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**ONE WEEK LEFT TO VOTE. BALLOT CLOSSES 5PM ON
WEDNESDAY 27 FEBRUARY.**

USE YOUR VOTE!

UCU TELLS EMPLOYERS TO STOP INTERFERING IN HE BALLOT

UCU has attacked the employers' latest attempt to interfere in the democratic processes of the union as members vote on the future of pay negotiations in higher education. The union said that it is for members to decide our policy, not university bosses. A Times Higher Education article by a Human Resources Manager at Kingston university describes UCU members as a "vocal, militant minority who cannot see the future of modern employee relations" and goes on to criticise the union for seeking members' views. UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said the article showed how little understanding exists among managers about trade union democracy.

STRIKE ACTION AGAINST KEELE

REDUNDANCIES - As HE NEWS goes to press, members of the University and College Union (UCU) at Keele University

are planned to take on strike action after they voted overwhelmingly in favour of this action and 'action short of a strike' in their dispute with the University over job cuts.

Staff say they have been forced to take the drastic action following university proposals which have left more than half (38) of the 67 academic staff in the world-renowned school facing redundancy.

The action short of a strike is designed to cause the maximum impact on the university without disrupting the education of students.

UCU general secretary, Sally Hunt, said: 'Keele University can rest assured that if it does decide to try and push through these hurried and nonsensical redundancy plans that we will fight them all the way. Trying to rush them through at a quiet time of the year and outside its own internal structures is cowardly and offensive. Following the national pay dispute, we are aware of poor short-term decision making by Keele University's management, but we still find it incredible.'

The Local Association has held several, really well supported lobbies and rallies locally since January. The local press have also been giving great coverage. However

despite the best attempts by members, students and hundreds who have emailed the Vice Chancellor, the University is still hell bent on proceeding. The University Council will consider the situation again in April.

The Local Association are asking for your support for a National Rally on 3rd April 2008 to lobby the Council. The rally will start at 10.30am.

It is imperative the University understand the anger by members and Students at Keele.

The Local Association are asking that every UCU branch/local association send whoever they can. They understand it is a week day but please try and give your support.

Due to Keele's location we are having to try and make arrangements now. Can you let Julie Cooper (jcooper@ucu.org.uk) know if your branch/local association can attend and if so whether you need a parking space, preferably one for a coach.

THE REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY into the government decision to stop £100m worth of **funding for ELQ students** was awaited as this newsletter went to press. Of 478 submissions to the inquiry only 7 were in support of the government's decision, committee chair, Phil Willis MP, told the committee as UCU gave oral evidence. Many UCU branches have been spelling out the consequences for re-skilling, lifelong learning and part-time opportunities of this ill-judged decision, announced without any prior consultation last September. The government's rationale is that first time students should have priority and that money will be redirected there and to encourage more employer funding of HE. Apart from the fact that there is little evidence of students and ELQ students being in competition, the presence of ELQ students actually supports many courses for first time students. Charging many ELQ students the same fees as overseas students will destroy courses and jeopardise jobs.

UCU has been working alongside institutions, the NUS, and other HE organisations to take our concerns to the widest possible audience. We had a well attended briefing in the House of

Commons. An early day motion opposing the move attracted a large number of MP signatures. There have been debates and parliamentary questions in both Commons and Lords. However the government is sticking to its guns so far and some time in March the results of the funding council's consultation on implementation of the measure and proposals for exemptions will be published.

If you haven't yet sent in information on the impact in your institution to rcopeland@ucu.org.uk, or written to your MP, please do so without delay. UCU calls on the Government to withdraw the policy and defer the issue of ELQ funding to the 2009 Fees Commission. Keep up to date with the campaign on the web site at

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2947>

Paula Lanning, head of communications & public affairs

Say no more!

'Something of a leap in the dark, then – and one that is being funded by switching money away from a well tried system that has delivered economic as well as social benefits.'

CBI Director-General Richard Lambert on the ELQ policy

ACADEMIC FREEDOM – WHAT DO YOU THINK?

UCU is seeking the views of members on '**academic freedom**' and freedom of expression in higher and further education. The union has published a discussion document following two motions on the issue at the 2007 Congress. It outlines some of the key threats to academic freedom in higher education, the main legislative protections in the UK and the importance of an international framework. The paper also poses a number of questions and issues on which we would welcome comment. You can read the paper online at:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/ucu60.html> Responses should be sent by **Friday 14 March** to rcopeland@ucu.org.uk

HOURLY PAID STAFF ARE OFTEN NOT CONSIDERED WHEN INSTITUTIONS ARE PUTTING TOGETHER THEIR POLICIES, INCLUDING THOSE ON HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

- A year ago the OU branch of UCU started making representations to our management asking for recognition that part-time Associate Lecturers, (most of whom now mark students' assignments by computer, respond to emails, and carry out administrative tasks by computer), should be recognised as users of DSE (Display Screen Equipment) for Health and Safety purposes.

We have now been told that Associate Lecturers will be recognised as users of DSE, and (amongst other things) should get free eye tests as a consequence of this. We are also going to have an Associate Lecturer as a UCU branch Health and Safety rep attending the OU's Health and Safety Committee for the first time this year.

