

University and College Union

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To Branch and local association secretaries

Topic **NEC annual report to Congress**

Action For information; for adoption at Congress 2026

Summary The NEC's annual report to Congress, which is presented to Congress and used by the Congress business committee to structure the order of Congress motions.

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Dear Colleagues

NEC report to Congress

This circular contains the NEC's annual report to Congress, which is presented for Congress to adopt and is used by the Congress business committee to structure the order of Congress motions. The report is set out in sections corresponding to the NEC's sub-committees:

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A word document version of this can be downloaded at www.ucu.org.uk/Congress26.
Hard copies of this report can be sent to branches if required – please contact demservices@ucu.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jo Grady

General secretary

Section 1: Report of the strategy and finance committee (SFC)

1 Introduction

The strategy and finance committee (SFC), chaired by UCU President Maria Chondrogianni, keeps a strategic overview of the work of the union. It receives reports from the general secretary on the overall industrial picture, demands on the union's resources, work with other unions and the TUC, and in the political arena, including in the devolved nations. It deals with cross-sectoral issues, including the union's international work, and receives financial reports and considers the annual budget. The committee also receives regular membership figures.

2 Priorities

- 2.1 The following table of priorities was agreed by SFC in its strategic role and approved by the NEC for work over the year to Congress 2026.
- 2.2 The aim of this process is to improve accountability to Congress and members by increasing transparency, aligning policy with work plans and ensuring that the union's resources and activities are focussed on key strategic objectives.

Priority 1: Winning collectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fight for members' pay and terms and conditions, including pensions• Defend members' jobs, including casualised staff• Take action for equality in the workplace and beyond• Improve the conditions under which our members work
Priority 2: Leading, campaigning, influencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campaign for a new funding model, for a fully funded post-16 education sector• Defend courses, curriculum, and the ability to deliver• Opposing the far right and attacks on equality• Support the freedom to protest, on and off campus• Prioritising 'people not profits'• Act to further the green agenda• Defend and improve the employment rights of members, including action on casualisation• Defend academic freedom; defend freedom of expression

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity with international educators, especially in conflict zones
Priority 3: Building a strong and involved membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase recruitment and engagement from all groups within the membership • Provide branches with the tools to build branches and support members
Priority 4: Supporting and representing members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take action for equality in the workplace and beyond • Provide branches with the tools to build branches and support members
Priority 5: Effectively resourcing our work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage all union activities within the agreed budget • Resource the union’s democratic structures

3 Finance and property

3.1 The committee receives regular management accounts and reports from the honorary treasurer. This enables the committee to monitor spending against the agreed budget. The full proposals for the upcoming financial year will appear in the Congress documents for greater explanation and consideration by delegates.

4 Working with other unions and political overview

4.1 The union continues to engage critically with the UK and devolved governments. The UK Government published the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper late last year containing major proposals affecting FE, HE and apprenticeships. UCU issued a critical response on publication, arguing that the White Paper is insufficient on public funding and doubles down on fee-led funding models which will not solve the systemic financial crisis in higher education.

4.2 UCU’s response to the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper continues to be used as an opportunity to strengthen our ongoing political, industrial, and public campaigns challenging its market-driven approach and inadequate funding proposals.

4.3 In January, UCU launched its own parliamentary group of MPs and peers who support our campaigns across adult, prison, further and higher education. The inaugural meeting focussed on the impact of falling pay, insecure contracts and chronic underfunding, and made clear that the Government must act to fix a broken system. This group has support across parties and allows us to build on existing work to brief and lobby parliamentarians while bringing members to Westminster to ensure politicians hear directly from the members.

4.4 UCU continued engagement with the NUS All-Parliamentary Group (APPG) commission which reported in July 2025. The general secretary served as a

commissioner. This has been another route for ensuring the union's priorities and concerns and reflected in parliamentary discussion.

- 4.5 The general secretary continues to meet regularly with the minister for skills and senior DfE officials.
- 4.6 The passing of the Employment Rights Act is a major step forward for union members. This legislation swept away many restrictions placed on trade unions by previous Conservative governments. The union is working directly and with the TUC to ensure the implementation of specific measures are as strong as possible.

5 The TUC and joint union work

- 5.1 The annual Congress took place in September. UCU submitted motions on a national education service and national renewal and on defence spending – wages not weapons - and amendments on UK participation in the Erasmus scheme and ending government demonisation of refugees and migrants. An emergency motion was also submitted on the right to protest and attacks on democracy. All of these were passed.
- 5.2 Delegates contributed to a range of debates. In addition, the general secretary participated in fringes from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, War on Want on a wealth tax and a CWU/RMT platform on sectoral collective bargaining and reform of the TUC. UK officers were involved in speaking at fringes from Stand up to Racism and the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign.

6 Democratic structures

- 6.1 The union published a report from the Labour Research Department on members' perceptions of UCU Democracy. This wide-ranging piece of research drew thousands of detailed responses from members across all sectors and the UK to ask some fundamental questions about members' relationship to the union at all levels. The research is available to members and will be a starting point to further work to understand how members experience their position in relation to decisions taken in their union. This work will help to ensure UCU remains a democratic, inclusive and accountable union for all members.
- 6.2 The standing orders and rules group (SORG) reports to the committee. This year consideration was given to a range of issues including some matters around NEC elections and other internal processes. Recommendations will be before Congress, if approved by the NEC.
- 6.3 New political fund rules were approved by a special meeting of the NEC, in order to keep the union compliant with the new statutory provisions following the enactment of the relevant section of the Employment Rights Act 2025.
- 6.4 Congress 2026 will be our second hybrid Congress after the success of the first year. Delegate feedback from 2025 has been noted and on the matter of hybrid Congress and electronic voting was reported to the NEC in full.
- 6.5 The Conduct of Members Committee is now in its second year of operation. This committee elected by Congress delegates now has oversight and responsibility

for the operation of the disciplinary procedure for member conduct. We continue to build upon best practice in improving the process of this challenging area.

7 European and International work

7.1 UCU's international work covers both solidarity and education policy issues. This work is overseen by the International Working Group, which held two hybrid meetings during 2025-26.

7.2 In line with the international motions from the 2025 Congress, as well as existing UCU policy, solidarity actions have been promoted in support of workers, educators and students in countries such as Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Hungary, Iran, Jamaica, Myanmar, Palestine, Sudan, Türkiye, Ukraine, United States and Zimbabwe. There has been a particularly strong focus on Palestine, including continuing support for the campus voices for Palestine tour and campaigns against 'scholasticide', as well as actions to defend the right to protest in the UK.

7.3 In October, UCU – in conjunction with Education International (EI) – organised an international conference on academic freedom in London. The conference heard from union leaders based in the UK, United States, Norway, Türkiye, Kenya and the Philippines on the different ways in which state repression and interference, managerialism, and the marketisation of academia are undermining academic freedom and how education unions are fighting back.

7.4 UCU remains actively involved in our global union federation, Education International and its European region, the ETUCE. UCU participated in EI's first Global Conference on Artificial Intelligence, held in Brussels on 4–5 December. Over these two days, participants examined how artificial intelligence is reshaping education and work, and how unions can ensure that these systems strengthen, rather than undermine, public education, democracy and the teaching profession.

7.5 Throughout the year we have sought to share information, strategy and experience with sister trade unions, for example, via meetings, webinars and visits. This has included a diverse range of unions from Argentina, Canada, France, Ireland, Kenya, Netherlands, Philippines and the United States.

8 Update on action on Congress motions 2025

8.1 **Motions 18-21** are the annual motions around budget and finance and were implemented in full.

8.2 **Motion 26** asked for a range of campaign activity on pensions in addition to ongoing support and advice which we continue to deliver via our pensions team supporting members in all schemes in all sectors. A further area of work involving collecting data involves membership records and will require further exploration.

8.3 **Motion 27** on fighting redundancies restates existing practice in supporting branches in disputes, and called for branches to be allowed to determine how to demonstrate support for a statutory ballot. Local dispute guidance is in place and

support for branches fighting redundancies continues to be a priority for the union at regional and national levels.

- 8.4 **Motion 62** on a post 16 education funding strategy has been at the heart of discussions and the work of the political and policy teams in shaping the unions' response to Government proposals and industrial campaigns in further and higher education (see also paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 above).
- 8.5 **Motion 63** asked for invitations to supportive MPs to attend the NEC. Invitations were issued, though at the time of writing attendance has not been possible.
- 8.6 **Motion 64 -66** on tackling measures to stifle activism on Palestine has been the focus of our work with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign including an additional donation of £1000 to the PSC legal fund to resist such crackdowns. Statements were issued and an emergency motion was submitted to the TUC Congress on the right to protest.
- 8.7 **Motion 67** called for UCU to support calls for compensation for WASPI women, affected by pension changes. Unfortunately in late January the government re-confirmed their decision not to pay compensation.
- 8.8 **Motion 68 and 69** relate to the Employment Rights Bill set out a series of demands that we pursued via the TUC. The legislation was passed and repealed the key anti union laws of the previous UK Government. The union continues to advocate for improvements in the secondary legislation and consultations that have followed since Royal Assent.
- 8.9 **Motion 70** on defending the state pension set out potential joint work with sister unions and affiliates including the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) to achieve these goals. UCU continues to support the NPC.
- 8.10 **Motion 71** on a political campaign for welfare not warfare: the union changed TUC policy on defence spending via a UCU motion to TUC Congress 2025, despite opposition from some others in the movement.
- 8.11 **Motion 73** on reparations has seen the union better involved in the campaign for reparative justice with the immediate past president representing the union at the 2025 UK reparations conference.
- 8.12 **Motion 77** on supporting a further campus tour for Palestine was another area of work for the union with both financial and political support to this tour (paragraph 7.2 above).
- 8.13 **Motion 78** focused on campaign goals towards the UK government and pressure on the Israeli Government which was delivered primarily through our work with PSC. Further points on UK universities severing ties has seen a greater focus via our engagements with employers and USS.
- 8.14 **Motions 23, 28-33, 72, 74-76 and 79-83** were remitted not having been taken for debate by Congress. These motions were noted by the committee with no action to report back to Congress on for this year.

