

IN THIS FIFTH ISSUE:-

- ❖ **JNCHES Review – still unresolved**
 - ❖ **Universities Superannuation Scheme – Threat of 65 retirement age looms**
 - ❖ **UCU's position on the Boycott motion (against Israel)**
 - ❖ **Cardiff job threats**
 - ❖ **Oppose privatisation in HE – Manchester Seminar steps up the fight**
 - ❖ **London Met members continue the struggle**
 - ❖ **New HE in FE Network to be launched with DAN**
 - ❖ **UCU Publishes initial findings on new HE Pay & grading structures**
 - ❖ **Grading QAA access to HE diplomas consultation**
 - ❖ **An update on events at Harlow College**
 - ❖ **Health and Safety Work of UCU**
 - ❖ **Open University OpenLearn Competition**
 - ❖ **Staff Moves**
 - ❖ **Apology to University of Gloucestershire**
-

JNCHES REVIEW- STILL UNRESOLVED

As the deadline of 12 July approaches for the report of the Review of the JNCHES (Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff) machinery, it seems that we are still a long way off agreeing new arrangements. The meeting of the Review group on 13 June did not resolve the question of a one of two table structure for negotiating pay but the employers re-iterated their threat that if they did not achieve a single table they may not continue with national pay bargaining.

Other key issues also emerged during the talks. A disputes resolution procedure was proposed and supported by the employers and the non-academic unions. However the employers' version of such a procedure included a clause stating that unions would not commence an industrial action ballot before the procedure had been exhausted. UCU argued strongly that this was an unreasonable delay and that only the start of action should be deferred until the procedure was exhausted.

A further point concerned an annual programme of JNCHES meetings. The unions had proposed that an annual calendar of meetings should be agreed with the employers each year. The employers however are looking for a calendar fixed for all years to include meetings in March and May to "*facilitate effective consideration of pay claims submitted before the March meetings*". It doesn't take an experienced UCU activist to see that taken together this would mean that if talks breakdown in any year and if it were necessary to take

industrial action we would not be able to commence that action until as late as June. Such a hobbling of UCU's ability to negotiate and pursue effective pay campaigns is not acceptable. **So as we approach 12 July these issues all remain unresolved.**

UNIVERSITIES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME- THREAT OF 65 RETIREMENT AGE STILL LOOMS

As one team of UCU negotiators meet the employers at JNCHES on 12 July, another will meeting employers' representatives at the USS Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

USS has proposed that the normal retirement age (NRA) under the scheme should be increased from the current de facto 60 years to 65 for new entrants. It should be noted that recent changes to the Teachers Pension Scheme also resulted in an increase of the NRA to 65 for new entrants. However this was offset by improved benefits such as increasing the accrual rate from eightieths to sixtieths. There was also a small increase in contribution rates. USS employers have put forward proposals for a "flexible retirement" scheme, however the terms they have suggested do not represent a very attractive alternative and UCU negotiators believe that few would see any benefit in the scheme as it is proposed. Universities UK canvassed the support of their institutions for this scheme as an alternative to an increase in contribution rates. UCU believe that a wider range of options should be explored. At a working party meeting on 21 June employers representatives seemed determined to force through their proposals. However this will need to be agreed with UCU at the Joint Negotiating Committee. At present the package is a net reduction of benefits and offers nothing for USS members.

UCU's POSITION ON THE BOYCOTT MOTION (against Israeli academic institutions)

At its meeting on 8 June the national executive committee (NEC) remitted the resolution which deals with a range of issues, including circulation and discussion of the Palestinian call for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions to the Strategy and Finance Committee (SFC). The SFC met on 29 June. The union has confirmed that it is now considering the necessary steps for members to be able to debate the arguments for and against an academic boycott of Israeli universities. This does not mean an academic boycott is in place, it means that individual branches will debate the pros and cons of boycott. Following the outcome of that debate, the union's democratic structures will be used to ensure any decision on boycott is one that best represents the views of the majority of members. With the summer break fast approaching it seems likely that the consultations will begin next term. The union will release further information when it has it. UCU general secretary, Sally Hunt, will also be writing directly to members via email about the plans for its implementation and inviting their views as well as making sure members know what the union was doing about this important issue. Read all about this on <http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/ucu31.html>

