

IN THIS ISSUE OF HE NEWS:-

- ❖ **Pay and Job Security – 2010 Campaign: Special HE Sector Conference**
- ❖ **BIS Higher Ambitions Document**
- ❖ **Lobby of Parliament and UCU alternative manifesto**
- ❖ **Research Excellence Framework**
- ❖ **Quality Assurance Review**
- ❖ **Framework Agreement – Follow up Survey**
- ❖ **Governance Review**
- ❖ **Overseas Working**
- ❖ **Post-92 Annual Meeting**
- ❖ **Specialist Group Annual Meetings**

Pay and Job Security – Special HE Sector Conference in 2010

At its meeting on 4 December 2009 UCU's Higher Education Committee was united in its condemnation of the employers' refusal, throughout the long negotiations over the 2009 pay claim, to respond positively to the trade unions' reasonable request for agreed arrangements for the avoidance of redundancies in higher education. HEC was similarly united in declaring the employers' final offer of a 0.5% pay rise for the year unacceptable, and was highly critical of the employers' failure to bargain in good faith in the course of the year's negotiations.

In noting the unsatisfactory conclusion to the 2009 national negotiating round, and bearing in mind the expectation of rising inflation in coming months, HEC resolved that the deficit resulting from the employers' unwillingness to provide a pay increase of more than 0.5% will be treated as an IOU which UCU will press for in the 2010 pay claim.

UCU will continue to link the political issues being raised in the Make Education Count campaign with its industrial demands.

The HEC also agreed the following outline timetable to prepare and develop the 2010 pay claim and campaign:

- The UCU national negotiators will meet on Friday 8 January to consider the key issues for UCU in the 2010 claim;
- The five trade unions will meet on 12 January. It is hoped to agree the outline of a joint union claim and associated campaign materials (based on the 5 unions, 1 demand model);
- A UCU special sector conference will be called before 12 February to consider the draft claim and campaign for 2010;
- The five trade unions will meet on 23 February, hopefully to agree the joint draft claim.

The date for the special sector conference has now been set for Thursday 11 February. It will be held at a central London venue at 2pm–4.30pm. Further details and information for registration and submission of motions will be sent out in a formal calling notice the week beginning 11 January.

Branches /LAs are given early notice of the need to convene meetings between 12 and

28 January to elect delegates and discuss motions for the sector conference.

Government's 'vision' for Higher Education published

On the 3rd November the Government's vision for higher education (Higher Ambitions - the future of universities in a knowledge economy) was published. The document outlines a framework for higher education in England over the next ten to fifteen years. See: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-ambitions>.

The document is a potential watershed in that it effectively signals the end of publicly funded expansion in higher education, and suggests that a greater share of the financial burden be taken up by employers and individuals. It also opines that the introduction of variable fees has not had a negative impact on access. Other key messages include a proposal for greater flexibility over pay arrangements, an emphasis of business-facing universities in which students are to be treated as consumers, and a greater research concentration in institutions with particular strengths.

UCU have produced an analysis of the key messages, recommendations and new policies in the framework, which can be found on the UCU website. See:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/m/d/uc_u_higherambitionsbriefing_dec09.pdf

Branches and local associations are encouraged to include the Higher Ambitions paper as a topic for discussion at forthcoming meetings. If you would like a speaker from Head office for such a meeting please contact Rob Copeland, rcopeland@ucu.org.uk.

Lobby of Parliament and launch of UCU alternative manifesto

On Tuesday 26 January 2010, UCU will be holding a lobby of Parliament to let MPs know what is happening in further and higher education and to make sure the voices of UCU members are heard in the 'corridors of power' in the run up to the general election. As well as highlighting our industrial agenda, we will importantly also be launching our alternative vision for education, in the form of our post-16 education manifesto.

Between 2.30pm and 4.30pm on 26 January, there will be speeches from Members of Parliament, trade unionists and educators. Although the speeches will continue for 2 hours, members should do their best to meet their MPs whenever possible.

A guide to lobbying your MP will be available on the UCU website nearer the date of the lobby but one thing that members must be aware of is that:

MPs are very busy and their diaries often fill up weeks in advance. Although the House authorities will do everything they can to find your MP, it may not be possible. It is always best to book in advance.

