



Chairman: Andrew Moss
Secretary: Will Smith
email: ws103@cam.ac.uk
Tel: 01223 334444

Cambridge University Branch 0775M

<https://cambridgeuniteunion.com/>

Working to protect staff in Cambridge University

Introduction from the Secretary

Dear Unite Colleagues,

I receive a great many email messages from Unite members asking me what is happening in other parts of the University to the ones they work in. I tell what I can, but all too often we are tied up with the University claim that practically everything is confidential – but believe me staff in the University face a lot of ongoing difficulties. Unite is at the forefront of trying to address them.

A recent enquirer asked whether or not the University was “beginning a cost cutting exercise?” The unfortunate fact is that there is a cost cutting exercise and it has been happening for at least the last 10 years. Evidence is there to be seen. The loss of support staff posts, whether through job suppression due to redundancies – yes they do happen – or through voluntary severance/retirement schemes, puts greater pressure on staff who find that they are taking up the duties of those suppressed roles. This makes life harder when we are at work, but makes it impossible when returning from periods of holiday or sick leave to find no one has been able to cover that leave, and catching up usually involves longer working hours and less breaks. This pressure puts an unsustainable strain on our workforce; the circle of stress begins and staff are forced to take sick leave suffering from work-related stress – which means of course there isn’t anyone to pick up their tasks. Any return to work, usually on a phased return, is short lived, as the work once again builds up, and stress once more makes that person ill.

Cambridge University is sure that it knows the cause of this stress. The main message from the “My Cambridge” initiative, which is all about staff wellbeing, is that streamlining procedures and improving staff “efficacy” will alleviate stress and help us to achieve a good work-life balance. The example they offer is that of a member of staff who used to cycle to town to deliver documents to the Old Schools on a regular basis. They no longer do this and the documents are sent by email. Yes – this saves time – a major part of the My Cambridge idea, but I would question whether it helped that person’s wellbeing. Many of us might find a weekly cycle ride quite de-stressing?

Unite has questioned the effectiveness and underlying aims of the “My Cambridge “ initiative.

Whilst departments are always quick to deny the fact, one key tool of this cost saving exercise is Organisational Change. Unite is currently supporting a number of staff in several different University departments who have found their jobs are at risk of redundancy due to enforced changes in their workplaces. Confidentiality clauses forbid us at the moment to say where – but look out for Unite posters, which may be displayed in the near future. We are fully prepared to take action should the consultations not go well.

Will Smith
Branch Secretary

Please pass this newsletter on to your work friends and colleagues. Ask if they too would like to join us. Print it and pin it up on department notice boards.

Spread the word.

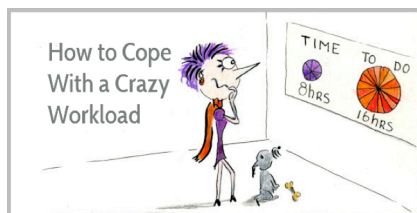
At the moment we are achieving a lot. With an even larger membership it is highly possible that we will burst the Cambridge bubble.

Update on Pay Dispute

Higher Education new JNCHES Pay negotiations 2019
(Joint Unions Unite, UCU, Unison, GMB, EIS)

Pay Claim

Our pay claim for this year was drawn up by Unite members elected to our National Education Sector Committee based on a survey of all members which shows that staff working in Higher Education have suffered below inflation pay rises in recent years and our pay is not keeping pace with the cost of living; 50% of Unite members frequently work longer than their contracted hours; 72% of members experience work place stress and 50% rate staff morale as bad or terrible.



Our pay claim of the inflation rate based on the Retail Price Index (RPI), plus 3% reflects that pay in higher education is falling behind public sector pay. We also asked our employers to address the unfairness that many universities have a 37 or 39 hour week. There should be a 35 hour week for all universities without loss of pay. The pay claim asked the employers to address the increasing workloads of staff, address the gender and ethnicity pay gaps and further look at bringing outsourced staff back in house.



The unions worked collectively to present our pay claim and were clearly able to demonstrate that there is affordability within the sector to provide a “keep up and catch up” pay rise for 2019. Employers expressed that additional pension costs, uncertainty over Brexit, perceived reduced student numbers and no increase in student fees as reasons that the offer remains low. There were a series of items relating to a 35 hour week and outsourcing that they were explicit in stating should be pursued at a local level this year and a proposed Scottish sub-committee for JNCHES that was rejected by the employer. However, the employers conceded

that they were able to address wider issues within the current framework agreement and would explore this with the board.

Unite senior negotiators and the joint trade unions in Higher Education met with the University employers body UCEA over April and May to negotiate the pay offer which is set out below.

