

## Higher Education Sector Conference, Wednesday 2 June

### Report on voting

191 delegates were sent a unique voting link. 164 delegates voted. Not all delegates voted on every motion. Note that the 'registered abstention' figures in this report indicate only delegates who actively selected the option to abstain.

Motion	Title	
	Minutes of HESC 26 May 2019	Carried
	Minutes of Special HESC 6 December 2019	Carried
	Minutes Special HESC 30 September 2020	Carried unopposed
	Minutes interim on-line HESC 15 December	Carried
HE1	HE pay	Carried unopposed
HE2A.1	Amendment	Carried
HE2	Pay - 4 Fights	Carried (as amended)
HE3	Response to the New JNCHES 2021-22 negotiating round	Carried
HE4	Building on the successes of the Four Fights dispute Anti-casualisation	Carried
HE5	Maintaining the 'Four Fights'	Carried
HE6A.1	Amendment	Carried
HE6	For a national campaign on workload and casualisation	Carried (as amended)
HE7	Formula for the election of HE negotiators	Carried
HE8	Composite: Support for branches pursuing the model claim for ARPS	Carried
HE9	Risk assessment, health and safety and black workers	Carried unopposed
HE10	USS	Carried
HE11	Composite: Condemn the USS valuation, defend USS	Remitted
HE11A.1	Amendment	Fell
HE11A.2	Amendment	Fell

	To remit HE12	Lost
HE12A.1	Amendment	Carried
HE12	USS - Build the Resistance	Carried (as amended)
HE13	SWG Principles	Carried
	To remit HE14	Lost
HE14	Composite: Initiating legal action on USS	Carried
HE15	Replacing USS Ltd. as the trustee company of the USS	Carried
HE16	Pension policy: reverse the governance deficit, divest from fossil fuels	Carried
HE17	Women and pensions	Carried
HE18	Resisting cuts to research funding, defending academic freedom	Carried
HE19	Stop the government cuts to UKRI ODA projects	Carried
HE20	Discrimination in promotion	Carried
HE21	Disputes of National Significance	Carried

### **Minutes, HESC 26 May 2019**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	142
Votes against	1
Registered abstentions	19

Conference is asked to adopt the minutes of the higher education sector conference held 26 May 2019 as set out in [UCU/1084](#)

### **Minutes, Special HESC 6 December 2019**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	143
Votes against	1
Registered abstentions	19

Conference is asked to adopt the minutes of the special higher education sector conference held 6 December 2019 as set out in [UCU/1085](#)

### **Minutes, Special HESC 30 September 2020**

#### **CARRIED unopposed**

Votes in favour	140
Votes against	-
Registered abstentions	17

Conference is asked to adopt the minutes of the special higher education sector conference held 30 September 2020 as set out in [UCU/1087](#)

### **Minutes, on-line HESC 15 December**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	141
Votes against	1
Registered abstentions	18

Conference is asked to adopt the minutes of the interim on-line higher education sector conference held on 15 December 2020 as set out in [UCU/1088](#)

**HE1 HE pay Higher education committee**

**CARRIED unopposed**

Votes in favour	156
Votes against	0
Registered abstentions	4

HE Sector conference notes the report and approves the recommendations of the national negotiators contained in [UCUBANHE/76](#).

**Amendment HE2A.1 University College London**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	117
Votes against	36
Registered abstentions	11

Add at end, "Where possible, to coordinate this campaign with ongoing national HE dispute(s) over USS to maximise unity and organisational efficiency, and ballot and call action according to this principle."

**HE2 Pay - 4 Fights Higher education committee**

**CARRIED (as amended)**

Votes in favour	119
Votes against	31
Registered abstentions	10

HESC notes:

1. The continued support for a focus upon the four fights (pay, pay inequalities, casualisation and workloads) in our pay claim among members as witnessed by the branch delegate meetings in 2020.
2. HESC believes standing committees of UCU should continue to have input into the demands in each of their respective areas.

HESC resolves:

- a. To continue to ensure that the four fights, informed by the decisions of the equalities standing committees and anti-casualisation committee, should remain a central element of our claim in 2021.

