UCU
University and College Union

...and related

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ACADEMIC-RELATED STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Representing administrators, librarians, computing and other professional staff in HE

In this issue:

WELCOME!

This is the second issue of our newsletter for academic-related staff *...and related*. When the first issue went to press we were in the early days of the new Tory-led coalition government and the implications for our sector were just beginning to be realised. They promised us cuts in public services, pensions and 'back office' staff, and for once a group of politicians have kept their promises. We are now experiencing unprecedented levels of cuts in all our public services including Higher Education.

The Prime Minister regularly talks about too many administrators, managers and how reductions in the 'back office' will be the cure for all. Back office staff include our academic-related staff colleagues and are the HE professionals who are the backbone of our universities. Our latest slogan 'the back office on the front line' is one of the truest phrases I have ever heard. Academic-related staff really are on the front line this time and are key targets when costs need to be cut.

In HE, the latest management ploy is to 'restructure'. Restructuring tends not to openly affect our academic colleagues in the same way as it does AR staff. Restructuring is how universities cut the 'back office' staff. As UCU members and case workers we spend our time sitting in on restructuring meetings which ultimately end up with layers of highly skilled and professional (and let's face it relatively expensive) staff being made redundant. Whether a university wants to 'restructure' from a department to school or school to faculty – there is only one conclusion and that will be job losses for those of us working in the 'back office'. Staff are cut but workload does not go away and so those redundant roles can be carved up and handed out to lower paid, non-academic-related staff.

Another big threat to the back office is outsourcing and the shared services agenda, a theme we discussed in depth at our annual meeting in March. This issue has a report on the annual meeting and a section exploring the dangers outsourcing present to us.

Thanks to all those who contributed to a successful annual meeting and I look forward to seeing more of you at Congress. The Academic-related Committee has tabled a number of Congress and HE Sector conference motions and amendments, which I encourage you to support. We will also be holding a fringe meeting on 'the back office on the front line' on Sunday 29th May. Hope to see you there! (Further information at the end of the newsletter).

As Chair of the Academic-related Staff Committee I am immensely proud of your professionalism and commitment not only to your universities but to UCU.

Patricia Hulme, Chair, Academic Related Committee

Join your union online today: go to www.ucu.org.uk/join

Spread the message!

Please pass this newsletter on to other academic-related members (or potential members). Encourage them to join or get more involved! To join UCU see: www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2283

See also the UCU webpages on academic related matters: http://bit.ly/l7s7ZF

To be added to the academic-related mailing list or if you have any questions on academic-related matters contact Stefano Fella, National Industrial Relations Official (with responsibility for academic related matters), sfella@ucu.org.uk

Also contact Stefano if you have ideas for articles and/or wish to contribute to a future edition.

Report: annual meeting for academic-related staff on 16 March

The meeting was well attended and heard a keynote speech from UCU President-elect, Terry Hoad, giving valuable insight into the national disputes and an inside view on the USS and UCEA negotiations.

Our guest speaker in the afternoon, Professor Dexter Whitfield of the European Services Strategy Unit, provided a fascinating overview of the pitfalls of outsourcing (Dexter's research is discussed in the section on outsourcing below).

Motions adopted at the meeting focused on: the need to fighting job losses among academic-related staff; supporting members in addressing concerns over the shared services agenda and the implications of restructuring. Also covered were the collection and analysis of data on changes to working environments for AR staff, and working to raise awareness of different mental health conditions and hidden disabilities of members/staff in sector.

Full text of motions adopted at the meeting can be found at: http://bit.ly/imTDd5

Workshops were held in the afternoon on deprofessionalisation and outsourcing and 'fighting the cuts and organising AR staff', providing a valuable forum for AR members to share experiences and campaigning ideas.

New committee

Patricia Hulme – Chair (University of Nottingham)

Dan Arthur – Vice Chair (LSHTM)

Eileen Tilley – Vice Chair (Bangor University)

Greg Howard (Birmingham University)

Nick James (Oxford Brookes University)

Angela Lamb (Edinburgh University)

Dom Kingsmill-Stocker (Loughborough University)

Lesley McGorrigan (Leeds University)

Gordon Watson (Strathclyde University)

Kate Purcell* (Birkbeck College, London)

Joe Gluza – NEC rep (Cambridge University)

Roger Walters – NEC rep (Open University)

*Kate replaces Alex Lancaster (Liverpool), who stood down from the Committee for personal reasons after the annual meeting. Our thanks to Alex for her contribution to the Committee's work, and also to Elizabeth Clear (UCL), who stood down from the Committee, after a number of years service.

When AR staff strike!