Section 2: Report of the higher education committee

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The higher education committee has four scheduled meetings each year. Several additional 'special' HECs have also been called, to focus on single issues such as the pay claim and ballot.
- 1.2 The Chair of the HEC is Dyfrig Jones (Bangor University), and the Vice Chairs are Grant Buttars (University of Edinburgh) and Andrew Feeney (Northumbria University).

2 Pay and New JNCHES

- 2.1 For the 2025/26 pay year, UCEA offered the five HE unions (UCU, Unite, Unison, EIS, and the GMB) a pay uplift of 1.4%, applied to all spinal points and the deletion of the bottom two points by June 2026. This offer was rejected by all five unions as it amounted to yet another real-terms pay cut.
- 2.2 HESC voted in favour of the negotiators' recommendation to trigger dispute resolution meetings with UCEA. These were triggered jointly by all five unions. HESC also voted in favour of UCU coordinating next steps, including member consultations, with the other unions.
- 2.3 Since the close of Congress 2025 UCU's negotiators have been Dyfrig Jones (Chair of HEC), Grant Buttars and Andrew Feeney (HEC vice Chairs), the national negotiators elected by HESC – Christina Paine (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ben Pope (University of Manchester), Sean Wallis (UCL), and Robyn Orfitelli (University of Sheffield), and Shahenda Suliman (UCU Head of HE).
- 2.4 Dispute resolution meetings centred on the following outstanding issues that the New JNCHES negotiations failed to reach agreement on:
 - Pay
 - Term-time working
 - Job security
 - Protection of national agreements including the post-92 contract and HE2000
 - Joint work on sector funding
- 2.5 Little progress was made on these issues, and UCEA's final offer is available [here](#). The negotiators statement on the offer and outcome of the dispute resolution meetings can also be accessed [here](#).
- 2.6 HEC voted in July 2025 to launch a consultation over this offer, asking members whether or not they wished to accept or reject the offer and whether they would be willing to participate in industrial action. HEC recommended that members vote to reject UCEA's offer and vote yes to participating in industrial action. The other HE unions also launched consultations urging their members to reject UCEA's final offer.

- 2.7 The results of UCU's consultation were as follows: 74.% of respondents voted to reject the offer, and 61.2% voted in favour of taking industrial action. Turnout was 32%.
- 2.8 The four other unions also voted to reject the offer. Unite, Unison, UCU and EIS proceeded to ballot over the offer. UCU's ballot was over the following:
- National agreement to avoid redundancies, course closures, and cuts to academic disciplines across the sector
 - A pay uplift that is at least RPI+3.5% or £2,500, whichever is higher, on all pay points;
 - The protection of national agreements relating to terms and conditions of employment, including the 2004 framework agreement, the Post-92 contract for Post-92 institutions, and HE2000
- 2.9 Unite and Unison launched disaggregated ballots and met the threshold in some institutions. EIS and UCU launched aggregated ballots and failed to meet the 50% threshold required at the time, although a majority of those who voted did so in favour of industrial action. Unite and Unison are currently exploring taking industrial action in some institutions over the 2025/26 pay uplift.
- 2.10 Arrangements are underway to engage with branches on the ballot outcome and HE issues more broadly.
- 2.11 HEC is scheduled to meet on 11 February 2026 to consider UCU's ask for the 2026/27 Joint HE Unions' pay claim. Following HEC, UCU will meet with the other four HE unions to agree our collective pay claim.

3 Redundancies

- 3.1 The widescale loss of jobs continues to be the most important issue facing the HE sector. Branches continue to face attacks on jobs through the form of redundancies, and members continue to resist these job cuts. A list of live disputes over job cuts in post-16 education can be found [here](#).
- 3.2 Many branches have successfully fought these job cuts following significant industrial action. This includes Newcastle University which secured an agreement that no compulsory redundancies would take place in 2025 and no 'workforce resizing' that would threaten jobs in the 2025/26 academic year. This followed the branch taking 44 days of industrial action since March 2025 as well as widespread solidarity from other UCU branches. A list of branches that have successfully fought job cuts is available [here](#).
- 3.3 Whilst there have been commendable wins, these attacks and the widespread insecurity facing the sector show no signs of abating, and UCU will continue to fight to protect every single job.

4 USS

- 4.1 **Stability Working Group (StWG):** Throughout 2025/26, the Superannuation Working Group (SWG) has continued to represent scheme members on the StWG, working alongside UCEA employer representatives and USS staff.

- 4.2 A UCU paper seeking changes to Valuation Methodology was discussed and the USS Trustee accepted a majority of proposed changes to introduce best-estimates and increase scheme stability.
- 4.3 In line with UCU policy, SWG have continued to investigate Conditional Indexation (CI) meeting regularly with UCEA and USS. The CI Sub-Group agreed an Interim Report in June 2025 and SWG held a webinar in August 2025. A Second Report was agreed in December 2025 with webinars held in February 2026.
- 4.4 **Collaborative Review Forum (CRF):** The SWG has met regularly throughout the year with UCEA and USS, to consider and investigate changes to scheme rules and make recommendations to JNC on these. In February 2026, JNC considered its first recommendations from CRF on unintended consequences from Restoration and Recovery for total and serious Ill-health retirees, and Death in Service that happened between April 2022 and March 2024.
- 4.5 **Governance Review:** SWG is leading with UCEA on a review of USS scheme governance. An introductory stage was agreed where Pi Partnership are carrying out independent work to establish current governance structures and key issues for consideration under any review.
- 4.6 **Revaluation:** USS Defined Benefits increase annually by inflation and there are a number of factors that determine this increase. As the result of a complaint, USS found that the scheme rules and operational practice for applying inflation when a member has left the scheme mid-year were not aligned. A Deed of Amendment changed the USS scheme rules to resolve this misalignment and SWG has been engaged with USS and UCEA to deal with a number of outstanding issues resulting from this change.

5 Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS)

- 5.1 UCU is represented on the TPS England/Wales Pensions Board and Scheme Advisory Boards for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
- 5.2 This year UCU has been involved in the 2024 Valuation process which is due to be completed in mid-2026.
- 5.3 There continue to be issues around the implementation of Transitional Protection Remedy, resulting in longer processing times for members. UCU is working with the other education unions to resolve these issues and improve communication between members and TPS.
- 5.4 Capita/TPS report working within Service Level Agreement for Cash Equivalent Transfer Valuations, for divorce proceedings, however, there remains a discrepancy between the reported completion figures, from TPS, and anecdotal data from the membership.
- 5.5 UCU is continuing to campaign for the increase in employer contributions to be centrally funded in line with the FE sector.
- 5.6 UCU are aware of institutions attempting to circumvent the statute entitlement for members to join TPS. Challenges have taken the form of employment via

subsidiary companies effectively removing the legal entitlement to join TPS, offering an alternative DC scheme detrimental to the members. Other institutions incentivise withdrawal from TPS, instead moving into USS.

- 5.7 UCU commissioned financial analysis to see the impact of proposed changes and is seeking legal advice on proposals from Institutions, such as Northumbria. Branches have taken industrial action in defence of TPS and UCU will continue to support such action.
- 5.8 UCU is campaigning in defence of TPS provision and continues to challenge institutions who seek to revoke access to the scheme.
- 5.9 UCU is meeting with the Department for Education regarding pension provision and continue to work with other education unions on this issue. The three Union sides of the Scheme Advisory Boards for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have agreed to work together to ask the Government to review the link between the Normal Pension Age in the scheme and the State Pension Age. The 2011 Hutton report which recommended the link also recommended a review to see if it is still appropriate.

6 Academic related, professional services staff (ARPS)

- 6.1 Motion HE28 at HESC related to ARPS career progression and included a resolution to pursue meaningful career progression pathways for ARPS staff as part of JNCHES negotiations. The negotiating team have agreed to include an ask for UCEA to work with the unions to develop meaningful and inclusive career pathways for ARPS staff. These discussions would include career progression, career pathways, and grade drifts for academic-related professional services staff.
- 6.2 The ARPS annual meeting is scheduled to take place on 26 February 2026 and a key theme will be Job Security and Professional respect.
- 6.3 The committee has also explored ways of promoting the work of ARPS and member engagement through UCU communications and campaigns, and discussions are currently underway about how to better promote ARPS work in UCU campaigns and raise the profile and concerns of ARPS members.

7 Progress on motions from HESC 2025

- 7.1 **HE1** (National Negotiators report) recommended that UCU a) continue to pursue progress on all areas of the 2025/26 claim, b) continue to pursue joint initiatives which will lead to an alternative funding model, and c) continue to pursue progress on job security urgent measures. Dispute meetings were held to seek to resolution on these issues. In these meetings UCEA stated that they would only pursue joint lobbying on sector funding if UCU agreed not to use this work to pursue a dispute with the Secretary of State, which UCU has not agreed to.
- 7.2 **HE2** and **HE3** related to industrial action and campaigning on pay and job cuts, including calling on UCU to plan a pay campaign linked to a political campaign for a fully funded sector calling for emergency measures to save jobs, to declare an industrial action dispute after exhausting JNCHES dispute resolution

mechanisms, and for UCU to call a conference to defend HE. Whilst the conference has not been organised, UCU declared a dispute and has campaigned on pay and job cuts.