UCU commits to re-launch a campaign over the four fights among UCU members with publicity and social media prior to balloting for industrial action up to and including strike action where these are not met.

Where possible, to coordinate this campaign with ongoing national HE dispute(s) over USS to maximise unity and organisational efficiency, and ballot and call action according to this principle.

### **HE3 Response to the New JNCHES 2021-22 negotiating round Higher education committee**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	136
Votes against	20
Registered abstentions	7

#### Conference notes

1. The unacceptable 2021-22 UCEA offer, the 0% pay adjustment of 2020-21, and over a decade of prior subpar offers.
2. Local attacks on member conditions and job security by individual HEIs.
3. Ongoing threats to pension security, both in USS and TPS,

#### Conference resolves to

- a. Reject UCEA's 2021-22 offer and formally enter into dispute.
- b. Task HEC Chair and elected negotiating team with developing materials to raise member awareness around the headline issues of the 2021-22 New JNCHES claim during summer 2021, and to actively organize towards the possibility of balloting.
- c. Task HEC with holding a Special HE Sector Conference in the first two weeks of August 2021 on the topic of HE dispute(s), including New JNCHES, USS, TPS, and any possible links between them.
- d. Schedule a HEC meeting the week following this Special HESC to action the policy determined by conference

**HE4 Building on the successes of the Four Fights dispute  
Anti-casualisation committee**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	144
Votes against	11
Registered abstentions	8

Conference notes:

The Four Fights campaign was built by broadening our pay claim to include casualisation, pay inequality and workload and on the basis of these demands we delivered the largest national university strike in history.

2. That the Four Fights campaign succeeded in forcing UCEA to negotiate around these issues for the first time
3. That while there are lessons to be learnt, the principle of combining the issues that motivate our members into one dispute was correct and that members and branches demonstrated incredible determination and resolve to deliver 22 days of industrial action
4. That while the 2020/21 pay claim contains demands around casualisation, workload and pay inequality, the profile of these demands has been reduced

Conference resolves:

- a. To build on the progress made by including demands around casualisation, workload and pay inequality in future claims
- b. To embed/promote these demands in all future campaigns

**HE5 Maintaining the 'Four Fights' University of Brighton, Moulsecoomb,  
University of Brighton, Grand Parade**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	114
Votes against	37
Registered abstentions	12

Conference notes:

1. The 86% rejection by members of the 0% pay 'offer' for HE staff for 2020-21
2. The unfinished business of the Four Fights dispute of 2019-20.

3. The success of recent UK-wide action in building the UCU.

Conference believes

- a. Issues of pay, casualisation, equality and workload have become more not less urgent as a result of the pandemic.
- b. The HE sector has the ability and the resources to address these issues.

Conference resolves to develop a strategy to mobilise members over the Four Fights issues.

This should include:

- i. a timetable for balloting and for taking UK-wide industrial action
- ii. a campaign making the case that staff and students deserve better in HE
- iii. a GTVO strategy.

#### **HE6A.1 Southern regional HE sector committee**

##### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour 142

Votes against 10

Registered abstentions 11

Delete "and casualisation" (title) and replace with ": impact on casualised and disabled members."

Add at end of point 2 (Conference notes) after 'members' "impacting disproportionately on disabled staff."

Add at end of b. (Conference resolves) after 'pay rise' "with additional focus on casualised and disabled staff."

#### **HE6 For a national campaign on workload impact on casualised and disabled members Bournemouth University**

##### **CARRIED (as amended)**

Votes in favour 138

Votes against 15

Registered abstentions 7

Conference notes

1. a crisis of spiralling workloads during the pandemic

2. a failure to offer secure jobs to casualised members impacting disproportionately on disabled staff
3. a number of institutions restructuring for the market

Conference believes that there is an opportunity to argue for consolidating casualised jobs to relieve the workload crisis for 2021/22

Conference resolves

- a. to launch a UK-wide public campaign for decent jobs in HE with publicity materials (e-posters, petitions, twitterstorms), resources for reps, launch events, etc
- b. to integrate this public campaign with the national pay dispute, including the demand for a decent pay rise with additional focus on casualised and disabled staff.
- c. to use this to drive up turnout for the national JNCHES ballot.