I often hear comments from colleagues that if academic-related staff all went out on strike this would bring the university to its knees. Without IT or library helpdesks and critical administrative functions the business could not run. It seems that we believe them as on many picket lines AR-staff make up the majority of the numbers. This sentiment has been echoed by colleagues around the country. At my own university the comments were very much along the lines of 'academic related staff continue to support academics, even on strike'. With a few notable quite senior exceptions our academic colleagues at the institutions I saw were very thin on the ground. What really riled some of us (Okay, particularly me, as I'm sad enough to have recall of most of the membership list) was seeing members going in 'because I have to go to a meeting'. A number thought that

meetings at other institutions didn't count. We corrected a number of visitors using this excuse of their error. The news that the remote access system kept crashing was greeted with mixed emotions: 'Good, people can't work. Bad, they are trying to'.

Okay, so a number of colleagues are of the very strong opinion that one-day strikes are little more than demonstrative. So get out and demonstrate then! (On our lines we turned the loo roll delivery away, I hear, causing a few uncomfortable moments.) They feel that action short of a strike (ASOS) is the way forward as this will affect the institution more. This might work, though previous experiences suggest that this may elicit a response of 'my university (apparently) has so many exceptional student groups that we can't participate in <insert any type of ASOS> because <insert excuse>'. Others see ASOS as a soft option, although my management have reported that UCEA is now encouraging employers to make salary deductions for any duties not undertaken. At local disputes employers have tried to take 100% reductions until exams are set/marked.

A number of AR staff have also raised concerns that ASOS can disproportionately affect AR staff and our other support colleagues.

It's often student administrators and others in our group of staff (who usually have to work office hours and more!) who end up explaining the details of what's not happening to students, or why their marks aren't ready (while academics work from home). For many AR staff, whose main function is enrolment in the first few months of term, boycotting enrolment would mean performing few or none of their duties. If they are deducted 100% salary they could lose weeks or months of pay. This must feature in our planning.

UCU members on strike during the national day of action to defend staff pensions in March 2011

I'm reading about the Wobblies at the moment and even at the turn of the 20th Century, and before, trade unionists were writing about the pointlessness of partial strikes. As we go forward into more difficult times for higher education, AR staff must take the lead again.

We must make sure we ALL vote in all ballots to give our national negotiators the strongest possible mandate, and if strike action is called we must make sure we are ALL there on the lines. In future I will be grabbing two academic colleagues by the ear and either walking them to the post box with their ballot papers, or marching them up to their picket lines as the situation requires.
Dan Arthur, LSHTM, Vice-Chair
Academic-related Committee

Career progression for AR staff: is there anything we can do?

The Academic-related Committee is committed to working towards equality of opportunity for academic-related staff vis-à-vis academic staff. One area where difficulties are constantly encountered is that of career progression/promotion. It has been impossible for UCU to establish, at national level, a normal expectation of progression from AC2 to AC3 for academic related staff, in line with that for academic staff. Although data on promotion rates for academic related staff is lacking, one suspects that they are unacceptably low.

Whereas some of the resistance encountered to progression from AC2 to AC3 may stem from management's desire to save money, it may be that a degree of the difficulty arises from an intrinsic difference between academic and academic-related roles. Whereas academic staff can be promoted for doing what they already do – whether it be teaching or research – at a higher level, academic related staff often have to manage more staff or bigger budgets to get their promotion or regrading. Since such responsibilities may only be given to those already on a higher grade, academic-related staff may find themselves in a Catch-22 situation.

We cannot force our managers to give us greater responsibilities. Is there anything else we can realistically do to create better opportunities for academic related promotion?

It may be helpful to look at what is required in a fair

Research indicates it is unlikely that development opportunities for academic-related staff are equal to those available for academic staff

promotion policy and procedures, and the extent to which present systems meet these requirements.

One primary requirement is that there should be clear criteria for promotion, linked to the grading structure – if you can show you have met the criteria, you get the grade. The National Academic Role Profiles (see: http://bit.ly/iusgnp) along with the 'expanded version' containing criteria for promotion, have been invaluable in defining the level at which different grades of academic staff should be operating, but there are no nationally agreed role profiles for academic-related staff.

