

## Special HESC USS, Wednesday 27 April - results of voting

166 Delegates were sent a unique voting link. 161 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 Number	Title	Voted
	To remit motion 1	LOST
1	SWG report and recommendations	CARRIED
2	Call for indefinite strike action	LOST
3	Indefinite action USS	LOST
4	Escalate to indefinite action with local consultation	LOST
5	Composite ASOS and strike action	CARRIED
6	Industrial Action Plan	CARRIED ( without points 3 and 4)
7	Action to win	CARRIED
8	Escalating industrial action	LOST
9	Assessment boycott as a core part of our UK-wide strategy	CARRIED
10	Escalation of USS Dispute	LOST
11	UCU HEC invitation to UUK to ACAS collective conciliation	LOST
12	Next steps in the disputes	CARRIED
13	Planning now for action next academic year	CARRIED (without point ii)
14	Co-ordinating effective UK-wide action	CARRIED
15	Striking out of teaching term	LOST
16	Maximum effective action	CARRIED
17A.1	Amendment	CARRIED
17	Compiling regional calendars to assist timing of industrial action	CARRIED(as amended by 17A.1)
18	Call for a return to aggregated strike ballots	CARRIED
19	No decoupling of Four Fights and USS	CARRIED
20	UCU HE members to decide future HE	LOST

	strike action	
21	Branch Delegates Meetings	CARRIED
	To remit motion 22	LOST
22	Pay deductions for striking members with external funding	CARRIED
23	Negotiations before valuation	CARRIED

## **Motion 1 SWG report and recommendations**

### **CARRIED**

#### **Motion to remit motion 1 was lost**

Votes in favour	63
Votes against	78
Registered abstentions	17

#### **Vote on motion 1**

Votes in favour	93
Votes against	43
Registered abstentions	21

HE Sector conference notes the report and approves the recommendations of the SWG contained in [UCUBANHE79April2022](#).

## **Motion 2 Indefinite action Four Fights**

### **LOST**

Votes in favour	4
Votes against	139
Registered abstentions	18

Conference believes that:

1. The current pension cuts across the Higher Education sector are completely unacceptable in the fullest sense of the word, meaning that winning this dispute is not optional.
2. Employers have shown that they are prepared to wait us out when there is an end date in sight.
3. We cannot return to work until this issue has been resolved fully, and

our action needs to reflect that, as well as taking into account the employer's increasing unwillingness to negotiate.

Conference resolves to call for the UK-wide escalation of the ongoing strike action to indefinite strike action to take place during the next available mandate leading up to, alongside and if necessary beyond the marking boycott.

### **Motion 3 Indefinite action USS**

#### **LOST**

Votes in favour	46
Votes against	96
Registered abstentions	18

Conference resolves to:

1. Call 'indefinite' strike action in the USS dispute commencing one week after the beginning of a marking and assessment boycott. Indefinite is defined as consisting of notification for the following 12 weeks of the mandate.
2. Reserve the right to call off some number of dates of this action subject to weekly review by asking delegates from striking branches their views on the employer response at that point. Dates will be potentially called off one week at a time, via the mechanism of a single issue branch delegate meeting.
3. Branches will be given flexibility to opt out of specific time periods related to holidays, reading weeks and term dates, in consultation and in agreement of the HE officers, and with the goal of maintaining roughly equal strike dates across branches.

### **Motion 4 Escalate to indefinite action with local consultation**

#### **LOST**

Votes in favour	43
Votes against	103
Registered abstentions	14

SHESC notes:

1. That devastating cuts have been forced through the USS pension scheme.
2. The dedication and determination of our members during the recent

industrial action.

3. That our action so far in this round has not combatted the intransigence of our employers.

SHESC believes:

- a. We need a serious escalation in our industrial action to achieve a win on the USS dispute.
- b. That this includes the need for the USS dispute to continue to be coupled with the four fights, with any strike days being taken on the same dates.