- 7.3 **HE5** also related to a campaign to fight job cuts and the inclusion of a claim to UCEA to protect jobs, and a ballot should UCEA not protect against redundancies, which was implemented.
- 7.4 **L1** called for a national demonstration in Newcastle, for all branches to be invited, and for UCU HQ to organise and fund travel to Newcastle. This demonstration took place on 11 June 2025. UCU HQ supported up to 25% of the travel costs.
- 7.5 **HE14** called for UCU to open a trade dispute with the Secretary of State over HE sector funding. At the time of writing, further legal advice has been sought and discussions remain underway about taking forward this motion.
- 7.6 **HE23** called for transparency on the extent of casualisation in HE, and to request data related to this including on fixed term and hourly contracts. A Research Group has been developed to take this work forward.
- 7.7 **HE24** called for transparency on casualisation and hidden redundancies. A campaigns strategy is currently under development which includes campaigning against hidden redundancies.
- 7.8 **HE25** called for work to be done to evaluate hourly teaching models and to use the results to reform pay practices and achieve equal pay. A Research Group has been established to take this work forward.
- 7.9 **HE27** related to Medical Research Council (MRC) funding cuts. UCU has called for the restoration of MRC funding, and a briefing on a pooled resourcing model is currently being developed.
- 7.10 **HE29** called for Congress to create popular educational materials on the importance of Black and anti-colonial intellectual traditions for UK education, host an associated online event, and work with community and student groups. Scoping work has begun on mapping provision of Black and anti-colonial programmes taught, draft outline of accessible educational materials is in development, and planning is underway for an online event this Spring.
- 7.11 Other motions asking for UCU to fight compulsory redundancies, for UCU to demand Equality Impact Assessments be undertaken, and for campaigning for an alternative fully funded sector are being implemented. UCU also continues to raise sector funding concerns with the Department for Education.

Section 3: Report of the further education committee (FEC)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This part of the annual report deals with UCU's work in the further education sector, including Adult Education and Skills and prison education, over the last year. Only an overview of the work undertaken can be reported.
- 1.2 A significant part of the work in the last year has been focused on the New Deal for FE campaign [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#) , the prison education campaign [UCU - UCU prison educators: unlocking futures](#) and the launch of the Save Adult Education campaign [UCU - Save Adult Education](#)
- 1.3. The priority work areas for the Further Education Committee are the New Deal for FE campaign, pay, equality, adult education and skills, prison education, protecting members' TPS benefits and work to reduce members' workloads.

2 New Deal for FE

- 2.1 2.1 At the FE Sector Conference (FESC) at Congress 2025 branch delegates voted to escalate the New Deal for FE campaign in the autumn. (See the end of this report for details of the New Deal and other motions). Over 100 branch delegates participated in the hybrid FESC and 37 motions were resolved.
- 2.2 The New Deal campaign was to move to a dispute footing by nationally coordinated disaggregated strike ballots in each college where that branch opted into the dispute. The timetable for the action was to be developed by the Further Education Committee (FEC) at its meetings after FESC.
- 2.3 FESC wanted as many branches as possible to opt in to the dispute. An e-consultation of members was live at the time of FESC. The result of the consultation was announced in June, which achieved an 86% yes vote in favour of escalating the campaign and moving to a strike ballot.
- 2.4 FESC resolved to build the escalation of the campaign on the three core New Deal for FE demands:
 - Pay parity with schoolteachers in England
 - National workload agreements
 - Fully funded and binding sector level national bargaining.
- 2.5 FESC considered the context and timing was right to escalate the campaign. UCU campaign and lobbying work had raised the profile of FE. The UK Labour government offered the potential to reposition and support FE at the heart of the post-16 education and skills agenda. The comprehensive spending review gave opportunities to press for a New Deal for FE.
- 2.6 In June the UK government announced the outcome of the spending review and the three-year funding outcome for FE for 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28.
- 2.7 An additional £300m funding for 2025/26 with £50m for April to July was confirmed. Analysis of the funding outcome indicated that once the additional

60K 16-18 student intake per year was factored in, and projected inflation considering the spending review resulted in a standstill outcome.

- 2.8 Beyond the spending review, the UK government announced cuts to the Adult Skills Fund of up to 6% (average 3% for FE college providers). The ASF distribution of the funding is uneven and impacts differently in each FE college depending on the levels of provision and learner profile. In all cases the cuts had an impact and the employers raised these issues at the national pay talks.
- 2.9 The announcement of additional FE funding was made at the same time as the STRB recommended a 4% pay increase for schoolteachers in England. The additional funding for FE, the lack of a national framework for distribution and the basis on which it was allocated, did not result in a 4% pay increase for all FE staff.
- 2.10 In support of the campaign for a New Deal for FE, UCU made a submission to the School Teachers Review Body (STRB). The submission made the case for a New Deal for FE and it can be found here:
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15341/School-Teachers-Review-Body-Submission-October-2025/pdf/UCU_STRB_submission_Oct25.pdf
- 2.11 At the meeting in September, FEC agreed a dispute and ballot timetable. Following a disappointing and non-binding pay recommendation of 4% for FE colleges in England and no meaningful response to the non-pay elements of the New Deal for FE campaign, UCU set up disputes with the employers prior to issuing notice of strike ballots.
- 2.12 The ballot, involving around 70 FE England college employers (corresponding to over 100 FE England UCU branches), opened on 13 October and closed on Monday 17 November 2025. 32 branches and college employers secured a 50% plus turnout and a 'Yes' vote for strike action. The overall Yes vote was 90%. The turnout was 50.6% on an aggregate basis. Eight branches secured a 40% -49% turnout, six branches secured 30%-39% turnout, seven branches had turnouts of 30% or less. During the ballot period 17 branches reached agreements to settle the dispute, and their ballot was not counted. Seven were removed for other reasons. The results can be viewed here:
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/FEEngland-ballot-Nov25>
- 2.13 In support of the ballots, branch briefings, focused on GTVO, took place on 2 October, 9 October and 6 November. The GS hosted a live event that included other general secretaries on 14 October. Over 50 branch reps participated in the briefings. Reps shared experiences of their GTVO work in branches, the Thru Text roll out and discussed the materials and communications from head office.
- 2.14 Reps and activists' videos supporting the campaign and GTVO have been circulated to branches. These along with regular social media communications ran throughout the ballot period.
- 2.15 In November the FEC agreed three days of strike action will take place on Wednesday 14, Thursday 15 and Friday 16 January. UCU organised a rally in London for striking branches on Friday 16 January. A further round of branch

briefings took place after the strike action. UCU head office sent a survey to all members in striking branches seeking their views on next steps.

- 2.16 In January those branches still in dispute organized impressive strike action and picket lines. <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#actionjanuary2026>
- 2.17 A special meeting of the FEC took place in February. The FEC discussed the latest developments with the New Deal for FE campaign, the three days of strike action in January, the New Deal for FE rally, press and media coverage of the dispute, feedback from the branch briefings, branch general meetings, and the membership survey on further action.
- 2.18 FEC agreed that branches will now decide what further strike action they wish to take at a time that best suits them. UCU centrally will coordinate and support branches that wish to take strike action on the same day(s). UCU will organise a parliamentary lobby for a New Deal for FE. To maximize the impact of the lobby, it is likely to take place after the Easter recess. Two branch briefings will be organised for those branches still in dispute so that the decisions of FEC can be fed back and discussed with reps.

3 National Joint Forum – FE pay 2025/26

- 3.1 In April 2025 UCU and the other further education trade unions (GMB, NEU, Unite and Unison) submitted the joint FE trade unions' pay claim (2025/26) to the Association of Colleges (AoC).

[You can click here to read the full claim here](#)

- 3.2 The first meeting of the NJF took place on 26 June. A report of that meeting can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#payupdate>
- 3.3 The second meeting of the NJF took place on Wednesday 17 September. A **[disappointing and non-binding pay recommendation](#)** of 4% was made by the Association of Colleges (AoC).
- 3.4 UCU negotiators pressed the AoC to make a pay recommendation and meet the other priority demands on workload and national bargaining. The AoC failed to do so. UCUs overall assessment of the recommendation was:
 - 4% does not close the growing pay gap with schoolteachers pay or start to make good the losses in pay over recent years.
 - Excessive workloads have not been addressed.
 - We need fully funded and binding national bargaining in FE.

3.5 Just Transition Framework

- 3.6 In June UCU and the other FE trade unions reached agreement with the Association of Colleges (AoC), has reached agreement on a just transition road map for colleges.
- 3.7 The [agreement](#) lays out a local strategy for colleges to work towards a more sustainable future with a focus on playing a bigger role in the green economy and new skills.

3.8 The framework highlights that:

- Colleges are a catalyst for change and have important roles to play in the future green economy.
- As anchor institutions, colleges can play a key role to influence, convene, collaborate and support both existing and emerging sectors, employers and communities.
- The college workforce needs to have the resources and knowledge to train those moving into new and developing growth sectors.

4 Workload campaign

- 4.1 UCU launched the workload campaign to address members experiences of excessive workloads, long working hours and intensification of work that is the cause of significant stress and ill-health. [UCU - Workload campaign](#)
- 4.2 In FE members face increasing administrative burdens, the widening of job roles, the introduction of new IT and online working, increased student numbers and staff retention and recruitment challenges. We have reached the point in FE where workloads are unsafe.
- 4.3 In the absence of national agreements, employers continue to pile on excessive workloads, impose unrealistic deadlines, and create working environments that drive stress, burnout, and rising sickness absence.
- 4.4 UCU has developed our 'Workloads Are Not Working' in FE campaign. A new training programme for reps in FE will take place on Friday 27 February. The training will give reps the tools to challenge unsafe workloads effectively using UCU materials, consider collective and legal routes, plan the best way to mobilise member support for the campaign in branches.

