

## Recent USS and UUK leaks and the USS dispute: key questions for branches to ask vice-chancellors

This week there was a leak of two slideshows from Universities UK's annual conference on 11 September [<https://academicfreedom.watch/node/48>]. One was presented by Alistair Jarvis and Stuart McLean of Universities UK and Adam Tickell, vice-chancellor of Sussex University and the Employers' Pension Forum. The other was presented by USS chief executive, Bill Galvin.

These leaks are worrying to UCU, for several reasons.

- USS is currently considering measures that would result in even higher and faster contribution increases than the ones which employers and members are already facing. These increases could be implemented as early as the next 9-12 months and at any rate earlier than originally scheduled (i.e. October 2019). They are likely to be imposed on members as well as employers. See page 9 [<https://academicfreedom.watch/sites/default/files/2019-10/Bill%20Galvin%20presentation%20to%20UUK%2011%20September%202019-S.pdf#page=9>]
- In the other leaked slideshow, Adam Tickell talks about moving members on to alternative risk-sharing models like Collective Defined Contribution (CDC) – an option which the JEP has explicitly ruled out considering in its second report. See page 12: <https://academicfreedom.watch/sites/default/files/2019-10/UUK%20Annual%20Conference%20-%20Stuart%20McLean%20and%20Adam%20Tickell%20slides-S.pdf#page=12>
- Finally, there is little indication that employers are discussing ways in which they can work harder or more effectively to press USS to accept the findings of the Joint Expert Panel's second report. Given that they have permitted USS to reject the most important findings from the first report, this is very concerning.

It is almost certainly the case that a senior manager or other representative from your employer attended this event more than a month ago. With that in mind, UCU has drafted a set of questions for branches to put to their vice-chancellors and other employer representatives, based on these leaks and focusing on issues that will be important over the coming months.

At the moment, employers are insisting that they have done everything they can to get a better outcome for the USS valuation. We encourage you to ask them these questions and share their responses with UCU [[pbridge@ucu.org.uk](mailto:pbridge@ucu.org.uk)].

- How do you plan to encourage USS to accept the findings of the Joint Expert Panel's second report when it is published later this year? Will you do anything differently this time, given employers' failure to make USS accept the first report?
- If somebody from the institution was present at the UUK conference, why did the institution not see fit to warn USS members that they might face accelerated, higher contribution increases in the next 9-12 months? Why have UCU and USS members been excluded from these important discussions about the future of USS?
- If USS does go ahead and impose higher and/or accelerated contribution increases before the date originally proposed for the 2020 valuation, how will your institution respond? Will you promise not to impose any share of the increases on members? Will you promise not to propose any cuts to benefits?
- Why are employers already talking about alternative risk-sharing options like Collective Defined Contribution, which would shift all investment risk on to staff and leave them entirely without any guaranteed pension benefits? Why are they not waiting for the JEP's second report, which will not consider CDC and will instead focus on proposals for making guaranteed, Defined Benefit pensions more affordable?
- These presentations took place at the annual conference for Universities UK, the body that represents employers in USS negotiations. Do you believe that Universities UK adequately represents your views and your position in this dispute? If not, what is your plan for making sure that your views and like-minded institutions' views are heard within UUK and USS?

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