Final Offer on Pay

An offer of base pay uplifts to the New JNCHES pay spine points, from 1 August 2019, salary point 1 is deleted and points 2 to 16 are set out below.

| | Salary from 1 August 2018 (£) | Salary from 1 August 2019 (£) | % increase |
|----|--|--|-----------------------|
| 2* | 15,842 | 16,420 | 3.65% |
| 3 | 16,146 | 16,736 | 3.65% |
| 4 | 16,460 | 17,046 | 3.56% |
| 5 | 16,766 | 17,361 | 3.55% |
| 6 | 17,079 | 17,682 | 3.53% |
| 7 | 17,408 | 18,009 | 3.45% |
| 8 | 17,751 | 18,342 | 3.33% |
| 9 | 18,189 | 18,709 | 2.86% |
| 10 | 18,688 | 19,133 | 2.38% |
| 11 | 19,202 | 19,612 | 2.14% |
| 12 | 19,730 | 20,130 | 2.03% |
| 13 | 20,275 | 20,675 | 1.97% |
| 14 | 20,836 | 21,236 | 1.92% |
| 15 | 21,414 | 21,814 | 1.87% |
| 16 | 22,017 | 22,417 | 1.82% |
| 17 | 22,659 | 23,067 | 1.80% |
| 18 | 23,334 | 23,754 | 1.80% |
| 19 | 24,029 | 24,461 | 1.80% |
| 20 | 24,771 | 25,217 | 1.80% |

Points 13 to 16 to increase by under 2%

Points 17 and above to increase by 1.8%.

Consultative Ballot

The Unite National Education Sector committee met on Friday 1 May and gave detailed consideration of the final offer; reflecting that:

- there is a below inflation pay rise for points 16 and above;
- there are significant issues for recruitment and retention of staff in universities;
- this represents a significant pay increase at the lower end of the pay spine, but represents a pay cut for the squeezed middle, and that work load and working hours are significant issues for all staff;

- cutting working hours without loss of pay would address some of the pay issues for those members on a 37 or 39 hour week, but that this must also be matched by a cut in work load.

The Committee reflected on the high cost of living for our members, and that employers had choices about whether they invested in new buildings or invested in staff, and that a decent pay rise for staff is now well overdue after 6-7 years of below inflation pay rises representing a real cut in wages.



V



The National Education Sector Committee agreed that a consultative ballot of members needed to be combined with Unite branches holding all member meetings to discuss the pay offer, and campaign materials with the strap line “it’s time to talk about pay” and the results of our members survey to support the discussions, to identify whether branches will pursue a 35 hour week at a local level on a joint union basis and to maximise turnout in the consultative ballot.

Unite recommended rejection of the employer's pay offer which is a below inflation pay rise of 1.8% for anyone above salary point 16. Whilst some Unite lower paid members will achieve the foundation living wage with this offer, it does nothing to address pay drift for those higher up the spine points or indeed pay drift on all other elements of the spines including the lower end.

It was important to communicate to members that this is a final offer that is the best that can be achieved by negotiation, that we recognise that at the lower end of the pay spine this represents a significant pay increase, but that we recommend a rejection of the offer, to send a signal to the employers that more must be done to increase pay across the pay spine and that the turn out in that consultative ballot is the best indicator of the strength of feeling of our members.

It was recognised that an up-to-date members list is an essential element of our organising to maximise turnout, and that branch meetings should also focus on ensuring membership records are up to date.



"Sorry, bub. You're not in the database."

© 1997 Mick Stevens from The Cartoon Bank. All rights reserved.

**IF YOU WANT TO CHECK THAT
YOUR DETAILS ARE CORRECT**

**Please contact your Branch Secretary
at Will.Smith@unitetheunion.org**

The NEISC met again on 10th July and our members received our consultative ballot results, which was 81% to reject the final offer, a significant increase in turn out from the ballot last year, as a result of the pay campaign.

We met with UCEA through the dispute resolution procedure, which did not result in a significant increase in the final offer, and the NISC has recommended that the union now organise a national aggregated formal industrial action ballot of all employers on the issue of pay, and that branches may also move to industrial action ballots on local matters as appropriate.

Next Steps

Our time scale will be similar to the joint unions during the period from 9th September through to 30th October. Whilst recognising that this is a long ballot period, our timing remains flexible and it will be possible for us to ballot in a shorter time frame. **Currently all unions have rejected the offer and will be working through a joint formal industrial action ballot with all other unions engaged in the dispute.**

We recognise that turn out will be crucial as currently Higher Education is bound by the trade union act requiring 50% turnout to enable industrial action. At the current time we await further advice from the legal department regarding the organisation of a formal industrial action ballot.