

To: all members; and Heather and Jamal (Unison)
Subject: UHUCU report of our AGM held on 1 July 2022

UCU at University of Hertfordshire

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Dear Member

Here is a summary of the key points discussed at our AGM last Friday.

President, Treasurer and Membership reports

The unacceptably high pay ratio at UH was highlighted (over 20 to 1 when the UCU position is that 10 to 1 should be the maximum). The highest paid full-time UH employee (the VC) has a total remuneration package of £354,000 while the lowest paid full-time employee earns £17,189. UCU has consistently complained about this.

The UH report on the many failings of StAR (the Student Administration Review) will be out soon. We will discuss it with members and coordinate our response with Unison.

Election of officers 2022/3

The following officers were elected to the UHUCU executive committee for the coming year: Will Atkinson (Membership secretary), Maciej Bancarzewski (Environmental officer), Martina Doolan (Learning officer), Jana Filosof (Treasurer), Lindsey German (Equalities officer), Katrina Navickas (Press and Social Media officer), Mike Pickup (Health and Safety officer), Dragan Plavsic (Secretary), Jane Say (Vice President) and Keith Seed (President).

Pay round 2022/3

Inflation currently stands at 9.1% (CPI) or 11.7% (RPI). The final offer from employers for 2022/3 was 3% for those of us on spine points 20 or above (i.e. on or above £25,627). For the lower paid (i.e. on or below £24,871), the offer rises from 3.1% at point 19 to 9% at point 3. UCU's HEC (the Higher Education Committee responsible for business between conferences) was meeting on 1 July at the same time as our AGM and its ballot strategy for action in 2022/3 will be announced shortly.

The AGM noted that our VC is vice-president of Universities UK, the collective voice of VCs, with a key influence on employer policy and one of its main media spokespersons.

Workload/VC's controversial comments

A motion was submitted by a member prior to meeting which all parties subsequently agreed to replace with a motion drafted by the executive committee. This motion raised (a)

the VC's failure to reply to UHUCU's email of 15 June regarding his controversial comments on workload and wellbeing; and (b) the scale and method of UH's increasingly problematic strategy for recruiting international students. The motion proposing that these issues be raised with UH Governors was overwhelmingly carried.

We attach the motion and the transcript of the LMS Open Forum of 30 March 2022 at which the VC made his controversial comments about workload and wellbeing.

Safe to speak up

The AGM discussed whether UHUCU should participate in the so-called 'steering group' set up by UH to oversee the review into why staff don't feel 'safe to speak up' announced by the VC this year after two years of UHUCU pressure.

The AGM voted overwhelmingly against participation given UH's refusal to accommodate any of UHUCU's three requests, namely: (a) that UCU and Unison representation be increased from one per union to two, given the steering group's overwhelmingly managerial composition; (b) that UH address concerns over specific management personnel appointed to the steering group; and (c) that the chair of the steering group be independent and thus free of potential conflicts of interest (the chair is currently the third most senior manager at UH, the Registrar).

Contribution to Essex UCU strike fund

Essex UCU has been the only regional UCU taking strike action. The AGM voted overwhelmingly to donate £500 to its strike fund.

AOB

A number of other concerns were raised including HR's often slow, bureaucratic and lack of understanding approach to staff issues; the unfairness of the Equate system; and the recent comments by Michelle Donelan, the government's higher education minister, on freedom of speech in universities.

In solidarity

UHUCU Executive Committee