SHESC resolves:

- i. To instruct HEC to call a significant programme of strike days that are locally consulted upon and coordinated UK-wide, and includes a marking and assessment boycott.
- ii. For strike days to be called as a form of indefinite action, meaning striking on every day that will have an impact on the employers with no end date

## **Motion 5 Composite ASOS and strike action**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	75
Votes against	73
Registered abstentions	11

SHESC notes

1. The intransigence of the employers over both HE disputes.
2. The growing support for a marking & assessment boycott among members.

SHESC believes

- a. That a marking and assessment boycott can be an effective tactic
- b. Branches must not be allowed to suffer punitive pay deductions in isolation.

SHESC calls on HEC to

- i. Initiate a marking and assessment boycott at the earliest opportunity in all branches with a mandate
- ii. Notify bouts of 10 days of strike action commencing in late May to support the ASOS

- iii. Call BDMs before notification of further action
- iv. Adopt the practice of notifying further bouts of action before the previous bout has concluded.
- v. Make an emergency appeal inside and outside the union to boost the Fighting Fund for branches suffering punitive deductions.

**Motion 6 Industrial Action Plan**

**CARRIED (without point 3 & 4)**

Votes in favour	78
Votes against	52
Registered abstentions	18

HESC resolves UCU will:

1. Identify summer term dates with each branch.
2. Call a boycott of all summative marking from the start of summer term.
3. Ask branches to delegate two officers to coordinate with ROs and Head of HE to enact this plan.
4. Call weekly Branch Delegate Meetings with voting powers to continually monitor the UK-wide situation.
5. Ask members not taking ASOS to pledge a day's pay a week to local hardship funds.
6. Call an emergency appeal for the central Fighting Fund.

**Motion 7 Action to win**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	91
Votes against	61
Registered abstentions	9

Conference notes:

1. HESC 2021 agreed to link FourFights and USS. This increased member involvement in both disputes.
2. Linked - casualisation and equality pay gaps affect pensions and the USS cuts will particularly affect the lowest paid.
3. Member support for a marking and assessment boycott.
4. The need to prevent employers sitting out the action and punitive

deductions

Conference agrees to:

- a. Call on HEC to meet within a week of SHESCs and call a marking and assessment boycott in both disputes to start at the earliest possible date.
- b. Call blocks of 6-10 days strike in the next academic year if necessary.
- c. Consult branches on dates to maximise effectiveness.
- d. Call BDM with weighted votes before each HEC deciding further action.
- e. Notify further action before end of previous action.

### **Motion 8 USS - Escalating industrial action**

#### **LOST**

Votes in favour	64
Votes against	85
Registered abstentions	12

Conference notes:

1. That the USS pension fund is healthy and that the problem of regular deficits stems from deficiencies in the valuation method;
2. That the most recent pension cuts were pushed through by employers on a campaign of deliberate misinformation and deceit and can be reversed
3. That the future of Higher Education is at stake and that we need to re-double our efforts to bring employers to the table for meaningful negotiations

Conference resolves:

- a. To escalate industrial action by moving towards a marking boycott. Interfering with the award of degrees will hurt employers and is the strongest weapon UCU has not used;
- b. To give branches maximum local discretion about when to take industrial action as assessment timetables differ from institution to institution
- c. To support further industrial action with a vigorous fundraising campaign to support the central fighting fund.

## **Motion 9    Assessment boycott as a core part of our UK-wide strategy**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	110
Votes against	43
Registered abstentions	8

Conference notes:

1. Observing that the neoliberal university depends on data streams as never before, and is particularly vulnerable to their closure;
2. Recalling that in 2016 an assessment boycott at Newcastle University over the draconian 'Raising the Bar' targets-based performance-management scheme was spectacularly successful in winning the dispute after one full day of ASOS, galvanising students and their parents to pile pressure on university management over concerns around graduation and stage progression;
3. Noting that in recent ballots support for ASOS has generally been consistently high;
4. Recognising that not all members take part in a single activity at any one time, but holding that assessment boycotts are nonetheless one of the most powerful tools at our collective disposal.

Conference calls on HEC to mandate an assessment boycott as a core part of our UK-wide strategy for all branches in the four fights and pensions dispute, alongside the currently-tabled and future industrial action.