**HE7 Formula for the election of HE negotiators      Higher education committee**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	142
Votes against	10
Registered abstentions	11

Conference notes that the current formula for the election of HE negotiators is out of its keeping with UCU's approach to equality and representation in its requirement to elect 'at least two men'.

Conference therefore agrees that the formula for the election of HE negotiators (which also applies, as relevant, to the election of USS negotiators) should be amended as follows:

Paragraph E, clause b, delete 'and at least two are men'.

**HE8 Composite: Support for branches pursuing the model claim for ARPS Academic related, professional staff committee, University of Liverpool**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	157
Votes against	2
Registered abstentions	5



HESC notes:

1. The work of the ARPS committee and ARPS members in branches
2. The development of a draft model claim for branches on ARPS.
3. The erosion of terms and conditions for ARPS members by employers.
4. That pursuing the claim under current circumstances represents a significant challenge for already stretched branches.

HESC instructs HEC to:

- a. Ensure support and resource is provided via all relevant UCU national and regional structures to branches and ARPS members to pursue the claim via template campaign plans including data and information requests, and regular, ongoing support for negotiators within branches.
- b. Develop a coordinated campaign in support of the model claim for branches that is centred around wage theft and pay inequality.
- c. Facilitate communications between ARPS reps and members and the ARPS committee as a priority work area.

## **HE9 Risk assessment, health and safety and black workers Black members standing committee**

### **CARRIED unopposed**

Votes in favour	156
Votes against	0
Registered abstentions	7

Conference notes that according to the ONS, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted Black communities with a disproportionate number of deaths recorded. A lack of appropriate risks assessment has impacted profoundly on the health and wellbeing of black members.

Conference resolves that:

1. The impact of Covid 19 on black members must be considered in the institutional risk assessment and workload allocation
2. HE institutions should carry out a complete and sufficient risk assessment.
3. The risk assessment must be carried out for Black staff and staff who live with a Black person, based on ethnicity, and taking into account all relevant factors

4. All redeployment options should be considered for black staff, including specialist staff working from home if appropriate
5. Appropriate workload allocation and the health and wellbeing measures for black members must be considered
6. The health, safety and well-being of Black members must be assured.

**Note -motions HE10-HE17:** Delegates were reminded of the long-standing convention that only delegates from USS institutions vote on motions and amendments which relate to USS.

**HE10 USS                    Higher education committee**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	91
Votes against	26
Registered abstentions	5

HE sector conference notes the report and approves the recommendations of the Superannuation Working Group contained in UCUBANHE/77.

**HE11 Composite: Condemn the USS valuation, defend USS  
Newcastle University, Northern regional HE sector committee**

**REMITTED**

Votes in favour of remitting	64
Votes against remitting	56
Registered abstentions	3

HESC condemns:

1. The unnecessary valuation during Covid
2. USS's valuation proposals giving likely member contributions of 13.6-18.6%
3. UUK proposals to slash benefits and a lower value scheme for casualised and lower paid members.

HESC believes:

- a. Current benefits can be maintained at 26% total contributions.
- b. Very high member opt-outs due to soaring costs or slashed benefits could lead to USS closure.

HESC mandates negotiators to maintain current benefits at very close to 8% member costs.

HESC mandates HEC to:

- i. implement multi-pronged strategy to defend USS.
- ii. call on employers to (i) withdraw proposals for benefit reductions and worse benefits for lower paid members and (ii) put pressure on USS to modify valuation approach to give total costs of 26%
- iii. otherwise to call a ballot for industrial action to start at the start of the autumn term which involves strikes and action short of a strike

### **HE11A.1 University of Dundee**

#### **FELL**

HESC condemns: add at end of 2. 'including deficit recovery contributions of 2.3-6.0%.'