5 Prison Education

- 5.1 UCU's 'Unlocking Futures' campaign launched last year focuses on the crisis in prison education. The funding model does not work. There are big recruitment and retention problems and now widespread redundancies linked to the failing Prison Education Service contract: [UCU - UCU prison educators: unlocking futures](#) and [UCU - Prison education staff](#)

UCU is calling for:

- a comprehensive review of the Prison Education Service (PES) and the cuts to Prison education.
- UCU to be consulted by the MoJ on this and other prison education matters
- the prison education service that is overseen by the DfE as a national prison education service and on a not-for-profit basis
- the implementation of the Joint Unions in Prison Alliance Charter recommendations.
- a national contract for prison education staff and professional respect and parity of esteem with FE

- 5.2 MoJ funding cuts have caused hundreds of redundancies and major reductions in core courses such as English, maths, hospitality and IT. Workload has increased, conditions have worsened, and prisoners spend more time in cells, reducing engagement and harming rehabilitation. The Independent Monitoring Board reports cuts of up to 65%, warning of serious impacts on quality and safety. UCU branches are now focused on rebuilding.
- 5.3 UCU continues to play a leading role in the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group (JUPG). We have submitted report outlining the scale of education cuts. Key concerns include a narrowed curriculum, reduced purposeful activity, and likely increases in reoffending. Rachel Hopkins MP recently raised the issue in Parliament.
- 5.4. In December a reps and members meeting was called to discuss the impact of the new PES contract. Over 300 educators have left the profession, leaving heavier workloads and limited cover. Branch rebuilding plans include workplace mapping, prison visits and phone-banking, have started and branch rebuilding plans will be agreed at the annual meeting in February.
- 5.5 Black Prison Educators Network. The network continues to grow, with a recent webinar reviewing Professor Nicola Rollock's research and report into the experiences and aspirations of Black prison educators. The report will be launched in parliament on 3 March.
- 5.6 The new PES contract rolled out in October and replaced PEF. TUPE applying to hundreds of staff. UCU reps and staff were actively engaged in the process. Following sustained UCU lobbying, New Fair Deal protections on pensions were confirmed to apply to Novus staff transferring to People Plus.
- 5.7 Pay Updates. Novus, Milton Keynes and People Plus members accepted 4% offers. Pay transparency remains a concern at Milton Keynes College. Weston College withdrew from prison education, with staff transferring to new providers.
- 5.8 TUPE Training. Eighteen UCU reps completed a two-day TUPE course in July and supported members through PES transfers.
- 5.9 The annual meeting of prison educators takes place on Friday 20 February.

6 Adult Education and Skills

- 6.1 UCU launched the Save Adult Education last summer [UCU - Save Adult Education](#) The campaign covers staff working in general FE colleges who teach adults ESOL, English and maths, functional skills, or any of the many adult courses offered at colleges across the country
- 6.2 The campaign also includes adult institutes, private and charitable adult education providers, as well as adult and community education delivered through local and combined metro authorities. The aim of the campaign is to reverse cuts to the Adult Skills Fund, promote social cohesion, defend members' jobs, and

champion professional respect. UCU will fight the cuts to adult education funding, with our members at the heart of the campaign.

- 6.3 The aims of the campaign focus on the government to reverse the cuts to adult skills and adult education, invest in adult skills and adequately fund all adult provision, a joined up national strategy on skills and education with adult education playing a central role, with staff treated as education professionals and on secure contracts with comparable terms and conditions with other educators.
- 6.4 UCU has been pressuring the UK government, metro mayors and employers and highlighting the impact that cuts to the adult skills fund will have on communities, learners of all ages, UK's growth ambitions. The campaign promotes the role of adult education and skills in the skills and employment strategies, the decade of renewal, NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), Just Transition agenda, social cohesion, lifelong learning for all. UCU has been active in fighting redundancies and course closures in adult education.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/SaveAdultEducation#petition-email>

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/SaveAdultEducation-MP>

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/SaveAdultEducation#resources>

The adult education and skills annual meeting take place on Saturday 7 March.

7 Teachers' Pension Scheme

- 7.1 UCU is represented on the Teachers' Pension Scheme England/Wales Pensions Board and Scheme Advisory Boards for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. This year UCU has been involved in the 2024 Valuation process which is due to be completed mid 2026.
- 7.2 There continues to be issues around the implementation of Transitional Protection Remedy, UCU is working with the other education unions to resolve these issues and improve the communication between members and TPS.
- 7.3 There remains a delay in processing retirement applications and the recommendation is that members should anticipate a timescale of 6 – 9 months from application to receipt of pension benefits, this timescale varies between TPS schemes with Northern Ireland members reporting a significant delay with many members reporting almost 12 months to process applications.
- 7.4 There has been some improvement in the production of Cash Equivalent Transfer Valuations, for divorce proceedings, however, there remains a discrepancy between the reported completion figures, from TPS, and anecdotal data from the membership. It was reported last year that it was anticipated the backlog will be cleared by the first quarter of 2025, however this was not the case and an extension of 2 years has been granted to all public sector pension schemes, TPS have reported that the 'few outstanding cases' will be resolved by October 2026.
- 7.5 UCU is continuing to campaign on the increase in the employer contribution for TPS. Although FE institutions are receiving additional funding to cover the costs, HE institutions are not leading to more considering ways of avoiding their obligations. Following on from the increase in Employers' contributions,

implemented from the previous valuation, UCU have been made aware of multiple HE institutions removing provision of TPS to employees. This has been robustly challenged by UCU, the union commissioned financial analysis to generate illustrations on how the proposals would impact members across various career stages. Industrial action was taken by affected branches, and the union is seeking legal advice on the proposals.

- 7.6 The threaten removal of TPS provision to HE members impacts on FE members, and wider the education sector, as decreases in active membership of the scheme would be concerning for future valuations. UCU are meeting with the Department of Education regarding pension provision and continue to work with other education unions to keep focus on this issue.
- 7.7 The three Union sides of the Scheme Advisory Boards for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have agreed to work together to ask the Government to review the link between the Normal Pension Age in the scheme and the State Pension Age. The 2011 Hutton report which recommended the link also recommended a review to see if it is still appropriate.

8 Progress on FE sector conference motions 2025

- 8.1 **Motion 1** FESC approved the report on FE England pay 2024/25 and noted the developments with pay 2025/26 and the report on the New Deal for FE in FEBAN24:
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15037/UCUBANFE24/pdf/UCUBANFE24.pdf>
- 8.2 **Motion 2** resolved UCU build nationally coordinated action in support of the New Deal for FE campaign by branch briefings, a member consultation, a national disaggregated ballot, a GTVO and comm plan, encourage branches to op in and to organise rallies and lobbies. UCU implemented the decisions of FESC linked to the escalation of the New Deal for FE campaign and autumn dispute. [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#) Members were consulted and the results can be found here: [UCU - New Deal for FE: consultation 2025](#). UCU organized a nationally coordinated dispute and statutory ballot of members see here:
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#ballot2025results> and
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#ballot2025> and
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#strikejanuary2026>
- 8.3 **Motion 3** was withdrawn.
- 8.4 **Motion 4** called for an England-wide IA ballot for FE England on the New Deal claim, strike action in September 2025 to target the census date, an indicative ballot before the summer to engage members, prepare branches and build the campaign. FEC agreed to delay the strike until the new year to give branches the maximum opportunity to participate in the dispute. The ballot opened on 13 October and closed on 17 November. Consultation results can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/FEconsultation2025> The ballot results can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#ballot2025results>

- 8.5 **Motion 5** resolved that after the spending review UCU will prepare national action. UCU submitted evidence to the spending review in July, [UCU - UCU responds to spending review](#) . FEC agreed to delay the strike until the new year to give branches the maximum opportunity to participate in the dispute. The ballot opened on 13 October and closed on 17 November. A nationally coordinated ballot took place in October and November and the results can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#ballot2025results>
- 8.6 **Motion 6** called for an England-wide industrial action ballot for September, coordination where possible with sixth form staff, NEU, and to campaign for binding national bargaining in FE. A nationally coordinated ballot took place in October and November and the results can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#ballot2025results>. Joint action with the NEU took place in three colleges. National bargaining is one of the three core demands in the New Deal for FE and resources on national bargaining can be found here <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13711/The-case-for-binding-national-negotiations-in-further-education-in-England>
- 8.7 **Motion 7** resolved to campaign to ensure extra Government funding for FE is ringfenced for staff pay increases, petition the Government to continue additional funding for FE, actions to close the pay gap between FE Sector and Schools. UCU has actively campaigned to secure additional funding to be ringfenced for FE staff pay as part of the New Deal campaign see here: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15341/School-Teachers-Review-Body-Submission-October-2025/pdf/UCU_STRB_submission_Oct25.pdf and <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#writetoyourMP> and <http://newdealforfe.org.uk/>
- 8.8 **Motion 8** resolved a national ballot for strike action on pay and workload in FE. FEC agreed to delay the strike until the new year to give branches the maximum opportunity to participate in the dispute. The ballot opened on 13 October and closed on 17 November. Ballot results can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#ballot2025results>
- 8.9 **Motion 9** called for UCU to build on the New Deal for FE campaign and escalate the campaign to organise within branches and between branches in regions. The escalation of the campaign following congress can be found here: [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#) and details of the dispute and statutory ballot can be found here <https://www.ucu.org.uk/NewDealForFE#ballot2025results>
- 8.10 **Motion 10** called on UCU to press the UK government to dramatically increase investment in education and the importance of Further Education. A central feature of the New Deal for FE campaign is to call for additional funding for FE: [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#). UCU made the case for additional funding in our submission to STRB: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15341/School-Teachers-Review-Body-Submission-October-2025/pdf/UCU_STRB_submission_Oct25.pdf and UCU has responded to the Spending Review outcome: [UCU - UCU responds to spending review](#)

