

IN THIS ISSUE OF HE NEWS: HEC Report, October 2011

- ❖ HE White Paper
- ❖ New JNCHES Review
- ❖ National Claim 2011-12
- ❖ USS dispute
- ❖ National Ratification Panel
- ❖ Health Educators
- ❖ Suspension of Edd Bauer
- ❖ Research Excellence Framework
- ❖ HEFCE project – Management Information Portfolio
- ❖ UUK Efficiency and Modernisation Group
- ❖ Annual Meetings
- ❖ Equality Conferences

Report from UCU Higher Education Committee (HEC) meeting, 7 October 2011

HE White Paper

The Committee discussed the union's policy and campaigning response to the Government's White Paper Education. As highlighted in the discussion, the White paper is imbued with a number of ideological themes that characterise the Government's approach to Higher Education.

- A shift from direct funding for teaching towards effectively a 'voucher' system in which funding follows the students with the requisite grades, who can take their government funded tuition fee loan to the university of their choice;
- Institutional competition and stratification based on variable price and 'quality';
- Entrenchment of the model of consumer sovereignty;
- Constitutional revolution in the way HE is regulated, how degrees are awarded and what it means to be a University. This also means greater scope for new providers to enter the HE 'market', including private providers and FE colleges.

The Committee also noted the increasing divergence between the approach to Higher Education taking place in England and that in the devolved nations and Northern Ireland, and agreed further campaigning activities on the White paper. Further details on these will follow.

The full UCU response to the White paper consultation can be accessed here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/s/4/HE_White_Paper_response_Sep11.pdf

UCU has also established a campaigns blog site, where you can access more information on our campaigning activities and how you can contribute, together with resources for branches and members:

<http://whitepaper.web.ucu.org.uk/>

New JNCHES review

The committee discussed the policy and financial factors influencing employer's current approach to national bargaining and the preparations the union was making to deal with potential changes.

National claim 2011-12

The HEC noted that UCU members had voted reluctantly to accept the employers' offer of a flat rate pay increase of £150.

USS dispute

HEC noted the excellent ballot result which was due to the hard work of branches and staff. HEC endorsed the report which outlined the various actions taken since June and endorsed the HE Officers' 'decision principle' to authorise strike action on 30 November, should the dispute not be settled by then.

National Ratification Panel

A report outlining a new ratification process for local agreements was agreed. A negotiating pack currently being developed, consisting of all approved negotiating guidance across a range of industrial issues, will be sent out in the new year to all branches/LAs to facilitate this process.

Heath Educators

HEC's Health Education Advisory Group set out its work priorities for the 2011/12 session, including action to oppose the damaging reform proposals in the Health and Social Care Bill, currently with the House of Lords. Despite the so called 'listening exercise' undertaken by the coalition government, in response to widespread public concern, the Bill continued to promote a hugely damaging cocktail of competition, markets and fragmentation, which would fundamentally undermine the founding principles of the NHS.

It was noted that the original workforce education and training reform proposals were not amended, however the 'NHS Future

Forum' had been charged to continue firming up the detail in this area. HEC was advised to monitor these developments closely and maximise opportunities to press for positive change. Members were also encouraged to support the TUC's 'Adopt a Peer' campaign, <http://www.goingtowork.org.uk/peers/> to press Peers of all parties to resist and amend the Bill for the better.

HEC motion on suspension of Edd Bauer

HEC also passed an emergency motion in support of Edd Bauer, the Birmingham University student arrested and eventually released on bail for alleged traffic offences in the course of displaying a banner from a bridge at the Liberal Democrats conference in Birmingham. Edd was subsequently suspended by the Birmingham University Guild of Students from his post as a sabbatical officer, and also suspended as a student by the University itself. The HEC motion called for Edd to be reinstated by the University, and for the Guild of Students to end his suspension pending an investigation.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) consultation – UCU response

A big thank you to all members who sent in comments on the REF consultation. The overwhelming majority of respondents focused on the treatment of maternity and adoption leave. We hope that these comments will have an impact on the final panel criteria (due to be published in January 2012). UCU's written response to the consultation document is now on the website at:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2267>. We will be issuing initial guidance to branches and local associations shortly.

