

Report: 3-Union Meeting

UCU co-Secretaries Maïa Pal and Andy Kilmister met, on 17 April 2018, with Student Union officers Diko Blackings (President), Sam Cockle-Hearne (VP Welfare), Becca Harrington (Women's Officer), and Sharelle Holdsworth (VP Societies Development), as well as with UNISON Rep Jon Appleton.

One of the items discussed was the possible organisation of a public event on the subject of 'Unions at Uni'. This event will provide an opportunity to engage with students on what a union is, what a strike is, the difference between the Student Union and other unions on campus, and how students can or already engage with union activity through employed work during their time at university or in their future career. This event is planned for week 2 (3 October 2018) of the first semester of the 2018-2019 year.

Diko Blackings shared information from the Widening Participation Group that 75% of Brookes students come from socially advantaged background, and it was agreed that this was important to bear in mind when organising events such as the one described above, or discussing equality issues.

Other items on the agenda included food and catering contracts, and the USS Pensions strike, particularly with respect to Oxford Brookes' relationship to the strike as a post-92 university. (Continued Next Page)

Members' Voices & Views

Dr Ingrid A. Medby comments on a panel discussion organised by UK academics at the conference of the American Association of Geographers (12 April), "The Great Strike of 2018 – UK Higher Education After Marketisation":

Discussion centred on some of the key issues of late, centring on the strike but broadening out to a changing academic landscape. On the one hand, increased solidarity and collegiality are praiseworthy; on the other, increased internal divides between e.g. strikers/non-strikers are worrying. As was pointed out, however, the former prompts us to reassess our collegial relationships in a way that should allow us to face the latter potential conflicts - to actually speak, relate, and understand different positions on the issue. Particularly relevant for Brookes, the relationship between Post-92s and Russell Group universities was mentioned; according to a commentator it has prompted a renewed awareness of each other in his particular town, and is an opportunity we should seize as we are often in both close geographical proximity and political affinity. Finally, a theme throughout was that also beyond the strike, the union and its members seem to be mobilising and taking a stand on a creeping change to our jobs and institutions. Keeping this going, moving forward is crucial for the future of higher education in the UK.

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Having occurred throughout the 2017-2018 academic year, 3-union meetings are now regular (every 4-5 weeks), and will continue from September 2018 onwards. A smaller group met briefly on 27 February 2018 and discussed the USS strike, the budget cuts announcement, and how unions plans to react to them. The next meeting is scheduled for 24 May 2018 at 3-4pm.

UCU members vote to accept proposals in pensions dispute

In a record turnout for a national ballot, UCU members voted by two to one to accept proposals aimed at resolving the university pensions dispute. A second wave of strikes due to begin next week and to continue into May and June has been suspended, as has the action short of a strike. The result:

Yes to accept the UUK offer 64%
No to reject the UUK offer 36%
Turnout: 63.5%

The proposals agreed by UCU members mean that a joint expert panel will be set up to re-examine the USS valuation and make recommendations. The employers have also stated that they do not intend to return to their original proposals to end the guaranteed pension, have made a clear commitment to defined benefits and agreed to discuss a wide range of issues raised by UCU. These will include inter-generational fairness, comparisons with the Teachers' Pension Scheme and the role of government in providing support for USS.



****Recruitment Week****

UCU Recruitment Week is occurring at Oxford Brookes University on 15, 16, and 17 May. UCU Oxford Brookes will be in the JHB forum from 1100-1400 each day. Please stop by to say hello, pick up campaigning materials, and meet the team!

**Not a member yet?
Here's how to join:
<http://join.ucu.org.uk>**