## **Motion 10    Escalation of USS Dispute**

### **LOST**

Votes in favour	62
Votes against	83
Registered abstentions	16

Conference believes that the consequences of the USS dispute will be hugely significant for the future of the sector. Members are facing a collective loss adding up to billions of pounds from their pensions, alongside rampant precarity and redundancy threats. This approach is destroying employment conditions in our sector and the effects of this will be felt most keenly by casualised HE workers.

Conference further believes: Given the employers have a massive financial interest in undermining our pensions it will require a significant escalation of

industrial action, meaning weeks of strikes rather than days, combined with an assessment boycott to win

### **Motion 11 UCU HEC invitation to UUK to ACAS collective conciliation**

#### **LOST**

Votes in favour	59
Votes against	93
Registered abstentions	9

#### HESC notes:

1. UUK's refusal to engage with UCU proposals regarding USS pension reform.
2. The harmful consequences of industrial action to staff and students.
3. ACAS collective conciliation processes facilitate but do not impose agreements.
4. Temporary resolution of the pensions dispute by recourse to ACAS conciliation in 2018 which established the USS Joint Expert Panel (JEP).

#### HESC believes:

- a. UUK should be invited to address the USS dispute through ACAS conciliation.
- b. That invitation could prompt UUK to implement JEP recommendations.
- c. If refused, the invitation would prompt greater membership support for industrial action.

#### HESC resolves:

- i. To instruct HEC to invite UUK to ACAS conciliation on USS pension reform.
- ii. That ACAS conciliation be conditional on extension of any current ballot mandate from 6 to 9 months, so that industrial action can still be called if needed.

## **Motion 12 Next steps in the disputes**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	94
Votes against	59
Registered abstentions	8

Conference notes the successful strategy employed by Liverpool UCU to defeat redundancies at their institution, viz. a marking boycott, followed by the threat of industrial action affecting the following academic year.

Conference calls:

1. on HEC to schedule a ballot of members for all-out industrial action in the USS and Four Fights disputes, in order that action should commence from the beginning of the academic year 2022/2023;
2. on HEC to develop a strategy that can sustain strike action over months rather than weeks;
3. on the General Secretary to use her public platform to promulgate the intent of rendering the first semester of the next academic year non-viable; in particular, to make this intent known to potential international applicants.

This motion is to be viewed as independent to any action affecting the remainder of the academic year 2021-2022.

## **Motion 13 Planning now for action next academic year**

### **CARRIED (without point ii)**

Votes in favour	75
Votes against	61
Registered abstentions	10

SHESC notes that recent industrial action has been planned reactively, undermined by failures to:

1. ballot for action during summer 2021;
2. pre-plan effectively timed escalation.

SHESC believes that

- a. ineffective action risks demoralisation, undermining the union
- b. effective action must be pre-planned democratically in consultation with elected branch delegates and vigorously implemented by the

union centrally.

SHESC resolves that:

A the General Secretary now coordinate preparation of an industrial action plan for the academic year 2022-23, including:

- i. aggregated ballots to maintain mandates for action throughout;
- ii. marking, admissions and worktime-survey boycotts;
- iii. immediate, united UK-wide responses to punitive ASOS deductions;
- iv. contingencies to foreseeable events;
- v. transparent negotiations and decision making.

B The plan should consider:

- the UK employer negotiations calendar;
- the teaching terms of institutions.
- the HEC modify and activate the plan if the disputes are unresolved on 1/7/2022

#### **Motion 14 Co-ordinating effective UK-wide action**

##### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	110
Votes against	43
Registered abstentions	7

SHESC believes:

1. That a UK-wide, co-ordinated attack on assessment must be based on input from branches about the marking timetable that identifies when strike and ASOS most effectively target assessment in each branch.
2. The Liverpool dispute (2021) showed that marking boycotts need to be complemented with sustained industrial action and need the full involvement of all members including those with no assessment roles.

SHESC resolves:

- a. To demand that an emergency meeting be held between branch officers and HEC, the General Secretary and UK Officers, to discuss effective dates for further industrial action.
- b. To ensure this dispensation is not limited to Liverpool but to all branches, granting them the autonomy to take action when it is most effective in this dispute.