HEFCE project - Management information portfolio

HEFCE have recently published something called "The Management Information Portfolio" which consists of an over-arching report on achieving "academic and financial sustainability", as well as four guides on: course costing; effective workload planning; departmental sustainability; and prioritising and aligning resources to academic strategies.

The thrust of the reports is about applying business models to HEIs. There is no mention of trade unions and their role in the main report or guides other than the guide on workload planning which does at least recognise the trade unions as key stakeholders.

Whilst the direction of the reports may be of no surprise to UCU it would be worth branches/LAs having a look at the reports to get an idea of current thinking in these areas.

Colleagues interested in any of the reports can view them at:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/finance/funding/trac/tdg/mip.asp>

Universities UK Efficiency and Modernisation Task Group

A number of motions adopted at UCU Congress and HE Sector conference in recent years have expressed concerns about the implications of the shared services and outsourcing agenda for jobs, terms and conditions, professionalism, data protection and the quality of services provided. However, this agenda appears to be gathering pace, with strong encouragement from government.

The Government HE White Paper suggested that HEIs could do more to promote cost efficiencies and pointed to the work done by HEFCE in promoting efficiencies in areas such as procurement and shared services. It also referred approvingly to the work of the Universities UK Efficiency and Modernisation Task Group. Its report was published in September and referred to 'significant potential for outsourcing and the development of strategic relationships with the private sector to deliver services', and proposes 'strategic co-ordination of higher education procurement' in order to realise the 'full potential of the sector to use its size and purchasing power to generate additional savings.'

The report makes a number of recommendations around improving transparency of costings of operational functions; benchmarking to drive efficiency savings; collaboration among HEIs in procurement (based on a model already utilised in Scotland); work to estimate the costs of regulation to the higher education sector; and the establishment of a high-level panel to monitor efficiency savings in the sector.

On shared services, recommendations included the development of guidance to identify a series of 'non-competitive' areas where more extensive sharing of operational services can be developed and promoted, and the consideration of options for partnership outside of the sector – such as with other public sector bodies – where this is appropriate.

Noting the 'significant opportunities for institutions to employ outsourcing to deliver efficiencies and improve service quality, particularly (for example) in aspects of ICT

provision and student accommodation', the report also recommends that institutions should ensure that partnership approaches to outsourcing are considered as a normal part of their strategic planning.

The full UUK report can be accessed here:

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/2011/EfficiencyinHigherEducation.pdf>

Dates for your diaries: Annual Meetings

- MRC, NIBSC and GE Healthcare (Imanet) annual meeting : Friday 2 March 2012

Deadline for motions: 10 Feb; Deadline for registrations/nominations: 17 Feb

- Annual meeting for staff on casualised contracts: Friday 9 March 2012

Deadline for motions: 17 Feb; Deadline for registrations/nominations: 24 Feb

- Annual meeting for academic-related staff: Wednesday 21 March 2012

Deadline for motions: 29 Feb; Deadline for registrations/nominations: 7 March

The election of delegates to annual meetings, submission of motions and nominations for Committees, require approval by a quorate branch meeting, or a quorate branch committee meeting or a properly constituted meeting of relevant members (e.g. staff on casual contracts or academic related staff).

A formal calling notice for each meeting will be circulated in due course but branches/LAs are requested to note these dates and ensure that their own meetings' calendar allows time

for the branch to seek and elect delegates and nominations and approve motions.

Equality Conferences

UCU Equality conferences will be held in November 2011, on the following dates:

Women members – Friday 4th November

LGBT members – Saturday 5th November

Black members – Friday 11th November

Disabled members – Friday 25th November

Information and deadlines on registration, nomination and submission of motions can be found here:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1868>