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1. Institute for Learning – Potential Boycott?

No UCU FE member can be in the dark about the furore that has opened up since the Institute for Learning wrote to its members informing them that from April 2011, IfL members would have to pay their own membership fee of £68. UCU has had an unprecedented number of messages from our members expressing their outrage over this and their views on IfL. UCU is urgently seeking legal advice as to the possibilities of a boycott of IfL and is advising our members not to pay until they receive further advice from UCU. ULRs can assist by distributing this advice to UCU members in their college and urging all lecturers to sign the on-line petition. The petition can be completed online or a form downloaded from: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5271>

Latest News on IFL

It has come to our attention that IFL appears to have employed a marketing company to ring up individual members on their behalf, enquiring if they intend to pay the membership fee.

As we confirmed in an email to members from Sally Hunt recently, members have until 31 May 2011 to renew and pay the IfL membership subscription for this year (1 April 2011-30 September 2012). IfL have told us that they consider that if the fee is not paid until that time, membership will not lapse until 1 June 2011. Our view is that if due process is followed, this might take even longer.

Our advice remains that members can continue to delay paying their subscriptions while we attempt to achieve an acceptable negotiated alternative.

If you are contacted by any company on behalf of IFL:

- inform them that you have no intention of paying subscriptions at this stage and that your union may be organising a collective boycott of payment following a ballot;
- register your objection to a third party being given your personal details and therefore have no intention of discussing the issue with them.

2. Job Cuts and ULRs

Most if not all colleges will be facing job cuts currently and in the future. Whilst not accepting these cuts, UCU branches and UCU ULRs need to remind colleges that training and development are just as important now as in less harsh times. What can you do?


- 1 Audit your institution's redundancy procedures to ensure any audit of members' skills, knowledge and strengths will be done in a robust and meaningful way. This should be underpinned by decent staff development practices and policies to ensure members can get on, develop professionally and confidently apply for promotional opportunities within their work places. Or at least have the flexibility within their transferable skill set to move into different posts, should they so choose, as part of a redundancy situation.
- 2 In light of potential redeployment situations learning reps can be key to ensuring that members are supported in their new roles and receive adequate training and mentoring from the employer.
- 3 The kinds of training and development activities that colleges and universities might think about or the UCU branch could put on are:
 - training around CV writing;
 - training and short sessions around interview techniques;
 - pre and actual retirement training;
 - you could run a branch session as part of Learning at Work (LAW) day - there is a workshop in London run by the TUC for first time organisers of LAW day, see: <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/initiatives/learn-3854-f0.cfm>.

3. Professional Development Policies as an Alternative to Performance Management in HEIs

The introduction of new performance management procedures in HEIs is a major cause of concern for HE branches. The HE team at head office is working on guidance for HE branches to address this. This will be circulated shortly. The guidance will stress the need for all new procedures to be negotiated with, and agreed by, the recognised trade unions, and to respect existing agreements on career development and appraisal. New procedures should be focused on support for professional development and rejection of quantitative approaches for assessing performance. ULRs can help branch officers by supporting the development of these procedures. For more information, contact Stefano Fella, National Industrial Relations Official, at sfella@ucu.org.uk. It is intended that the guidance will be made available in the next ULR newsletter.

UCU continues to argue for progress on career pathways and progression arrangements within the context of its national claim for HE. The joint trade union side in the national negotiations with the HE employers have called for the establishment of a technical group to address issues relating to career pathways and progression, roles and professional development for distinct occupational groups. While there has been some degree of willingness on the part of the employers to talk about career and staff development, this has been stymied by the broader context of the current national dispute.

4. UK Professional Standards Framework in Higher Education

The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education was launched in 2006 and has recently been reviewed by the Higher Education Agency (HEA). UCU has responded to the consultation. The document, available here: 

Review of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for Higher Education – a response from UCU, Jan 11 (.doc) [161kb] highlights a number of UCU's concerns, in particular, the move by the HEA framework in to areas which are essentially matters for employer-union negotiations. ULRs can play a useful role in helping branches to become more aware of the professional standards framework and the impact it is likely to have on their institution. A link to the HEA review and consultation is available here:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/universitiesandcolleges/accreditation/ukpsf-consultation>

5. Joint NUT-UCU On-Line Survey

UCU members in your college may be asked to participate in an on-line survey (**http://www.surveymonkey.net/14-19_Survey**) on their perceptions, ideas and thoughts about current 14-19 education policies. This on-line survey is the first part of work that NUT and UCU are taking part in with two of the leading academics at the Institute of Education, Professors Ken Spours and Ann Hodgson. The research into teacher/lecturer perceptions and perspectives on 14-19 education is also intended to have a number of more detailed surveys and events on 14-19. The first event will be on 22 June at NUT Hamilton House, the NUT Head Office. For further information contact Dan Taubman **dtaubman@ucu.org.uk**.

The on-line survey has gone to a random sample of 6000 UCU FE members. If UCU members in your college have received the letter and link to the survey, please encourage them to participate. The sample will also include UCU members who don't work in 14-19. This is because UCU membership records don't have information on which students the member teaches. If you have UCU members who have received the invitation to participate and don't teach this age range, advise them to pass the invitation on to their colleagues who do.

6. New Learning Rep Dates: 11 and 12 May & 9 June 2011

The course will look at your role as a Learning rep, your legal rights, current issues, UCU union policies, agreements on learning and skills, and how to extend the UCU organising agenda to build the branch around learning.

Who should attend?

New and existing UCU learning reps have a statutory right to attend within 6 months after appointment. The course is also open to branch officers. Every branch should have at least one learning rep.

At the end of this 3-day module you will have:

- discussed why issues relating to learning, training and professional development are trade union issues;

- identified the role of the learning rep in your workplace and within UCU;
- demonstrated an understanding of your legal rights;
- be more informed about learning & skills issues in the post compulsory education sector;
- prioritised the key issues for you as a UCU learning and developed a plan to address these issues;
- identified ways to assess learning needs of your members;
- assessed your members learning needs;
- explored what learning, skills and professional development opportunities exist within your college/university;
- discussed equality issues around learning and how to deal with them;
- practised the necessary skills needed to support individual members to access their rights to time off to learn;
- created an action plan for your first UCU learning event to take to your branch committee.

Please click here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3302> to apply for a place.

7. Date For Your Diary: UCU Teaching and Learning Conference - Saturday 14 May 2011

Following last year's successful conference, Teaching & Learning: What is at Stake for UCU?, UCU will again present a conference on Teaching & Learning, all day on Saturday 14 May 2011. The theme of this year's conference will be *Multiculturalism and Inclusion in Education*. The conference will be free for members to attend and reasonable travel and child care expenses will be reimbursed. Further details will follow in due course, plus keep an eye on UCU's events calendar at: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2073>.

8. UCU Learning Rep News: Feedback, Contributions and Next Edition

If you have any comments or queries regarding UCU Learning Rep News or would like to contribute material for the next edition, please contact: Diana Hendry, Public Policy Administrator at dhendry@ucu.org.uk. It is intended that the newsletter will be issued every other month.