- c. To ensure all future industrial action is informed by identifying the most effective times and dates for all local branches to take action against each employer.

**Motion 15      Striking out of teaching term**

**LOST**

Votes in favour	75
Votes against	78
Registered abstentions	8

SHESC believes employer intransigence on USS necessitates maximised impact of strike action from staff in all roles

SHESC notes:

1. Strike action tends to be called only during term time.
2. Major works such as IT upgrades are generally scheduled out of term, allowing the opportunity for strike action to have significant impact on academic related activities.
3. Research funder deadlines and conferences are generally outside of term, allowing the opportunity for strike action to have significant impact on funders and visibility to international colleagues.
4. Researchers who choose to strike are sacrificing their wages and outputs, with career implications, regardless of the date of strike action.

SHESC calls on HEC and officers to adopt a strategic approach to the USS dispute which explicitly does not rule out the option of strike action at any time of year in consultation with branches who are asked to identify their own points of leverage.

**Motion 16      Maximum effective action**

**CARRIED**

Votes in favour	109
Votes against	43
Registered abstentions	9

Conference notes:

1. Decisions taken at previous Conferences to maintain the link between Four Fights and USS

2. The pattern of days over Feb/Mar that did not reflect the above
3. The number of branches who were striking in Reading Weeks and/or school holidays

Conference believes:

- a. We need to exert maximum force on the employers by having the maximum number of branches out at any one time
- b. Effective action is disruptive action.

Conference resolves:

- i. To maintain the link between the two disputes until sufficient progress is made in one or both to justify separation
- ii. To consult branches in detail as to which dates to avoid
- iii. To allow limited local variation to minimise as far as possible strike action on unproductive days while maintaining maximum effective action overall.

### **Motion 17A.1**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	120
Votes against	32
Registered abstentions	9

Add at the end of the motion:

- iii. The time required to collect this data in 2022 does not provide a justification for delaying the implementation of industrial action supported by this conference.

### **Motion 17 Compiling regional calendars to assist timing of industrial action**

#### **CARRIED (as amended by 17A.1)**

Votes in favour	133
Votes against	21
Registered abstentions	7

Conference notes:

1. Higher Education Institutions have different term times and exam periods.
2. Picking optimum times for strikes and marking boycotts to suit all branches is very difficult

Conference believes:

- a. Branches should have input into the best strike dates for them
- b. A readily available matrix of key dates for each institution would assist in making these decisions

Conference instructs:

- i. HEC to arrange for each region to supply UCU centrally with an annual matrix of term and exam dates for their institutions for the coming year, every May, to be updated throughout the year with any information not available in May.
- ii. That this matrix should be made available to branches on request, and automatically provided, at least 2 weeks in advance of motion deadlines, to any meetings making decisions on strike dates, including but not limited to HEC, Congress, Conference and BDMs.
- iii. The time required to collect this data in 2022 does not provide a justification for delaying the implementation of industrial action supported by this conference.

### **Motion 18 Call for a return to aggregated strike ballots**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	83
Votes against	73
Registered abstentions	4

UCU's current strategy of running disaggregated ballots in UK-wide disputes has not recently been successful. In the 2021 USS ballot only 35 branches initially met the threshold for action on an overall turnout of 53%. While aggregated ballots would have enabled industrial action across the sector, disaggregated ballots have enabled university leaders to characterise disputes as enjoying only the support of a minority. This weakens our negotiating hand, risks damaging solidarity across the sector, and weakens the public impact and media profile of the action.

Conference

1. instructs HEC in future to make aggregated ballots the default position in future sector-wide industrial disputes

2. resolves to provide support to branches with low turnouts to enable them to increase these

### **Motion 19 No decoupling of Four Fights and USS**

#### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	105
Votes against	47
Registered abstentions	8

SHESC believes that

1. UCU's recent success in building has been centred on fighting over issues facing all sections of our membership such as casualisation and pay discrimination in addition to pensions and headline pay.
2. This approach has led to increased involvement by members and a growth in solidarity across the union and is exemplified by the joint action over USS and Four Fights.
3. Members have repeatedly expressed support for keeping the USS and Four Fights coupled.

