

# Useful questions to ask your management

**This is a list of questions that branches may find helpful in approaching managements in any case where a form of privatisation is being considered that involves contracting out, outsourcing, the setting up of new joint ventures or the creation of subsidiary companies. It should be used in conjunction with the guidance documents relating to the specific form of privatisation being proposed.**

## **Finding out about the process of procurement or contracting**

- Can management confirm that discussions are taking place with (COMPANY NAME)?
- What review of services and appraisal of options has already taken place?
- What documentation supporting these processes exists and when will it be disclosed to staff unions and other stakeholders?
- When will unions and other stakeholders be consulted?
- What other alternatives have been looked at?
- If it is established that procurement of new or extended services will take place, can you confirm that: (a) there will be a formal procurement process of competitive tendering and that UCU and other staff groups will be consulted on the drawing up of the invitation to tender, and (b) that there will be a properly resourced in-house bid?
- Will you disclose all papers relating to the process of reviewing service provision and appraising options?

## **Getting basic information**

- What will be the main business of the proposed outsourcing/partnership?
- How will this provision supplement/ replace existing provision?
- What form of provision is this? Outsourcing, partnership, joint venture?
- What are the parties to negotiations expecting to bring to the contract, in terms of academic services, marketing expertise, or assets?
- Will it involve a transfer of any assets to a private company, arms length company, partnership or joint venture?

## **Quality and student welfare**

- How will the university/college assure quality control over the outsourced provision/partnership and defend standards?
- How will the university/college defend academic freedom?
- How will any students taken on by the outsourced provision/partnership be accommodated?
- Will they be students of the college/university or of the venture?

## **Terms and conditions for staff**

- Will any staff be transferred to the new venture and what protection will they enjoy?
- What will be the pension arrangements for staff in the new venture?

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- Does the college/university anticipate any redundancies?
  - How many staff will be employed on the proposed new venture?
  - Will staff employed by the new provision be college/university continue to be employees and enjoy appropriate terms and conditions?
  - If not, will you make available to the unions the terms and conditions they will have as employees of the company/partnership?
  - What proportion of teaching will be undertaken by casualised (eg hourly paid) staff? How will they be paid/what kind of contracts will they have?

**Union involvement**

- What is the timetable for discussions?
- What plans does the college/university have to arrange formal consultation with campus unions over this proposal regarding members' terms and conditions?
- What plans does the college/university have to involve the unions in discussions over the proposals?
- Will UCU be recognised in the new company/venture?
- What is the timetable for the university/college's compliance with the statutory duty to perform and publish impact assessments in respect of race, disability and gender?