- 8.11 **Motion 11** called on UCU to monitor return dates from summer leave across the FE sector and to campaign for a minimum of four weeks' continuous leave during July and August. Part of the planning for the dispute and strike planning covered a review of college academic calendars. [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#)
- 8.12 **Motion 12** resolved FEC demand that colleges pursue a growth strategy rather than a non-deficit budget through cutting wages and provision. A core campaign aim in the New Deal for FE strategy is the demand for fully funded national bargaining and these principles are covered in the national pay claim. [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#) and https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526_FE_pay_claim_FINAL_with_logos.pdf and in the STRB submission: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15341/School-Teachers-Review-Body-Submission-October-2025/pdf/UCU_STRB_submission_Oct25.pdf
- 8.13 **Motion 13** resolved a campaign for funding for a mass retrofit training programme in the FE sector, for the campaign to feature prominently in the year of trade union climate action, and campaign for a joined-up government strategy on training and delivery of energy efficiency retrofit and low-energy heating. UCU reached a joint agreement with AoC on a just transition to net zero [UCU - English college membership body and college unions sign agreement for a just transition to a net zero future](#). UCU has worked collaboratively with other bodies to promote the unions policy positions and develop the green reps' network. [UCU - Climate & ecological emergency](#)
- 8.14 **Motion 14** A prison education motion called for UCU to continue organising and campaigning to secure a better future under PES, to prioritise work on the New Fair Deal, to continue the campaign for a single contract for Prison Educators, advocate for wider curriculum and train all reps in TUPE process. The latest information about UCU's campaign work in prison education can be found here [UCU - UCU prison educators: unlocking futures](#). UCU campaigning and lobbying secured the protection of members TPS pensions when they transferred as part of the new PES contract. [UCU - UCU prison education end of year report, December 2025](#) TUPE training for reps took place in July.
- 8.15 **Motion 15** called for the protection casualised staff amid budget cuts and redundancies at Bristol College. UCU branch and regional office supporting at head office went into dispute and fought back against redundancies: [UCU - Strike at City of Bristol College in jobs row](#) Members were resolute in the action they took, and an acceptable agreement was reached: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/14308/Strikes-suspended-at-City-of-Bristol-College-to-allow-for-talks>
- 8.16 **Motion 16** Called on FEC to set up of a member group to explore how to increase UCU membership and activity from casualised members across FE. Members of the working group should be drawn from casualised members in FE and should be geographically representative and include members from FE, ACE and prisons. A call for volunteers to join the proposed member group was issued via UCU Friday emails during summer 2025. This resulted in two members expressing interest. These members have been put in contact with each other,

and discussions have begun about how to take the work forward. Given the low response, the Anti-Casualisation Committee (ACC) will consider how best to progress the objectives of the motion, including whether the work should continue through ACC structures rather than a standalone member group, and how to generate wider engagement from casualised FE, ACE and prison education members.

- 8.17 **Motion 17** called for a campaign to reverse cuts to the adult skills fund. UCU launched a new campaign in July called Save Adult Education: [UCU - Save Adult Education](#). The key aims of the campaign are: UK government to reverse the cuts to adult education and skills, Invest in adult skills and adequate funding, a joined up national strategy on skills and education with adult ed and skills playing a central role, staff treated as education professionals and on secure contracts with comparable terms and conditions with other educators, fight all redundancies. To support the Save Adult Education campaign, members were encouraged to [sign our petition](#) and [write to your MP](#).
- 8.18 **Motion 18** Resolved to lobby the Labour government to reverse the Adult Skills funding cuts and increase funding to a realistic level, to lobby Parliament, to promote ACE, call for adequate, sustainable funding for the sector and the immediate withdrawal of the threat of funding cuts. UCU launched a new campaign in July called Save Adult Education: [UCU - Save Adult Education](#) A parliamentary lobby took place in November [Edition-514-digi.pdf](#). UCU along with other bodies called for the UK government to reverse the cuts to adult skills and to invest in adult education and skills in the run up to the autumn budget. <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/14252/National-coalition-calls-on-Chancellor-to-invest-in-adult-and-community-education-in-Autumn-Budget-2025>
- 8.19 **Motion 19** resolved to recognise ACE funding cuts alongside the long-term decline in Adult Education funding, to ensure pay negotiators address IALs' funding issues and that UCU campaigns for fair pay, and to raise the profile of IALs by organising an IAL Forum to foster solidarity. UCU launched a new campaign in July called Save Adult Education [UCU - Save Adult Education](#). The key aim of the campaign is to Invest in adult skills and adequate funding, a joined up national strategy on skills and education with adult ed and skills playing a central role, staff treated as education professionals and on secure contracts with comparable terms and conditions with other educators, Fight all redundancies.
- 8.20 **Motion 20** a health and safety motion called on employers to develop robust, national regulations and guidance, demand that employers provide comprehensive training for staff and advocate for the implementation of stricter institutional policies on students who engage in inappropriate conduct. UCU responded to the use of technology and AI guidance for colleges [UCU - UCU responds to AI guidance for colleges](#) The future work survey was published in July [UCU - Future of Work in Post-16 Education](#) and UCU contributed to the development of guidance by EI which was updated in the summer <https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/28115:the-unintended-consequences-of-artificial-intelligence-and-education>

- 8.21 **Motion 21** A workload campaign motion resolved an FE Workload conference to building links between branches in FE institutions, gathering ideas, strategies and resources that have worked, build a menu of these and making it available to branches, and focus on offering branches practical solutions to help reduce workload and build the union. UCU produced a suite of workload campaign material and resources that branches can access on the website [UCU - Workload campaign](#) and https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9458/Its-your-time-UCU-workload-campaign-overview/pdf/Its_your_time_Overview_May23.pdf and <https://www.ucu.org.uk/stress>. A new workload training course based on the materials and rep's experiences will be launched in February 2026 called 'Workloads are not working in FE.'
- 8.22 **Motion 22** a motion calling for a stop to the erosion of hours for delivery of FE programmes and the increase in staff workload. Workload management and national agreements are central demand in the national FE claim and New Deal campaign. https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526_FE_pay_claim_FINAL_with_logos.pdf and [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#). Updated UCU workload materials can be found here [UCU - Workload campaign](#).
- 8.23 **Motion 23** a motion calling for the disclosure of relevant and confidential background information with staff was remitted to the FEC.
- 8.24 **Motion 24** resolved FEC publicly back the NEU's "Abolish OFSTED" campaign, call for increased scrutiny of the way OFSTED works, including risk assessing the inspections themselves, and surveying staff and organisations to gather a true reflection of the impact and value of these inspections, and organise national events to highlight the negatives of OFSTED inspections. UCU campaigns for fundamental reform of the inspection framework and the replacement of Ofsted built on the report of last year and can be found here: [UCU - UCU condemns new Ofsted report card system](#) and [Layout 1](#). UCU conducted a survey of branches seeking responses on the impact of Ofsted and the new inspection regime.
- 8.25 **Motion 25** resolved UCU demand institutions reaffirm commitment to racial equality, ensure anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion training, work with policymakers to challenge racist ideologies, support Black members and learners with resources and advocacy, hold political parties accountable for harmful rhetoric and provide support for members facing racial harassment or discrimination. UCU engaged with the AoC. The following steps have been taken in FE. Principals and chairs of governors were encouraged to revisit their mission statement, existing policies, core values, and staff and student safeguarding measures, a webinar for principals to share good practice took place, AOC has sign posted resources from the Red Cross and Hope not Hate, spaces were created for college leaders and staff to come together to discuss the issues, fringe and briefing sessions on confronting extremism took place at the AOC annual conference in November and work with trade unions on combatting racism continues.

- 8.26 **Motion 26** called on branches to carry out a student and teacher led Themed Learning Week on celebrating multiculturalism and diversity, create and share resources, and update UCU resources on tackling racism in the workplace. In addition to the work with the AoC on motion 25, The latest UCU guidance can be found here [UCU - Racism and religious discrimination](#)
- 8.27 **Motion 27** a motion on combatting the far right by providing new resources, support and guidance to branches. In addition to the work with the AoC in Motions 25, the latest UCU guidance can be found here, [UCU - Racism and religious discrimination](#)
- 8.28 **Motion 28** resolved UCU must ensure that all FE, Adult Education, and Prison Education bargaining agendas feature strong, intersectional equality demands, UCU Equality Committee will include national bargaining on the agenda at every meeting and will provide regular advice and guidance to negotiators and relevant committees, UCU will make clear, consistent demands for the government to address the equality deficit. The joint national claim called for joint work to address gender and other quality pay gaps: [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526 FE pay claim FINAL with logos.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526%20FE%20pay%20claim%20FINAL%20with%20logos.pdf). The latest UCU guidance can be found here: [UCU - Gender discrimination](#)
- 8.29 **Motion 29** called on UCU to campaign for sector-wide visa fee support in FE, mandatory anti-racism training in FE and workplace, protections for migrant staff, lobby for greater representation of migrant workers in FE governance structures. UCU has produced a range of guidance to support our migrant members working in FE and HE [UCU - Migrant members](#)
- 8.30 **Motion 30** called on UCU to set up a working group to explore how to increase UCU membership and activity from disabled members across FE. The latest UCU guidance can be found here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/14253/Disability-Pay-Gap-Day-2025> and [UCU - Disability discrimination](#)
- 8.31 **Motion 31** called on UCU to increase the visibility of young LGBT+ people in FE LGBT+ via activities and guidance. The latest UCU guidance can be found here [UCU - Gender discrimination](#) and [UCU - Gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination](#)
- 8.32 **Motion 32** called for UCU to develop a standardised data request for colleges, adult education institutions and prisons to acquire equality data about staff pay, progression and retention, work with AoC - or any relevant body on equality data and press employers to declare information for collective bargaining. Joint work to address the equality pay gaps were demands in the national claim, [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526 FE pay claim FINAL with logos.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526%20FE%20pay%20claim%20FINAL%20with%20logos.pdf)
- 8.33 **Motion 33** a motion calling on UCU to investigate excessive senior pay in FE. UCU has made the case for improving staff terms and conditions as part of the New Deal for FE campaign. This includes addressing senior pay in the sector. https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15341/School-Teachers-Review-Body-Submission-October-2025/pdf/UCU_STRB_submission_Oct25.pdf and

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526_FE_pay_claim_FINAL_with_logos.pdf

- 8.34 **Motion 34** resolved UCU to launch a national campaign highlighting the VAT inequality faced by FE institutions, to advocate for VAT exemption for FE colleges, training providers, and prison educators. to work with others to this end, to campaign actively highlighting this issue. UCU has been actively working with other stakeholders to make the case for VAT cancelling or rebate in FE. A members briefing has been produced, the case was argued in the national pay claim and STRB submission. <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/14298/FE-VAT-issues-and-campaign-member-briefing-2026> and [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15519/FE-VAT-issues-and-campaign-UCU-briefing-Jan-26/pdf/UCU_briefing - FE VAT issues and campaign Jan 26.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15519/FE-VAT-issues-and-campaign-UCU-briefing-Jan-26/pdf/UCU_briefing_-_FE_VAT_issues_and_campaign_Jan_26.pdf)
- 8.35 **Motion 35** a motion calling for freedom to discuss Gaza in FE. UCU has proactively campaigned on the issue Gaza see here <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13229/UCU-statement-on-IsraelGaza> and <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13472/UCU-condemns-USS-for-its-position-on-Gaza> and <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13499/Ceasefire-NOW-take-action-for-Gaza> and https://www.ucu.org.uk/gazastatement_jul14
- 8.36 **Motion 36** called for research to understand how regional FE meetings can best be organised to allow for maximum participation and for UCU to promote the work of regional FE committees helping FE members better understand the structures within their union. UCU commissioned the LRD to undertake research into among other things Ucu democratic structures. The research can be found here: [Its findings can be found here](#)
- 8.37 **Motion 37** resolved that once decisions are reached, we must act in unity. Officers to ensure decisions are implemented. This report covers the implementation of the decisions made by FESC.

