

Dear colleague

I am writing to report on the outcomes of yesterday's branch delegate meetings and today's Higher Education Committee (HEC) meeting.

I am sorry that branches have had to wait for the final calculated results of each vote taken at the meetings. [The final counts for each vote taken are now available here.](#)

- In the case of the **Four Fights dispute**, the overall view of the branches represented was that the recently tabled offer from UCEA should be rejected, but that the final decision on whether to reject or accept it should be taken via an e-ballot of all members, rather than by HEC, Higher Education Sector Conference, or any other body.
- In the case of the **USS dispute**, the overall view of the branches represented was that the dispute should be paused for the time being, with future decisions about progressing the dispute to be made by Higher Education Sector Conference, rather than by HEC or any other body.

In both meetings, branches voted by an overwhelming majority not to reballot for industrial action at the end of June (or as soon as practically possible thereafter), as per the timetable decided on by HEC at its meeting on 24 April.

### **Today's HEC meeting**

As outlined in previous correspondence, branch delegate meetings are advisory in nature. I had hoped to be able to tell you this afternoon what the HEC decisions were regarding each of the votes taken by branch delegates, how this mapped onto the expressed preferences of the delegate meetings, and what this would ultimately mean in each dispute.

However, HEC in the end only gave some consideration to the outcomes of the delegate meetings. The way the meeting was structured meant the first part debated and voted on various other (mostly non-dispute) items of business. But the second part ran out of time to discuss branches' positions in any detail and plot a way forward in each dispute.

### **HEC decision to reballot in June still stands**

Consequently, the previous HEC decision to reballot branches for industrial action at the end of June was not discussed or reconsidered. It therefore has not been rescinded and still stands. Both delegate meetings voted by an overwhelming majority against a June reballot, but at present the union has no authority to do anything other than proceed with the reballots as mandated by the April meeting of the HEC. Clearly, this is not an ideal position for the union to be placed in.

### **The way forward**



I know that branches worked extremely hard under a very tight timetable to consult their members on the issues and will be disappointed that their views did not receive a full discussion at HEC. They will also be concerned that HEC has not been able to act on their preference to cancel the June rebalot.

The current HEC leave office and are replaced by the newly elected HEC this Friday, 29 May. The current HEC chair and two vice chairs also leave office this Friday. I believe that the best way to resolve this situation is for an urgent meeting of the new HEC (which would not normally meet until 10 July) to be called as soon as possible, to hold a full discussion of the positions taken by branches at the delegate meetings and how to respond to them. I will be consulting on how best to progress this and will update you as soon as I can.

We will update you as soon as possible with further information. In the meantime, please reply to this email if you have any questions.

Paul Bridge  
UCU head of higher education