SHESC resolves that there should be no decoupling of these disputes unless and until there is a settlement in one or other of them.

### **Motion 20 UCU HE members to decide future HE strike action**

#### **LOST**

Votes in favour	51
Votes against	96
Registered abstentions	12

HESC notes:

1. UCU's HEC 'has the power to authorise or endorse sanctions including industrial action' as regards our current HE disputes.
2. Members were given an opportunity before the November 2021 BDM to deliberate on the timing of reballots, the timing of strike action and its duration.

HESC believes:

- a. Before HEC takes any decision regarding industrial action, it must consult with all HE members in branches with a mandate for strike

action by e-consultation.

- b. Such a consultation of members would better inform HEC members and ensure that UCU takes the most representative democratic decision possible.

HESC resolves:

- i. Before any decision on the timing or duration of strikes, HEC must consult with all members in branches with a mandate for strike action in an e-consultation.
- ii. Any e-consultation must ask whether the member is willing to take further action, and what strike action, its timing, duration and nature, the member wishes to take.

## **Motion 21      Branch Delegates Meetings**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	104
Votes against	50
Registered abstentions	7

Conference notes:

1. Guidance on holding branch delegate meetings (BDMs)  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10885/Branch-delegate-meetings/pdf/ucu\\_branch-delegate-meetings.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10885/Branch-delegate-meetings/pdf/ucu_branch-delegate-meetings.pdf)
2. That BDMs have not been called routinely during the course of the USS and Four Fights disputes prior to meetings of Higher Education Committee (HEC)
3. That votes have not always been held at BDMs

Conference believes:

- a. That BDMs are essential to internal democracy, allowing members views to be expressed through their delegates
- b. That BDMs greatly enhance HEC's ability to take key decisions that reflect and align with members' views

Conference resolves:

- i. To take a much more robust approach to the use of BDMs
- ii. To call a BDM before any HEC discussing the USS dispute
- iii. To circulate questions to branches sufficiently in advance

To instruct HEC to take a strong steer from BDMs

## **Motion 22 Pay deductions for striking members with external funding**

### **CARRIED**

#### **Motion to remit motion 22 was lost**

Votes in favour	42
Votes against	99
Registered abstentions	16

#### **Vote on motion 22**

Votes in favour	141
Votes against	4
Registered abstentions	13

Conference notes that:

1. striking members whose salary is partly or wholly provided by external funders routinely experience full pay deductions;
2. funding contracts impose limitations on how awarded money may be allocated;
3. where deducted pay is not returned to the relevant project code this may represent a breach of said contracts
4. where funding is returned to projects, it may be possible to extend projects and/or contracts of employment.

Conference resolves to:

- a. raise awareness of this issue amongst members through UK-wide communications;
- b. develop advice on how externally funded members should query the allocation of deducted strike pay, with the objective of obtaining an extension but acknowledging that in some cases the return of funds to the funder may be the best possible outcome
- c. contact major funders to request that they supplement this guidance with official statements on the allocation of funds.

## **Motion 23 Negotiations before valuation**

### **CARRIED**

Votes in favour	85
Votes against	57
Registered abstentions	19

Conference notes that:

1. UUK delayed and misrepresented UCU proposals at consultation;
2. They have nevertheless claimed that if future valuations allow, benefits could be restored;
3. It should already cost significantly less than we are paying to fund the current reduced benefits, so this should be possible;
4. A new valuation will happen soon.

Conference believes that:

- a. Vice-chancellors cannot be trusted to keep their word and stopping action will encourage further attacks;
- b. We must fight now to fix in advance how the next contribution rates will be determined.

Conference resolves for negotiations to focus on:

- i. a binding minimum contribution rate for after the next valuation irrespective of its outcome, with "excess" contributions used to restore benefits;
- ii. UUK making a binding commitment to provide the same level of covenant support to any UCU proposal that meets some negotiated standard as any UUK proposal.