Section 4: Report of the education committee (EdC)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The education committee meet twice a year, in October and January. This year, the chair is Brian Hamilton (Novus), and the vice chair is Christina Paine (London Metropolitan University).
- 1.2 The committee has continued its focus on work that contributes to defending post-16 education and building the case for a fairer system for staff, students and society.

2 Consultation responses

- 2.1 UCU has responded to several consultations, including:
 - Earned Settlement Consultation (via Migrant Members Committee)
 - Further Education Teachers Training and Development Consultation
 - School Teachers' Review Body (STRB)
 - Justice Committee Inquiry into '*Tackling drugs in prisons*'
 - Justice Committee Inquiry into '*Children and Young Adults in the Secure Estate*'
 - Education Committee Inquiry on '*Higher education and funding: threat of insolvency and international students*'
 - Curriculum and Assessment Review: independent review chaired by Becky Francis
 - Post-16 Level 3 and below pathways: Department for Education

3 Improving Education Together

- 3.1 UCU continues to participate in the Department for Education's *Improving Education Together* (IET) programme through representation on the national board and relevant sub-groups. This engagement ensures that the perspectives of further education staff are represented in discussions on sector reform, workforce strategy, and teaching and learning conditions.
- 3.2 Participation in the board and sub-groups also provides UCU with an opportunity to monitor policy developments, share evidence from members' experiences, and influence emerging proposals at an early stage.

4 Post-16 education and skills white paper

- 4.1 After considerable delay, the post-16 education and skills white paper was published in October 2025. The white paper seeks to encourage greater collaboration, specialisation and flexibility in the post-16 education system but fails to address the systemic funding and staffing crises in HE, FE and adult education.
- 4.2 UCU has published a detailed briefing paper on the white paper. The briefing highlights the key recommendations in areas such as funding, qualifications, staffing and professional issues and outlines UCU's response.

5 Post-16 education funding

- 5.1 UCU continues to challenge the inequities and inefficiencies of the HE funding model. Through our research, lobbying and communications, we have highlighted how declining levels of public investment, ballooning amounts of student debt and excessive competition between HEIs is having a detrimental impact on students, graduates and staff. We have raised additional concerns about the new international student levy which will come into effect in 2028-29.
- 5.2 To support the Stop the Cuts campaign, UCU commissioned a briefing paper on the crisis in HE and worked with Savanta to conduct polling of over 1000 students to learn more about how higher education funding and student financing shape students' experiences and decision-making for students in England. The findings continue to support the wider UCU HE funding campaign.
- 5.3 In relation to FE funding, UCU has called for VAT in the FE sector to be scrapped for years, including in our 2025 evidence to the FE and Skills Inquiry. VAT exemption for colleges would increase revenue for colleges, including for staff pay. Whilst the FE and Skills Inquiry recommendations supported the scrapping of VAT in the FE sector, the UK government rejected the recommendation.
- 5.4 UCU has been invited to submit evidence to the statutory School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) in two consecutive years, which had led us to hope that the Review Body may be extended to the FE sector or a separate pay Review Body created for the FE sector. Indeed, the FE and Skills Inquiry recommendations supported the establishment of a statutory pay review body for the FE sector. However, the UK government rejected the recommendation.
- 5.5 Despite the government's rejection of some of the FE and Skills Inquiry recommendations that would benefit UCU members, UCU's lobbying in relation to FE funding has created some upward shifts in FE funding. The Post-16 Education White paper confirms that funding for 16-19 education will increase by £450 million in real terms between 2025-26 and 2026-27, with the extra funding coming from the Department for Education's budget set out in the 2025 Spending Review. This translates to a 3% increase in real terms spending per student between 2025-26 and 2026-27 (the Spending Review itself had implied that the increase for this period would be 1.8%). Despite the increase, funding levels remain below those of the early 2010s, with real terms funding per pupil around 4% lower in colleges (and 18% lower in school sixth forms).

6 Prison education

- 6.1 Through parliamentary submissions and work with sector organisations, UCU continues to highlight the importance of prison education. We have urged the government to stop the damaging funding cuts in prison education, including major reductions in staffing.
- 6.2 In early March, UCU will publish two research reports (*'The mental health and wellbeing of prison educators working in the UK'* and *'The career experiences of Black Prison Educators'*). Both reports add unique evidence to the research field and support our calls for greater prominence and support for prison educators.

7 Professional autonomy and academic freedom

- 7.1 Work to defend and strengthen professional autonomy and academic freedom remains a priority for the education committee.
- 7.2 In January, the education committee agreed 'Principles for use of Artificial Intelligence' that had been drawn up by UCU's future of work in education working group. UCU believes these high-level principles should be applied when considering implementing an AI system in educational settings including teaching, research, human resource and organisational processes. We are also working with other education unions – both in the UK and abroad - to ensure the voice of educators and their representatives is included in AI policy formation, system development, procurement and evaluation.
- 7.3 As part of our work in FE, UCU continues to call for the abolition of Ofsted inspection and is gathering evidence on the impact of the new Ofsted inspection framework to submit to the Department for Education, Ofsted and via the *Improving Education Together* and the Standing Group of Teacher Associations fora.
- 7.4 Government proposals for the development of a new 'third', vocational Level 3 pathway to sit alongside A Levels and T Levels present significant professional concerns for members. UCU continues to consult and advocate for the need for funding, appropriate timeframes and staff engagement to support any significant qualifications reform.
- 7.5 In terms of HE, UCU and Education International (EI) hosted an international conference on academic freedom in mid-October. The conference heard from union leaders in the UK, the United States, Norway, Türkiye, Kenya and the Philippines on the different ways in which state repression and interference, managerialism, and the marketisation of academia are undermining academic freedom and how higher education unions are responding to these challenges.
- 7.6 UCU is engaging with the Office for Students (OfS) around the implementation of the new free speech duties, and have challenged their actions in this area, for example, the unprecedented fine of £585,000 on the University of Sussex.
- 7.7 In September, UCU hosted a webinar entitled 'HE governance in a time of crisis'. The webinar – attended by over 100 participants - included contributions from academic experts and union activists. We are working with the Campaign for the Defence of British Universities (CDBU) in promoting their new Code of Ethical University Governance. The CDBU code chimes with UCU's own approach on governance and is a useful tool for branches to use in local campaigns.

8 Education - Cradle to Grave conference

- 8.1 This year's education conference will take place on 21 March on the theme of '*Fighting for an education for all*'. The conference will involve plenary sessions on the implications of the post-16 education and skills white paper and on defending academic freedom and professional autonomy, as well as breakout sessions on:
 - Education Under Attack: International Solidarity and Reconstruction

- Artificial Intelligence and EdTech: how to ensure the voice of education
- Green Skills and the Just Transition: Education for Climate Justice.

9 Action on Congress motions 2025

- 9.1 The work of the union in response to **motion 1** ('Education policy as the foundation of a progressive industrial strategy') is outlined above.
- 9.2 **Motion 2** called on UCU to fight for the future of arts education. UCU has recently joined as a coalition member of the Arts and Minds campaign, and we have agreed to promote their initiatives.
- 9.3 **Motion 3** called on UCU to defend foundation years and Access to HE provision. Resistance to course cuts, including foundation year level provision, continues at a regional and national level, including through promotion of the problem in national press, and at ministerial level.
- 9.4 **Motion 4** highlighted the importance of reorienting HE and FE financing for a just transition. In July 2025, UCU published a report on *The Green Gap - Identifying the deficit in skills funding needed to support the net-zero transition*, which identifies significant challenges across the skills system, particularly within the FE sector. UCU continues to be active in various initiatives around the Climate and Ecological Emergency, e.g. Climate and Nature Festival.

Section 5: Report of the equality committee (EQC)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Equality Committee meets twice a year; in November and February. This year the committee is chaired by Matilda Fitzmaurice (Lancaster University) and Suzi Toole (Bolton College) is the vice chair.
- 1.2 Equality is central to the union's work and the equality committee has continued its work to ensure that it is a prominent theme across all UCU activity.

2 UCU Action on Proposed Settlement Rule Reforms

- 2.1 UCU contributed to The UK Government's "Earned Settlement" consultation, which sought views on proposals to reform the route to Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). The key element under review is increasing the baseline qualifying period for most migrants from 5 to 10 years, alongside new suitability criteria such as higher English language levels, sustained lawful employment and National Insurance contributions, and evidence of community contribution – with possible longer waits for some groups and faster routes for others.
- 2.2 These proposals would, in many cases, apply to people already in the UK who have not yet secured ILR and represent the most significant overhaul of settlement rules in decades. In response, migrant rights groups and campaigns have been mobilising members to participate in the consultation, raise concerns with MPs, and highlight the potential impact on migrant workers, families and essential public service staff. Public debate is also ongoing in Parliament, including petitions and committee inquiries on the proposed ILR changes.