You can email your MP asking to meet them on the day by visiting www.writetothem.com – or write to your MP at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA or call your MP's House of Commons office via the switchboard on 020 7219 3000.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) – 17,570 Stand up for Research

Over 17,500 academics have signed the UCU's statement calling on HEFCE to withdraw its proposals to make 25% of the

assessment of research dependent on its 'economic and social impact'. You can see the statement, which includes the names of leading academics from every field, at the Stand up for Research page on the UCU website:

www.ucu.org.uk/standupforresearch

The petition was handed into HEFCE on Wednesday 16 December alongside the union's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) consultation document. A copy of the union's response is also available on the Stand up for Research webpage.

For further details of the REF proposals, see: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>

Review of quality assurance: views sought

A review of quality assurance framework in England and Northern Ireland has been announced. The consultation sets out proposals for revisions to the system used for quality assurance of HE courses after 2010-11, when the current cycle of institutional audits by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) will be completed. In particular, they are seeking views on the following:

- Principles and objectives for the revised quality assurance system;
- The outline of a revised institutional audit method to operate from 2011-12, which would be "more flexible and transparent", and which would provide "improved information for a non-specialist audience";
- The way in which institutional audit could focus on particular topics, and how these might change over time;

- How the comparability of threshold standards can be assured.

The consultation document signals that students will be given a more central role in the new arrangements, including the provision of 'more robust and comparable information'. A separate review of the external examining system is also being undertaken by the vice-chancellors organisation, Universities UK.

UCU would welcome your views on the document and in particular any suggestions for alternative arrangements for quality assurance.

The consultation document is on the HEFCE website at: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_47/

Please send your comments to Rob Copeland rcopeland@ucu.org.uk by no later than 31 January 2009

Framework Agreement Follow-up Survey

We have now extended to 11 January 2010 the deadline on the framework agreement follow-up survey, mentioned in the last edition of HE News. See UCU HE38: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/UCUHE38.html>

The survey questionnaire can also be filled in on line at: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/frameworkfollowup>

We would urge all branches to fill in the questionnaire, as it will enable us to address the various motions passed at Higher Education Sector Conference in May, requesting that data be collated on a number of issues relating to the implementation of the Framework Agreement. The issues covered are equal pay audits, grade progression for academic and academic-related staff and assimilation of HPLs.

HEC Governance Review

HEC's Governance Working party, set up in October to oversee the implementation of the governance motions passed at HE Sector Conference 2009, has been examining issues of collegiality and accountability in the work of HE governing boards. The Working Party would welcome best practice notes or case study materials from UCU members highlighting real examples of good governance practice at HEIs, particularly those which emphasise the role of staff in decision making.

Any information would be gratefully received by 22 January 2010 (send to bbeckles@uc.org.uk), to be considered for inclusion in the Working Party's report to HEC in February.

For further details please contact Barbara Beckles, 020 7756 5553, bbeckles@ucu.org.uk; Rob Copeland, 020 7756 2592, rcopeland@ucu.org.uk

Overseas Working Guide

A guide for members employed overseas by UK Higher Education Institutions has been approved by HEC and will shortly be issued in a UCU HE circular. We are now seeking to develop more detailed guidance for branches and LAs on negotiating terms and conditions for members employed overseas by UK HEIs. In drawing up guidance we would be interested in examples of good practice adopted by institutions, which we would seek to generalise.

Any comments, suggestions and general information on overseas working would also be gratefully received. Please send these to Stefano Fella (sfella@ucu.org.uk) by 31 January 2010.

Annual meeting for staff in post-92 institutions

The Annual Post 92 Conference will take place at Head Office on Wednesday 3 February 2010 from 11.00 am (registration from 10.30 am) to 4.00pm

The meeting will discuss issues specific to post 92 membership, receive reports, and also consider motions submitted by branches that will be used to advise HEC decision making. There will be a number of speakers and workshops as well as plenty of opportunity to network with colleagues.

Registration is now open – the deadline for registration is 20 January 2010. The deadline for motions is 13 January.

For details on how to register, and procedures for branch delegations and motions see UCU circular UCU 221:
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/UCU221.html>

On-line registration is available and it is encouraged that this is utilised wherever possible. However, a hard copy registration form can be obtained on the UCU website, or by contacting Sue Moss at smoss@ucu.org.uk. This can be returned by e-mail, fax or post.

Annual Meetings for early 2010

The following annual meetings of specialist groups will also be held in early 2010:

Staff on Casual Contracts: deadline for motions – 5 February; deadline for registrations - 12 February; meeting date – 26 February 2010.

MRC, NIBSC and GE Healthcare: deadline for motions – 12 February; deadline for registrations – 19 February; meeting date – 5 March 2010.

Academic Related Staff: deadline for motions – 17 February; deadline for registrations – 24 February; meeting date – 10 March 2010.