HESC believes: add 'b. Expecting members, especially those early in their career, to pay DRCs is unjust and will lead to more opt-outs.'

Delete sentence 'HESC mandates negotiators to maintain current benefits at very close to 8% member costs.'

HESC mandates:

- ii (ii) delete and replace with 'support a rule change so that cost-sharing only applies to future service contributions.'

Add iv. Reject any settlement within the 2020 valuation.

### **HE11A.2 Heriot-Watt University**

#### **FELL**

Believes a. replace 'at 26%' with ', and it will be possible to return ' add 'back to past levels in due course' after 'contributions'

Replace from 'very close' to 'costs,' with 'the best cost achievable whilst keeping lower member costs in future within reach'.

- a. (ii) replace from 'to give' to '26%' with 'and to scrap the 2020 valuation'
- b. (ii) remove 'otherwise to' replace 'start at' with 'obtain a mandate running from'

### **Amendment HE11A.2 Heriot-Watt University**

#### **FELL**

Believes a. replace 'at 26%' with ', and it will be possible to return ' add 'back to past levels in due course' after 'contributions'

Replace from 'very close' to 'costs,' with 'the best cost achievable whilst keeping lower member costs in future within reach'.

- a. (ii) replace from 'to give' to '26%' with 'and to scrap the 2020 valuation'
- b. (ii) remove 'otherwise to' replace 'start at' with 'obtain a mandate running from'

### **HE12 USS - Build the Resistance UCL**

#### **To remit HE12: LOST**

Votes in favour of remitting	45
Votes against remitting	78
Registered abstentions	0

### **Amendment HE12A.1 Imperial College, University College London**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	61
Votes against	48
Registered abstentions	14

Insert before "invite speakers" in point b. "encourage branches and Regions to"

Replace point e. with "If the employers have not joined UCU to pressure USS and the pension regulator to cancel the 2020 valuation and use an evidence-based moderately prudent approach in 2021, ballot members from June to September 2021 for escalating industrial action in the Autumn, using the full resources of the union to deliver a resounding Yes vote and a high turnout."

(Point e, to be replaced, reads 'Ballot members for industrial action.')

### **HE12 USS - Build the Resistance UCL**

#### **CARRIED (as amended)**

Votes in favour	66
Votes against	50
Registered abstentions	6

HESC notes:

1. The 2020 USS valuation, claiming a very large projected deficit due to 'de-risking'. Yet in reality, assets have grown to ~£80bn. 100% DC or swingeing cuts are likely to be re-imposed.

2. Strikes in 2018 stopped a similar attack. Now USS and the employers are attempting to repeat it.
3. Pension cuts affect those beginning their careers the most.
4. We will likely need to take industrial action to stop the attack, potentially as early as Autumn 2021.

HESC resolves to:

- a. Organise a member-level campaign to stop detrimental USS changes.
- b. Develop campaign materials, encourage branches and Regions to invite speakers and call meetings to demystify the valuation and projected deficit.
- c. Call on university leaders to support UCU's position in negotiations with USS and lobby to adopt a more credible valuation methodology.
- d. Support initiatives to build the campaign, alongside organisations including USS Briefs, HE Convention and UCU Solidarity Movement.
- e. If the employers have not joined UCU to pressure USS and the pension regulator to cancel the 2020 valuation and use an evidence-based moderately prudent approach in 2021, ballot members from June to September 2021 for escalating industrial action in the Autumn, using the full resources of the union to deliver a resounding Yes vote and a high turnout.

### **HE13 USS "SWG Principles" University College London**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour 62

Votes against 56

Registered abstentions 6

HESC notes

1. HEC's proposed "SWG Principles" for negotiation with UUK over USS.
2. That exploring Conditional Benefits represents a new policy - which is the role of HESC to determine, not SWG.
3. That we need a solution to the 2020 valuation, which could include it being cancelled, or we will be faced with unaffordable contributions and smaller benefits than contributions.
4. That negotiations around additional Covenant Support require a similar high level of care.

Notwithstanding the importance of keeping open negotiations with the Employers, HESC believes that issuing these two “Principles” at this time sends the wrong message to the Employers and union members.