3 UCU Race Review

- 3.1 In September 2024, both UCU and Unite UCU (UCU staff union) committed to progress the work of the Race Review and ensure that any recommendations arising from the Review are acted on quickly.
- 3.2 This independent review has been initiated in response to widespread concerns about racism within UCU, affecting both Black members and Black staff. Originally prompted by concerns raised by UCU's Black Members' Standing Committee (BMSC) regarding institutional racism, the review was later expanded to include staff following formal disputes and complaints raised by the staff union, Unite UCU.
- 3.3 The review aims to ensure equity, justice, and adherence to UCU's commitment to equality, actively opposing harassment, prejudice, victimisation, and discrimination. It is jointly overseen by UCU Senior Management Team (SMT), BMSC, and Unite UCU, ensuring independence and timely delivery of recommendations.
- 3.4 The terms of reference were agreed and sent to the independent panel in January 2025; however, the panel have indicated that they are unwilling to proceed while UCU remains in dispute with Unite UCU.

3.5 While we await the review, a survey into the experiences of racism was developed by the Black Members Standing Committee. This was circulated to members in January 2026. Further an EDI action plan has been shared with staff.

4 Anti-far right campaigning

4.1 UCU members have strongly supported anti-far-right campaigning focusing on addressing the alarming rise in extremist violence that targets marginalised communities and thrives on systemic racism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism. Recognising the role of education in fostering inclusivity, the members have been advocating for significant public investment in education to promote critical thinking and counter divisive narratives.

4.2 UCU actively combats racism and fascism through union-led initiatives, offering unwavering support to affected communities. Most recently we have actively supported the Together Alliance: [UCU - Together Alliance](#).

4.3 UCU delivers training for branches on combating the far-right. The training focuses on how branches can mobilise to counter the influence of the far right. The training also focuses on the responsibility of the employer to ensure workers have a safe working environment with some focus on the role health and safety regulations can play in delivering outcomes for members.

4.4 UCU offers a monthly online drop-in session for branches and activists to share good practice and tips for organising against far-right activity in and around the workplace.

5 Supreme Court Ruling

5.1 In response to the UK Supreme Court's April 2025 ruling that the terms "sex" and "woman" in the Equality Act 2010 are to be interpreted as referring to biological sex, the University and College Union reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to trans rights and inclusion.

5.2 UCU publicly condemned the judgment, emphasising its potential to undermine the dignity, safety and legal protections of trans, non-binary and gender-diverse members.

5.3 We have also issued guidance to branches and formed a "trans taskforce" involving trans and non-binary staff and students to shape inclusive practice in our sectors.

6 SEND

6.1 UCU is working alongside the Department for Education and other stakeholders in the government's Social Partnership group, examining SEND provision, looking at the current pressures placed on schools and colleges and what is required to address the current challenges facing parents and learners. UCU has surveyed its members to better understand the issues facing members in post-16 education due to the huge pressures placed on schools and colleges to address the unprecedented levels of demand for SEND provision.

7 Disabled workers

- 7.1 We are reviewing our strategy for future 'Days of Action' for disability equality to focus on job losses and probation issues for disabled workers.
- 7.2 UCU continues to work with Disabled People's Organisations and the TUC to advance disability equality.
- 7.3 The General Secretary wrote to the Secretary of State for Social Security and Disability, Stephen Timms, condemning the Welfare and Benefits Bill and its impact on Disabled people. <https://x.com/ucu/status/1938229164760268956>

8 Equality Groups Conference 2025

- 8.1 Five equality conferences for Black, disabled, LGBT+, migrant and women members were held comprising of joint sessions, various workshops and guest speakers.
- 8.2 The annual conferences took place in November and December 2025 in Carlow street. The delegate feedback was positive but noted a preference for a format that brings all strands together.

9 CPD, webinars and events

- 9.1 UCU has also engaged members with its work on equality through a range of CPD courses we run on topics including:
 - Challenging sexual harassment
 - Menopause is a workplace issue
 - Decolonising and decarbonising
 - LGBT+ Language in Use
- 9.2 UCU also continued to deliver [equality courses](#) for reps.
- 9.3 The following webinars have been delivered this year:
 - Visa Holders and Redundancies 2026: The Migrant Members Committee held a webinar in response to the number of queries MMSC have received from migrant members who are facing redundancy and are understandably concerned about how this may impact their visa and visa fees that they have paid.
 - Holocaust Memorial Day 2026: In January Professor Eve Rosenhaft, University of Liverpool, Professor of Holocaust explored the genocide of Europe's Romani people.
 - The Health and Safety impacts of Workplace Racism. The webinar formed part of the annual Week of Action Against Workplace Racism 2026.
 - The threats to Black Studies and anti-colonial studies. A hybrid event looking at the background to attempts to cut back on Black and anti-colonial studies in tertiary education.
- 9.4 UCU has expanded the current provision of the very popular 'Neurodiversity at Work' programme, to provide reps with the tools to address the barriers and

challenges facing neurodivergent workers, as well as raising awareness and organising. In addition, we have developed a new programme looking at invisible disabilities and impairments. The pilot is expected to be available in Spring with the roll out of the programme in Autumn 2026.

- 9.5 We have developed a webinar on the Social Model of Disability, developed with and by Disabled members. The webinar will be delivered in the Spring/Summer.

10 TUC Equality conferences and ETUCE

- 10.1 UCU once again sent delegations to each of the TUC equality conferences, discussing motions and engaging in activity for Black, disabled, LGBT+ and women members across the movement.
- 10.2 UCU will also be represented by the Head of Equality and Policy at the annual ETUCE equality meeting in Bucharest in March 2026.

11 Resources for branches

- 11.1 We have produced several new and updated written resources and campaigning materials for members on equality issues, including:
- An updated "Challenging sexual harassment" guidance and model policy
 - New guidance on non-visible disabilities

12 The year ahead

- 12.1 The Equality Committee will continue to support the integration of equality into UCU's industrial, organising and recruitment work. This includes strengthening equality impact considerations in national campaigns, supporting branches to use equality legislation and collective bargaining to improve workplace conditions, and ensuring equality representatives are fully supported in their roles.
- 12.2 Priority areas for the coming year include addressing structural racism highlighted through the Race Review process, improving support for migrant members facing immigration insecurity, advancing disability equality in the context of job insecurity and workload pressures, and expanding training and resources for branches on trans-inclusive practice.
- 12.3 The committee will also work to improve member engagement with equality structures and ensure equality conferences, committees and networks remain accessible, representative and connected to the union's wider work.

13 Update on motions

13.1 Motion 40: Resisting attacks on equality

Since Congress agreed to continue building UCU's work resisting attacks on equality, this commitment has been embedded in national equality and campaigning strategies. UCU has spoken out against restrictions on protest and academic freedom, supported branches defending members facing intimidation, and continued casework and legal support linked to activism. Website accessibility issues raised by committees are being taken forward by the new Head of Comms and Campaigns.

- 13.2 **Motion 41: Challenging the far right, defending and promoting equality**
UCU continues to campaign alongside the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) on protecting and enforcing buffer zones, with progress made but further work needed for nationwide provision. We also affiliate to Abortion Rights and are supporting their current priority campaign for full decriminalisation of abortion.
- 13.3 **Motion 42: Opposing racist and far right activity**
Since Congress, UCU has continued active opposition to racism and the far right through national campaigning and branch initiatives. We remain affiliated to Stand Up To Racism and work with trade unions and community partners, promoting anti-racist demonstrations and organising teach-ins. Public statements have challenged racist immigration policies and the hostile environment, while branches are supported to counter far-right activity locally.
- 13.4 **Motion 43: Unite against the far right and racism, and Reform UK**
UCU continues to publicly oppose Reform UK and far-right organising, highlighting the impact of racist and anti-migrant policies on staff and students. Branches have supported counter-protests and anti-racist demonstrations, and anti-racist materials have been circulated to members. UCU is also part of the Together Alliance mobilising against the far right.
- 13.5 **Motion 44: UCU's Commitment to Trans Rights**
UCU issued a statement reaffirming its commitment to trans rights following the Supreme Court ruling and has circulated updated guidance to branches. Branches are working with employers to uphold trans-inclusive policies and access to facilities. UCU continues to promote and support protests and campaigns defending trans and non-binary people.
- 13.6 **Motion 45: The attacks against trans rights**
A joint working group of trans and non-binary members and student representatives has been established to develop sector guidance in light of the Supreme Court ruling. Specialist legal advice has been commissioned, and a draft policy framework is in development for consultation before being widely disseminated to institutions and students' unions.
- 13.7 **Motion 46: Support for those defending LGBT+ rights**
UCU has supported events highlighting international LGBT+ advocacy and good practice. Work is underway to progress the formal inclusion of "Q" in UCU rules and procedures. A CPD series for members leading LGBTQ+ advocacy is in development, including plans for in-person elements.
- 13.8 **Motion 47: UCU is for They/Them, not Trump**
UCU has provided guidance and support to LGBT+ migrant members navigating international policy changes. The union has communicated concerns regarding the Cass Report and advocated for trans-inclusive healthcare and education policies. Branches continue to be supported in defending and strengthening trans-inclusive institutional policies.
- 13.9 **Motion 48: Expanding and strengthening shared parental leave**
UCU is campaigning with Maternity Action through the Alliance for Maternity

Rights to replace the current Shared Parental Leave system with a simpler, better-paid model. Following sustained lobbying, the government has announced a review. UCU has signed a joint open letter and is working with the TUC to press for reform.

13.10 **Motion 49: Medical misogyny**

We will liaise with UCU Cymru to clarify the scope of the proposed UK-wide campaign and identify an appropriate opportunity within UCU's campaign programme to take this work forward.