If anyone has to make out a case that part-time or hourly paid staff should be recognised as users of DSE, you may find that the document at <http://www.lhk.me.uk/DSE.doc> is useful, as well as the Health and Safety Executive publication it refers to. Health and Safety reps have a right to paid time for attending Health and Safety Committee meetings, and for carrying out other responsibilities. If you are part-time and become a health and safety rep, you should be paid for the same amount of time as full-time colleagues on similar work for attending Health and Safety Committee meetings and for certain other duties. If your salary varies according to the number of hours you work, you should be paid your normal / average hourly rate.

AGE DIVERSITY PROJECT

Oxford Brookes University is leading a project funded by HEFCE under its Leadership, Governance and Management Programme to support the HE Sector with the implementation of the Age Regulations and to develop good practice in managing Age Diversity. UCU is a member of the steering group of the project.

The project intends to develop a good practice guide and is inviting universities to share their experiences, policies and practices in managing age diversity. They are particularly interested to hear about examples of good practice in the following areas:

- Recruitment
- Progression
- Positive action to attract and retain younger staff
- Staff development
- Older staff career management
- Performance management
- Flexible retirement
- Advice on planning retirement
- Retirement policies (including policies and procedures on the 'right to request' to work beyond retirement age)

If you think your institution could contribute to the development of the good practice guide, please speak in the first instance to your HR Department who should contact Project Leader Simonetta Manfredi Co-Director, Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice, e-mail smanfredi@brookes.ac.uk , tel. 01865 483843 by **Friday March 14th 2008** .

ACADEMIC-RELATED STAFF: HAVE YOUR SAY

Have you visited the discussion forum for academic related staff on the UCU web site at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3022> ?

There are currently three topics for discussion:

- ❖ The UCU manifesto for academic related staff
- ❖ Out of hours working
- ❖ The status of academic related staff

UCU's AR committee is very interested to hear your views so do please contribute to the forum.

ROLE PROFILES FOR ACADEMIC RELATED STAFF

UCU has set up a library of academic related role profiles on the web site at

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3039>

All the profiles have been provided by local associations and have been agreed as part of local agreements to implement the Framework Agreement.

We hope this will be a useful resource for local negotiators. If you have a set of agreed role profiles for academic related staff which are not yet available on the web site, please send them to Rachel Curley rcurley@ucu.org.uk

HELP UCU TELL THE STORY OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE INSPIRED YOU IN FURTHER OR HIGHER EDUCATION

Nominations are now coming in for the **2008 Life Changers Awards**. Don't miss your chance to nominate someone you know. Everyone has a story that encapsulates the power of education, about the people who inspired and continue to inspire them. Everyone comes into contact with people who exemplify the life transforming effect of education.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Nominate someone you know for a Life Changers Award today.

- Is there a Lecturer whose teaching or commitment inspire you?
- Perhaps there is a researcher whose work embodies the best in challenging orthodoxies and breaking down the barriers to knowledge

- It could be someone whose commitment to widening participation and improving access demonstrates the ability of education to transform the lives of the 'hard to reach'.

- Or it could be the support staff whose professionalism help to create an environment in which learning can happen. If there's someone who you think embodies the power of education and who you'd like to nominate, find out more and nominate by clicking here:

www.ucu.org.uk/lifechangers

LATEST STUDENT ENROLMENT NUMBERS

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) statistics showed a fall in the number of first-year undergraduate enrolments in England and Northern Ireland universities in 2006-2007, coinciding with the introduction of variable tuition fees - opposed by UCU - of up to £3,000 a year payable by full-time undergraduates.

By contrast, full-time first year enrolments increased in 2006-07 at Scottish institutions, where there are no tuition fees, and at Welsh institutions, where top-up fees were not introduced until 2007-8.

The statistics revealed that between 2005-6 and 2006-7:

- In England the number of full-time first year enrolments decreased by 2%;
- In Northern Ireland the number of full-time first year enrolments decreased by 9%
- In Wales the number of full-time first year enrolments increased by 4%
- In Scotland the number of full-time first year enrolments increased by 3%

The fall in student numbers is unlikely to continue. After decreasing in 2006, acceptances for students on full-time undergraduate courses in UK higher education rose in 2007. Latest figures for full-time undergraduate courses in the UK indicate an 8.9% rise in applications for entry in autumn 2008 compared with the previous year.

ON SATURDAY 15 MARCH 2008, NEWCASTLE & GATESHEAD T.U.C. CENTRE AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT WILL BE HAVING A DOUBLE CELEBRATION. It will be 30 years since Newcastle TUC launched the Centre Against Unemployment and will have been housed in a building bought by Newcastle TUC for 22 years.

Newcastle & Gateshead TUC Centre Against Unemployment

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS 1978 – 2008

With launch of appeal for building funds

11:45am Saturday 15 March, Royal Station Hotel Neville Street

Newcastle upon Tyne

Refreshments followed by Rally 12 noon

Guest Speakers: - Mark Serwotka PCS General Secretary

Kevin Flynn Co-Ordinator of the Centre against Unemployment

Chair Gill Hale Northern Regional TUC Chair plus

Short contributions from other Labour movement speakers

**For more information and to get involved, contact Kevin Flynn, Co-ordinator on
0191 2324606 or email cau@ne11ee.freeserve.co.uk ASAP**