CARDIFF JOBS THREAT - UCU reacted angrily to Cardiff University which is to make 22 academic and other staff redundant. The university has begun formal redundancy procedures in response to funding shortfalls affecting specific activities within its Business School, its School of Nursing & Midwifery, and its School of Postgraduate Medical & Dental Education. In rejecting the proposed compulsory redundancies, Cardiff UCU president Mark Aston said: "An institution that employs 5,500 staff and has an annual turnover of £315 million should be able to

redeploy staff. The higher education sector is expanding, not contracting, and the university should look to voluntary redundancies and re-skilling instead of rushing straight into compulsory redundancies." Further reading from:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2609> and

http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0200wales/tm_headline=university-jobs-to-go&method=full&objectid=19257198&siteid=50082-name_page.html also South Wales Echo.

OPPOSE PRIVATISATION IN HE – MANCHESTER SEMINAR STEPS UP THE FIGHT

The campaign against the privatisation of key university functions in higher education continues as more branches and local associations sign up for the anti-privatisation seminar. The latest seminar which took place on 18 May was attended by representatives from Manchester, Liverpool, Liverpool Hope, Lancaster, Salford, Queen's Belfast and Leeds. This specially designed seminar aims to brief local activists on national developments, gather and share information on local situations. It also aims to provide practical assistance to branches and local associations in developing campaigning, organising and negotiating skills to oppose the wave of private companies who are interested in establishing private colleges and PFI-style joint ventures at UK universities. Feedback from the seminars held in London, Glasgow and Manchester has been extremely positive. Representatives at the Manchester meeting agreed a series of action points to take back to their branches and local associations and resolved to reconvene at a later date.

Get involved: If you want to book a seminar for your local association or branch, contact Justine Stephens, Head of Campaigns, at jstephens@ucu.org.uk.

The national HE Campaigns Team has also developed an anti-privatisation campaign pack, which you can download from the web page at this link:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2444>

LONDON MET MEMBERS CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE: A resolution in support of colleagues at London Met was passed by acclaim at UCU Congress. The resolution calls on management to recognise UCU for collective bargaining, consultation and representation purposes. Unless progress is seen by September, the resolution further calls on the NEC to organize a national campaign in support of members at London Met. Management claim that the recognition previously held by NATFHE ended on the date of the unions' merger, and it required UCU to seek recognition afresh. This is a line unique to London Met. UCU's legal

advice is clear. UCU has inherited all agreements including local recognition agreements that erected with NATFHE and AUT.

Further reports will be provided, but it looks like being a continuing rocky period for industrial relations at London Met, proposals for redundancies have also been agreed by University governors and the university is refusing to consult with UCU about ways of avoiding compulsory job losses and no progress being made at all on the Framework Agreement. UCU has declared itself to be in dispute with the University on a list of terms and conditions issues which management is currently refusing to discuss.

Now Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn has put down an Early Day Motion (EDM) in the House of Commons condemning London Met's management. You can see whether your MP has signed here: <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=33613&SESSION=885>.

You can find out how to contact your MP at this site: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/>

UCU members can also support their colleagues at London Met by signing the online petition here: <http://www.petitiononline.com/lmufight/>



NEW HE IN FE NETWORK TO BE LAUNCHED WITH DAN:

With DAN you can: make a difference - strengthen your union - learn from others - raise UCU's profile:

This is the message the UCU campaigns team took to the inaugural UCU Congress in Bournemouth this

year. DAN is UCU's developing activists network, set up to encourage new members to get active in their workplace and it's growing fast across FE and HE. The DAN stall was inundated with delegates making enquiries about organising strategies and collecting their free campaigning materials. The new DAN mouse mats, mugs and T-Shirts proved particularly popular with delegates keen to raise awareness of UCU at work. Thursday evening at UCU Congress saw around 200 delegates attend the DAN fringe, over 90 of whom signed up for information on UCU training courses.

Do you deliver HE in the FE sector?