HESC therefore resolves to withdraw them and instruct negotiators to focus on clear demands to set aside the valuation and to preserve members' benefits and contribution levels.

**HE14 Composite: Initiating legal action on USS      Lancaster**  
**University, University of Glasgow**

**To remit HE14 - LOST**

Votes in favour of remitting	46
Votes against remitting	72
Registered abstentions	6

**HE14 Composite: Initiating legal action on USS      Lancaster**  
**University, University of Glasgow**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	80
Votes against	35
Registered abstentions	9

HESC notes:

1. USS's proposed 2020 Covid valuation risks members' contributions rising to 14-20%.
2. Academics for Pension Justice's QC opinion that there are good grounds for taking legal action against USS on breach of trust.

HESC believes:

- a. There is an urgent need to defend USS.
- b. What happens to USS will probably affect all DB schemes, including those in post-92 and FE, and members of the wider trade union movement.

HESC agrees that legal action is an appropriate means of defending USS and should be initiated as soon as possible.

HESC instructs Strategy and Finance Committee to:

- i. Take immediate steps to initiate urgent legal action, e.g. to delay current and overturn previous valuations and replace them by a better process. This will require obtaining legal advice on the most appropriate forms of legal action.
- ii. Actively involve the UCU Superannuation Working Group (minus directors) and endeavour to get them included in the legally privileged group with access to the legal advice.

**HE15 Replacing USS Ltd. as the trustee company of the USS      Lancaster University**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	93
Votes against	22
Registered abstentions	9

Conference notes –

- 1. USS having acquired master-trust status, UCU (and UUK) have lost the right to dismiss/replace their nominated trustees.
- 2. Repeated calls in previous HESCs for USS executive to resign
- 3. The wish of members to regain control of our pensions.

Conference believes –

- a. USS governance structures are not transparent or fit for purpose
- b. USS executive is not acting in the best interest of members as demonstrated by the non-implementation of JEP 1&2 reports.

Conference resolves that –

- i. UCU should immediately initiate an investigation to explore mechanisms by which USS Ltd (trustee company) can be replaced, and explore options to appoint a successor to administer the scheme.
- ii. The investigation should explore the advantages and disadvantages of replacing the trustee company with another, and make recommendations to UCU.
- iii. This investigation should be completed within the next 6 months to allow UCU to effectively evaluate its options.

**HE16 Pension policy: reverse the governance deficit, divest from fossil fuels      King's College London**

## **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	87
Votes against	29
Registered abstentions	8

Conference notes that:

1. USS trustees valued our pension assets in March 2020 when the FTSE 100 was down 36.7%,
2. USS annual 'personnel costs' inflated 1240% from 2008 to 2020,
3. five USS trustees are board-appointed, and have backgrounds at JP Morgan, Citi, HSBC and in coal,
4. the USS ethical investment survey showed members want to divest from fossil fuels. Trustees have refused to follow, and have no credible policy for casting shareholder voting rights.

Conference resolves that:

- a. we must elect at least half of USS trustees. It's our money, not theirs,
- b. USS personnel costs must be reduced to pre-2008 levels,
- c. USS assets must be managed through an in-house, low-cost indexed fund by default,
- d. USS must divest from coal, oil and gas, and have a shareholder voting policy that follows members' views.

## **HE17 Women and pensions Women members standing committee**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	154
Votes against	4
Registered abstentions	5

Conference notes that women have lower pensions, due to structural discrimination in promotion and the greater casualisation of female staff. Women are harder-hit by contribution increases, and also by reductions in benefits as



they generally have fewer savings. This applies to both USS and TPS. The move from final salary to CARE has also led to indirect discrimination as women tend to get promoted later. The situation for BAME, disabled and precariously employed women even worse as they experience multiple discrimination.

Conference agrees:

1. To demand that USS and TPS carry out equality impact assessments.
2. To fight contribution increases and benefit cuts to the maximum, including industrial action
3. To make links with women politicians to put pressure on USS and call for a public inquiry including equality impact assessment.
4. To organise webinars about women and pensions (USS and TPS).