Secondly, there needs to be a framework of some kind for showing evidence that a member of staff has met the criteria. The UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education has recently emerged as a framework for accrediting the level of teaching achievement which has been attained. The Framework enables staff who teach or support learning in Higher Education to evidence competence at three levels, which could be taken to correspond roughly to Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the National Academic Role Profiles. See http://bit.ly/6uV4nj

When we look at accreditation frameworks which can be used by academic related staff, however, we encounter problems. Although the Professional Standards Framework can be used by those academic related staff, for example librarians or learning technologists, who have teaching as part of their roles, it does not cover other aspects of their roles, and does not apply at all to academic related staff whose roles are primarily administrative. The Association of University Administrators has devised a framework for administrative staff in Higher Education which does

not, however, "map" to different grading levels, and has not as yet attained the same degree of national recognition as the Professional Standards Framework. http://bit.ly/iTAT3B

CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) provides a framework for librarians and other information workers. As it consists of a Certificate for para-professionals, a Chartership for professionals, and a Fellowship for those who "have been practising at senior level and have made a significant contribution to the profession". the CILIP framework does not tie in to grading structures within UK Higher Education. http://bit.ly/gaogt1

In addition to clear criteria and an accreditation framework, development opportunities need to be available to enable staff to meet the criteria and achieve the accreditation. A recent literature search by Doney (1998) has revealed very little UK research on whether staff development opportunities for academic-related staff are equal to those available for academic staff. One suspects that, as for rates of promotion, they are not (see E Doney, 1998, *Developing opinions: the attitudes of ILS staff to continuing professional development, Library Management* 19/8, 486-91).

Although there may be no 'magic bullet' to instantly solve the problem of academic related career progression, it may be that, by improving underlying systems and frameworks, we can gradually make progress. Here are some suggested ways in which UCU could pursue this aim:

- Carry out research on access to staff development for academic related staff.

- Monitor academic related promotion rates post-Framework.

- Work to collate the existing 'library' of academic related role profiles, with a view to producing a single set of profiles applicable to all academic related staff.

- Work with professional associations such as AUA and CILIP, and organisations devoted to promoting staff development, such as SEDA: www.seda.ac.uk to investigate the possibility of developing an accreditation scheme (or schemes) capable of being applied to all academic related staff.

- Campaign for equality in access to staff develop-

ment, national recognition of the role profiles, and national recognition of the accreditation scheme(s)
Eileen Tilley, Bangor University, Vice-Chair, Academic Related Committee

Outsourcing

The UCU survey of outsourcing and privatisation in post-16 education, conducted in 2010, demonstrated the extent to which colleges and universities were not only developing joint ventures with private partners to offer privatised teaching, but were also outsourcing a range of services from campus security and facilities maintenance, to IT support/maintenance and email provision, and other student support services.

Universities and colleges are increasingly looking to outsource key academic-related, professional and support services as a way of cutting costs and promoting 'efficiencies'. This often results in a reduction in the quality of services that are essential in supporting students and complementing the academic team, while the terms and conditions of staff are also downgraded. Furthermore, as research into outsourcing has shown, the much vaunted cost-savings often prove illusory in the long-term.

A renewed strategy to combat both outsourcing and privatisation in post-16 education is essential. The dangers of outsourcing are manifold, and branches/LAs need to highlight these dangers in campaigning against outsourcing and dissuading management from taking this damaging route:

- Outsourcing of services and functions previously provided by in-house staff inevitably leads to job losses among University and College Staff.

- External private companies to which such functions and services are outsourced often employ staff on inferior terms and conditions.

- Staff employed by outsourced companies often lack the professional training and experience required to provide the necessary levels of expertise previously provided by in-house staff.

- Outsourcing leads to a loss of control over recruitment, training and professional development and job evaluation.

- Outsourcing leads to a two-tier workforce, with greater casualisation of staff and increased job insecurity.

- Outsourcing leads to deprofessionalition – functions previously carried out by professional staff are performed by staff on inferior terms and conditions, often without the necessary expertise and professional training.

- The quality of service provided by outsourced companies is often regarded as inferior to that previously provided in-house.

- Whilst short-term savings are often made, cost-savings over the medium to long-term often fall way below the estimates previously used to justify the outsourcing, and sometimes the outsourcing actually results in an increased cost.

- There are issues of accountability and governance when it comes to outsourcing. Outsourced companies are not accountable to university/college structures. When things go wrong, getting a response and allocating responsibilities can prove problematic.

- The university/college has no control if the outsourced company is broken up/sold.

Stefano Fella, National Industrial Relations Official, and Secretary to Academic Related Committee

Outsourcing of IT, computing and email systems

An increasing common form of outsourcing relates to IT services, computer maintenance and repair and email provision:

- Moves by institutions to outsource some core IT services, including email have serious implications for data protection and privacy, data integrity and audit control.

- Outsourcing of virus scanning has led to security issues and less response to problems.

- Outsourcing of email makes it difficult to keep track of students and know whether they are receiving emails.

Private providers are particularly keen to take over the running of student email systems, as this means they can target students for advertising on their email servers and can capture the student market, with a good chance that they will keep their accounts after graduation.