With the growth of the new foundation degrees, more HE than ever will be delivered in the FE sector. UCU's Developing Activist Network (DAN) is establishing a new partnership email

network for members who deliver higher education in the FE sector where members can discuss the issues that concern them. Also under development is an area of the web within DAN where members will be able to access key resources. If you are

interested in joining this network, contact UCU's new policy officer for cross-sectoral issues, **John Offord**. John can be

contacted at jofford@ucu.org.uk. Please copy your message to Justine Stephens at jstephens@ucu.org.uk

NEW Campaigning and organising materials available now! We have some new campaigns materials available to order including T-Shirts, mouse mats, bags and mugs (in addition to the existing pads, pens, lanyards, badges, recruitment form holders and notice board stickers). If you are running stalls, a recruitment drive or are involved in a local campaign and would like some materials please email jstephens@ucu.org.uk specifying quantities needed. Many thanks to all of you who filled in a pink request form at Congress- your materials have been dispatched and should be with you soon.

UCU PUBLISHES INITIAL FINDINGS ON NEW HE PAY AND GRADING STRUCTURES

UCU has published some initial research on the new higher education pay and grading structures negotiated under the Pay Framework and the Memorandum of Understanding. The initial study so far analyses agreements signed at 27 universities in detail. The document provides tables that show how institutions have established grades boundaries on the pay spine.

It also provides an early snapshot, based on available data, of how the pay framework has affected the gender pay gap. The document also contains detailed breakdowns of the grading structures and other conditions agreed at each university.

Look out for more analysis of other agreements in the near future.

UPDATE ON EVENTS AT HARLOW COLLEGE: Staff who just last Thursday reluctantly accepted redundancy rather than compromise their professional integrity are extremely distressed by this latest managerial insult to their professionalism (this follows from strike action against draconian management threats). UCU members at Harlow have today written to Bill Rammell MP (as unanimously agreed at their branch meeting on June 26) calling on him to initiate a public enquiry to investigate the alleged maladministration and misappropriation of public money at Harlow College.

To access this document, click here: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/fwkcpendium>

GRADING QAA ACCESS TO HE DIPLOMAS CONSULTATION: FE AND HE MEMBERS VIEWS NEEDED: UCU is already working critically on current proposals for far-reaching A Level reform, so is equally keen to bring together FE members teaching on Access to HE Courses with HE admissions staff members to collectively consider the current QAA consultation (response date 2 July) on grading its kite-marked Access to HE courses, which could both increase and substantiate progression opportunities for Access to HE students and support receiving HEI's fair admissions policies and procedures. To read more go to: www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation
Email jofford@ucu.org.uk

UCU and NUS have issued the following joint statement in response to these latest developments:

Staff and students believe that the restructuring and resulting job losses at Harlow will undermine quality, reduce the time staff have to spend with students and lead to a fall in the college's reputation. We believe that the jobs now on offer at Harlow are designed to undercut the terms and conditions of current staff. Our advice to those who are considering a job at Harlow is to think again unless they want lower pay, less holiday, longer hours and a management who prefer confrontation to negotiation.

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY WORK OF

UCU has been steadily growing. The health and safety web page can be found at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2132> and is now substantially revised.

A reminder that the UCU health and safety advice line (for branch officers and safety reps only) is now staffed two days a week. The Health and Safety Advice Line number is 0161 636 7558 and email is healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk

OPEN UNIVERSITY OPENLEARN

COMPETITION - The Open University's OpenLearn project is setting a challenge to educators worldwide to reuse and remix their study materials. The OpenLearn website - at www.open.ac.uk/openlearn - was launched last year and gives free access to thousands of hours of materials from OU courses. The competition aims to create a showcase for innovative approaches in online education. Everyone

entering has the chance to win some smart technology. More details can be found at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/get-started-learner/get-started-educator/competition.php>

STAFF MOVEMENTS

Nick Varney, formerly HE Regional Support Official in Birmingham is now based in the FE Regional Office in the West Midlands. *Julie Cooper* has taken on Nick's role as RSO in the Birmingham office (as mentioned in our last HE News).

Lydia Richards is now back at UCU as Assistant General Secretary for the Anglia & South East England following maternity leave. Welcome back, Lydia.

HE News has just bid *Jim McCracken* farewell. Jim who was formerly Regional Official, Exeter left UCU at the end of June to return to Northern Ireland. Best wishes, Jim.

APOLOGY In our last issue of HE News (article on **Trade Union Activities**), we stated that the University of Gloucestershire did not make precise provision for trade union activities. Gloucestershire UCU have since pointed out: *'We receive currently some 1.7 fte in paid hours for the branch based on our membership and costed at SL top of scale, that is some £80k of support from the University. This is some 936 class contact hours based on the post 92 national contract of employment.'*