### **HE18 Resisting cuts to research funding, defending academic freedom Anti-casualisation committee**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	157
Votes against	2
Registered abstentions	4

Conference notes:

1. The almost 50% cuts to the UKRI ODA budget announced March 2021
2. The almost immediate withdrawal of funding, including from grants in progress.
3. Fears of further cuts to research funding, such as Horizon funding

Conference believes:

- a. The speed and size of cuts is an intentional assault on the HE sector's finances, stability and strength.
- b. Volatile, narrowly-defined funding streams are an assault on academic freedom that erodes the stability required to support an independent voice
- c. The harms of withdrawing funding will disproportionately fall on casualised staff

Conference calls on employers to:

- i. Guarantee no compulsory redundancies
- ii. Provide replacement funding for PhD students

- iii. Provide adequate funded time to bring in replacement funding from other sources or be redeployed

Conference commits UCU to lobby the government to reverse the cuts and increase research funding, allocated according to academic excellence

## **HE19 Stop the government cuts to UKRI ODA projects      University of Leeds**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	146
Votes against	8
Registered abstentions	7

Conference notes:

1. 49% government cuts to the £245million UKRI ODA budget for 2021-22.
2. these cuts, in an unprecedented breach of faith, affect projects mid-contract in around 30 Universities employing researchers working with developing nations.
3. managements are considering closing projects and making researchers redundant.
4. many pre-92 Universities affected have £multimillion operating surplus/reserves; they need to take exceptional measures.
5. public opposition from professional bodies.

Conference believes:

- a. UCU must urgently act on these short-notice cuts.
- b. this scandal exposes the fragility of the neoliberal research funding model with its permanently vulnerable casualised workforce.

Conference resolves to:

- i. launch an immediate campaign demanding the Government reverses the cut.
- ii. demand that universities guarantee the jobs of their research staff for at least the duration of the awarded project.
- iii. initiate a national petition.
- iv. plan for industrial action.
- v. establish a network open to all research staff.

## **HE20 Discrimination in promotion**

## **Higher education committee**

## **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	153
Votes against	3
Registered abstentions	7

HESC notes:

1. Continuing promotion discrimination of women and minority groups, particularly BAME and Disabled members.
2. Negative impact of casualisation.
3. Limited promotion opportunities for T&S and ARPS members
4. Continuously increasing criteria and resulting indirect discrimination.

HESC instructs HEC to:

- a. Produce campaigning pack to support branches to get management to:
  - a. provide data on promotion of people in equality strands, L&T and ARPR staff, existing policy and how implemented in practice.
  - b. carry out equality impact assessments of promotion procedures and changes in them and provide results to branch committee.
  - c. make criteria more flexible to take account of individual circumstances such as disability and separate this from the promotion form and monitor the impact.
  - d. implement and monitor measures for equality in promotion of L&T and ARPR staff.
  - e. promote equal numbers of women/non-binary people to men in male dominated areas.
2. Negotiate an agreement with UCEA.

## **HE21 Disputes of National Significance University of Liverpool**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	116
Votes against	39
Registered abstentions	8

HESC notes:

1. More than a dozen UCU branches face threats of compulsory redundancies, including Liverpool, Leicester, Dundee, Roehampton, UEL, Solent, Goldsmiths, Leeds and more
2. Many of these are targeting union activists, including UEL, Leicester and Dundee.
3. Elements of success have been seen at Northumbria where a formal ballot was initiated immediately without a consultative ballot and at Heriot Watt with their rapid activation of the Academic Boycott & Censure process.
4. UCU existing policy recognising disputes of national significance.

HESC resolves to:

- a. Declare all current disputes to be of national significance.
- b. Streamline the process of balloting, remove the requirement for consultative ballots
- c. Allow Academic Boycott and Censure to be declared immediately on request of the branch.
- d. Report back to HEC on all branches in dispute with the time taken from an employer declaring proposed job cuts to beginning of the balloting of members.