A research report by Dexter Whitfield for the European Services Strategy Unit identifies 105

outsourced public sector ICT contracts in central government, NHS, local authorities, public bodies and agencies with significant cost overruns, delays and terminations. Key findings were as follows:

- 105 outsourced public sector ICT projects with significant cost overruns, delays and terminations. Total value of contracts is £29.5 billion.

- Cost overruns totalled £9.0 billion.

- 57% of contracts experienced cost overruns.

- The average percentage cost overrun is 30.5%.

- 33% of contracts suffered major delays.

- 30% of contracts were terminated.

See Dexter Whitfield (2007) *Cost Overruns, Delays and Terminations in 105 Outsourced Public Sector ICT Contracts*. ESSU Research Report No 3
http://bit.ly/jf5ghD

Outsourcing: impact on libraries

The most usual target for outsourcing of academic libraries is technical or bibliographic services, in particular the processing of library stock and cataloguing/classification functions.

For simplicity, I concentrate on cataloguing and classification here, but parallel issues exist with regard to processing functions. There are three main issues involved:

1. **Threat to jobs:** The purchase of catalogue records from an external source (a library book supplier or a centralised database such as that of the British Library) is an established fact in many (probably most) academic libraries. However, the extent to which these records are accepted without scrutiny determines the extent to which cataloguers' jobs are under threat. Additionally the outsourcing of authority control functions to private companies is

becoming more prevalent. This substantially undermines the foundations of local catalogues, and greatly increases the risk of job loss. Of course, the usual defence is that the consequent financial savings 'free up' staff to undertake 'more productive' work. The more likely result is an overall reduction in staffing, but even if this isn't the case, it will instead result in the second problem:

2. **Deskilling:** If this occurs, it results in deeply demoralised staff. The extensive professional knowledge that is required to undertake cataloguing functions is lost to the library concerned, and librarians who possess this knowledge are at risk of being transferred into work which does not require these skills. This all leads to the third problem:

3. **Loss of quality:** The process substantially reduces the pool of available knowledge nationally and internationally, leaving the task of cataloguing and classification in the hands of library book suppliers, who provide it as a 'value added' part of their service rather than as their core function, and a small number of large centralised database suppliers whose records may in general be of a high standard, but who are unable to cater for local variations which have been applied for good reason, and who struggle to deal adequately with more complex and specialised material, or with grey literature. An important element of control is lost, and the retrievability of material from library shelves (and from electronic sources) is progressively and substantially reduced.

Nick James, Librarian at Oxford Brookes University and Member of Academic Related Staff Committee

Shared services

Linked to the outsourcing agenda is the shared services agenda. This has been promoted by government and funding bodies, encouraging public bodies to share services as a means of reducing costs and promoting efficiencies. This has led to universities and colleges becoming involved in projects to share services with one another (for example Nottingham and Birmingham Universities launched such a plan in 2011) or with other public bodies (for example the University of Bradford and Bradford College have been involved in developing a collaborative project with Bradford City Council, West Yorkshire Police, the local NHS trust and the local probation trust)

While acknowledging that there may be benefits in re-search collaboration, sharing best practice and pool-ing resources, UCU is concerned that such projects will lead to job losses and the establishment of exter-nal outsourced bodies to manage shared services.

Outsourcing IT support to 'cheaper' locations is a key risk of the shared services agenda

Research published by the European Services Strat-egy Unit outlines a number of risks presented by shared services initiatives. See Dexter Whitfield, *Shared Services Strategic Framework*, ESSU, May 2007. http://bit.ly/mx7ogV These include:

- Job losses, relocation, transfer to private contrac-tors, threat of offshoring, cuts in terms and condi-tions and lower quality pensions.

- Benefits are much smaller than first assessed which has a knock on impact on budgets.

- The possible transfer of services to arms-length companies or outsourcing to private providers and/or questionable use of management consult-ants.

- Failure to involve staff and trade unions in the planning and design of the project.

The report recommends an alternative approach in which the need for a procurement process, which in-evitably leads to more outsourcing is avoided. Thus the institutions and public bodies involved should:

- Concentrate on working arrangements which do not require the formation of new organisations.

- Oppose remote delivery of services – arguing for 'cheaper' locations in Britain could be a precursor to offshoring (for example Universities with over-seas campuses may seek to offshore IT support to these campuses).

- Minimise the use of management consultants who often select case studies with a lack of objectivity and assessment of local needs.

- Organisational structures must be inclusive, demo-cratic and accountable to host public sector bod-ies, involving staff/trade union and service user representation on project working groups.