13.11 **Motion 50: Supporting the End Not Defend campaign**

UCU has contacted the End Not Defend campaign to explore affiliation. An anti-sexual harassment campaign is planned for early 2026, and we will seek to align this work with End Not Defend's proposals on reporting systems and stronger enforcement.

Section 6: Report of the recruitment, organising and campaigning committee (ROCC)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 ROCC has met twice this year, in October and February, chaired by Mark Pendleton (University of Sheffield). Regine Pilling (Capital City College Group – Westminster Kingsway College) was elected vice chair. The committee's remit is matters concerning the recruitment and organising activities of the union, and campaigning, subject to the need to work in cooperation with the other committees on campaigns appropriate to their field.
- 1.2 In December 2025, UCU welcomed Helen Watson as its head of campaigns and communications. Helen takes the role of secretary to the committee.
- 1.3 The committee receives reports and actively discusses the union's recruitment, campaigning and organising activities nationally, regionally, and locally, engagement with members, and engagement with other unions and external organisations as appropriate on campaign matters. The importance of campaigning for the secure and long-term funding of HE, FE, adult and prison education, against attacks on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and other migrants, against the increasing casualisation of work across all sectors, and on climate issues, was recognised in last year's enabling motion on ROCC's work.

2 Industrial campaigns

- 2.1 In October, the New Deal for FE campaign was developing in phases towards the opening on 13 October of an industrial action ballot in over 60 FE employers. Campaign videos, social media and Thrutext were all employed to get the vote out. This was the successful development of a campaign over time, launched in June 2024, covering the submission of the joint union claim in March 2025 and responding to FESC decisions in May 2025 to bring these branches to the point of balloting.
- 2.2 At the same time, the committee received a report about the major campaign to support the aggregated industrial action ballot over pay in HE which opened on 20 October, We Are The University. The ballot campaign launched over a month before the ballot opened, including the first use of a dedicated WhatsApp channel by the union. Thrutext messaging, multiple social media channels and member communications were used to get the message out.
- 2.3 Running these two ballot campaigns together dominated the union's campaign work in the autumn. Whilst the aggregated HE ballot did not reach the threshold required, in FE, ballots were returned over the threshold in 35 institutions, which in turn led to improved offers in a number of colleges. In January, 17 colleges remained in dispute and took strike action with considerable national and regional press coverage secured. Importantly, press releases were also issued when improved offers were secured.
- 2.4 Campaigns have been supported in both HE and FE in respect of redundancies and closures. Whilst there are many examples, at the time of writing the closure

of the University of Essex's Southend campus looms large. Seven days of strike action were taken from 12 February, with coverage of the closure in the Guardian and a short film made by UCU spread across social media. A list of job cuts and redundancy plans and local campaigns is kept up to date at www.ucu.org.uk/your-support-is-needed

- 2.5 The vast majority of branches entering in local industrial action ballots have met the 50 per cent turn out threshold, supported with GTVO (Get the Vote Out) plans, including ThruText messaging, phone-banking and campaign materials. Support has continued to those branches where action is taking place.

3 Other campaigns, including political influencing and work with other organisations

- 3.1 The union's political work crosses a number of sub-committee remits as UCU works to influence and represent, as well as campaign, politically. Political activities have included the formation of the UCU parliamentary group, co-chaired by Rachael Maskell and Christine Blower as co-chairs, alongside Rupa Huq, Apsana Begum and Mary Kelly Foy as vice-chairs. There are plans in train to bring a fringe meeting to Congress on the work of this group.
- 3.2 UCU has been prominent in the Wages not Weapons campaign, launched by 10 trade unions ahead of UCU's successful motion to TUC Congress 2025 overturning the TUC policy of increased defence spending.
- 3.3 UCU is part of the Together Alliance, a coalition of over 120 groups including trade unions, NGOs and civil organisations, alongside celebrity endorsements, campaigning against the Far Right. The alliance is working towards a national demonstration on 28 March in central London which will include a UCU bloc.
- 3.4 Work is underway on an anti-sexual harassment campaign which will include materials for branches.
- 3.5 Looking across the union's range of campaign themes, in February the committee received an over-arching campaigns plan to bring together themes that affect all sectors of the union. The campaigns strategy is being presented to lay member committees in the organisation for their input and vacancies filled in the team so it can be rolled out to increase the union's reach and influence.
- 3.6 The committee's discussions have also noted the potential for more use of digital campaign resources. The union is looking at a system called Movement, that would allow national communication with members through email, text and WhatsApp, phonebanking, electronic surveys and ballots, actions and organiser dashboards among other things. This has the potential to revolutionise the way the union communicates, campaigns and organises and will have various levels of use, from campaign and comms super-users right down to branch and rep level. The new system will support good organising in the workplace and enhance our reps' ability to recruit and retain members.

4 Recruitment

- 4.1 The committee receives regular membership figures, including information about leavers, reasons for leaving, and the contract types of those leaving. There is a considerable amount of movement in the sector and in membership, which means that strong recruitment is required in order to maintain membership levels, and this must be further developed in order to achieve the aim of growing membership further.
- 4.2 All the union's campaigning, including campaigns to protect jobs, presents opportunities to incorporate recruitment, and this is reflected in the campaign plan.
- 4.3 A range of recruitment materials remains available to branches via the website.

5 Engaging and organising

- 5.1 The committee receives reports on the specific organising work carried out with prison members. Cuts in prison education have reduced the number of activists in prison branches and much work is being done to re-build. The Unlocking Futures campaign remains live, pushing for a comprehensive review of the delivery of prison education and a recognition of the professional – and essential - role that prison education staff have.
- 5.2 In adult education, members took part in a parliamentary in lobby in October as part of the Save Adult Education campaign.
- 5.3 The union continues to organise training for members, focussing on the skills that UCU's reps need. As well as the key initial training for reps, specific courses continue to be offered in health and safety, casework, effective negotiating and bargaining, and challenging redundancies, amongst others. UCU's CPD programme continues to be popular, with a large range of short courses on offer, and there are openings for non-members to enrol on these courses where this is being used for recruitment purposes.

6 Motions allocated to the recruitment organising and campaigning committee

- 6.1 **Motion 7**, *Recruitment, organising and campaigning*, was an over-arching motion of themes under the committee's remit, as described in paragraph 1.2 above and reflected throughout the report, including campaigns to support members' jobs, campaigning against the far right and work with other organisations. Climate campaigning is described against motions 10-13 below.
- 6.2 **Motion 8**, *Defend universal pension and welfare rights*, called for a campaign in collaboration with other unions to oppose the further erosion of universal welfare rights. The committee noted the letter sent to government in respect of proposed changes to disability benefits. UCU remains affiliated to an active in the NPC (National Pensioners Convention) which campaigns on pensions and some other welfare issues.
- 6.3 **Motion 9**, *Urgent action on the crisis in social care*, called for campaigning alongside other organisations for new funding for social care as a result

of reduced defence spending, including funding to local authorities for in-house care, and for the prioritising of 'people not profits'. UCU submitted a successful TUC motion which called on the TUC Congress to 'reaffirm that our movement's priority is welfare and wages, not weapons and war'. UCU is affiliated to Health Campaigns Together which include campaigns on social care, and remains affiliated to and active in the NPC (National Pensioners Convention) which campaigns on behalf of older people including on health and social care.

- 6.4 **Motions 10** *Campaigning on Green Issues*, **11** *Fuel poverty, retrofitting, and energy justice*, **12** *Union action on climate change*, and **13** *Trade union year of climate action*, called for a wide range of actions relating to the union's campaigning on the climate emergency. This includes working with TUC, ETUCE and EI on joint union events in the year Trade Union Year of Climate Change, which as a campaign has proposed actions around COP30.
- 6.5 UCU is positioned as a leading union contributor to the Year of Climate Action designated by the TUC. Activities include supporting grassroots members to organise climate action, building campaigns, and working with other unions to mainstream climate issues as core trade union concerns, from workplaces to wider society.
- 6.6 UCU held an annual Climate and Ecological Emergency meeting (Dec 2025) for members and reps to share insights, review progress, develop local organising ideas, and inform strategic priorities for the union's climate agenda.
- 6.7 UCU's *Green Gap* report highlights a critical shortage of training capacity in construction, energy systems and related technical fields essential for a net-zero transition, which points directly to the need for scaling up retrofitting skills training and supporting education that feeds into that workforce. UCU has formally signed up to the *Energy For All* manifesto. UCU moved to a renewables-only supplier for its own energy in spring 2025.
- 6.8 UCU is actively supporting the joint union Climate and Nature Education Festival on 14 March, exploring the role of educators for a just transition.
- 6.9 **Motion 14**, *Higher environmental risks demand stronger roles for environmental reps*, called for a stronger role for UCU in negotiations around employers' climate action plans; encouraging branches to have environmental officers, and campaign for facilities time and learning agreements for these roles. UCU has a number of CPD courses related to climate including *Embedding Climate Education in the Curriculum* and *Running Climate Learning Events*
- 6.10 UCU encourages branches to appoint environmental or Green reps to negotiate locally for sustainability, embed climate priorities in workplace practice, and build Green New Deal-focused bargaining.
- 6.11 UCU has participated with other unions and the Association of Colleges on a *Just Transition Framework* to help FE sectors deliver net-zero and sustainability outcomes without job losses, with accompanying resources and training to support local branches.

- 6.12 Collaboration with organisations like SOS-UK broadens access to tools and resources for climate organising and climate education.
- 6.13 **Motion 15**, *Training UCU representatives to support members struggling with addiction*, called for research on good practice to support this, the negotiation of supportive policies with employers, and the development of training and guidance for reps supporting members struggling with addiction.
- 6.14 **Motion 16**, *Fair facility time agreements for national anti-casualisation work*, and 17 *Challenging strike breaking tactics*, were remitted, having not been taken for debate. Fair facility time for all groups of staff remains an important issue for UCU. In respect of the latter motion, solidarity with the Birmingham bin strikers was demonstrated at the Congress meeting.