, who are therefore also members of the Union of UEA Students and the UEA Graduate Students' Association
8. History has shown that in the event of assessment and marking boycotts, there has been an expectation from HE institutions that Postgraduate teaching staff will take up the marking responsibilities on behalf of staff taking industrial action
9. Last year, the Union of UEA Students stood in solidarity with staff taking industrial action against attacks on their pay at UEA, with students and officers attending picket lines at every strike, officers hosting rallies for UCU in Union House, and ultimately supporting the proposed marking boycott through policy 1557 – UCU Marking Boycott – Standing By Our Staff'
10. UUEAS has a history of this solidarity and has supported previous industrial action as evidenced by policies 1101 – 'Motion in Support of UCU Industrial Action' and 1178 – 'Students Supporting Strikes Should Not be Disciplined'

Union Believes:

1. The proposed reforms of the USS would see members of the pension scheme lose thousands of pounds after retirement.

2. While the industrial action will cause disruption for students, a workforce that is well paid and well remunerated in their retirement is in the interests of students
3. That the interests of students and staff in Higher Education institutions are aligned – reforms in Higher Education, particularly since 2010 have had negative impacts on both students and workers.
4. University staff have repeatedly stood in solidarity with students fighting the marketization of education and tuition fees, most notably by marching side by side with students in the 2010 student protests.
5. The marking boycott that was proposed to take place on April 2014 was, with support from Student Unions across the country, effective in securing a 2% pay rise from UCEA without actually taking place.
6. The best way for UUEAS to prevent any potential disruption to students, is to join in solidarity with staff and pressure the Universities UK to grant their demands. Solid and widespread support can help to resolve the dispute quickly, averting or minimising disruption to students.
7. Postgraduate members of the Union of UEA Students who are also members of UCU should have our unwavering support in their role as students who teach.
8. Any attempts to push Postgraduate Students to take up marking or assessment work on behalf of those lecturers taking part would undermine the aims and efficacy of the industrial action as well as putting additional pressure on those students.

Union Resolves:

1. To support the UCU in their call for an assessment boycott
2. To mandate the Student Officer Committee to put forward time and resources in order to communicate effectively this position with staff and students as well as run a campaign in solidarity with staff participating
3. To directly support any Postgraduate students participating in the assessment boycott and actively encourage Postgraduates who teach to join UCU
4. To publicise the support services we offer for students affected by the industrial action