We would welcome more examples and case studies from academic related members on how outsourcing or the shared services agenda has impacted on your institution. Please send any examples, cases studies and information to Stefano Fella, sfella@ucu.org.uk

Mental health

The statistics around the wide proliferation of mental health conditions should be of no surprise to readers. Certainly recent campaigns have been higher profile than before and have focused both on the one in four statistic whilst also attempting to demystify some of the conditions which can so often be stigmatised and generalised. (If you haven't seen the Time For A Change 'Schizo' ad then I urge you to do so.) Often media portrayals in television dramas and the news can present a false picture of a condition and the ef-fects on the individual. This only serves to heighten stereotypes and entrench inaccurate viewpoints and make those with such conditions all the more aware of their 'differences'.

With advances in medical science and increasing di-agnoses and treatment, and one would hope a better overall knowledge within the medical establishment, we can realistically expect the numbers of those with conditions and the number of variants of these condi-tions to rise in the coming years. Sadly we are not in a climate that is likely to accept these conditions any more readily and bigotry and discrimination mean that many people do not feel comfortable disclosing their conditions either at work or at home.

Many of those with mental health conditions or other hidden disabilities are used to a variety of coping mechanisms in order to structure life around prevent-ing any disclosure. IT advances have helped dyslex-ics often pass unnoticed amongst their colleagues and working from home can in some cases be a boon for those who cannot always face a bustling social and often oppressive environment. Others with the same conditions may have spent years seeking

diagnoses, clarification, medication, therapy or just recognition only to find once they have it they are very much in the firing line for preconceptions and ill-informed judgements.

As redundancies increase, those with mental health and hidden disability conditions are very likely to be hit disproportionately, the negative perception of someone who may have more sickness/absence time than others or who may require specific adjustments paid for by the department is difficult to change. Those who have not declared their conditions within the workplace are not subject to the full protections the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Equality Act 2010 afford and it is vital therefore that where possible they can be encouraged to come forward.

The creation of an environment where people feel able to disclose has a double significance for us, on the one hand affording protection to those who need it in times when they may be more at risk and on the other showing institutions and the world at large that such conditions are far more widespread. It is time society accepted that mental health conditions are more 'normal' than you think and we as trade unionists must be at the vanguard of this endeavour.

Motion HE41 put forward at the HE Sector Conference last year has begun the process of making the union take notice of mental health and hidden disabilities to bring awareness and representation up to speed. Motions this year will seek to further that aim and I hope you will feel able to support them fully.
Dom Kingsmill-Stocker, Loughborough University, Academic-related Committee

Motions to Congress and Higher Education Sector Conference 2011

The Academic Related Committee has tabled two motions on the Congress agenda. These are:

Motion 10: The back office – on the front line which calls on the NEC to fight job losses among academic-related and support staff as a matter of urgency, and campaign to ensure that shared services do not lead to further job cuts, worse terms and conditions and new forms of outsourcing.

and Motion 75: Mental health and hidden disabilities in the workplace (Composited with a motion from the Disabled members standing committee) which calls on the NEC to establish a mental health working

group and requests additional guidance to address the problems facing members with 'hidden disabilities' such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism, OCD etc.

The Academic-related Committee has tabled two motions on the HE Sector Conference agenda:

HE36: Changes to working environments which draws attention to new forms of managerialism which undermine academic-related staff and calls upon the HEC to vigorously oppose their effects on our working environment. It calls upon HEC, in conjunction with the Academic-related Committee, to collect and analyse data, from as many branches as possible, on changes imposed by new forms of managerialism.

and HE38: Partnership working and shared services between universities which refers to the recent collaboration framework announced by the Universities of Nottingham and Birmingham and calls upon HEC to support members in addressing their real concerns over such shared services plans, and work with ROCC to campaign to ensure that such initiatives do not lead to job losses and worse terms and conditions for staff.

The Committee has also tabled amendments to two motions at HE Sector Conference (HE4 and HE11) and two at Congress (Motions 8 and 19).

Congress Fringe Meeting
The back office on the front line
Sunday 29 May 13:00-14:00, Harrogate

Academic related staff are the professional staff, administrators, IT staff and librarians without whom universities and colleges cannot operate. However, across the UK we are in the front line, the 'expendable back office' under threat from redundancy, outsourcing and the new shared services agenda.

This meeting is a chance to discuss strategies to fight this onslaught on our jobs and terms and conditions, and find common cause with colleagues from across the public sector.

Speakers:
● Simon Renton, Vice-President elect of UCU, and

● Sheila Banks, Chair of Yorkshire and Humberside region – Public and Commercial Services Union, and President of Leeds Trades Council