

UCU UWE BRANCH NEWSLETTER

September 2015

LISTENING TO UCU MEMBERS AND WORKING TOWARDS AN EVEN BETTER WORKING EXPERIENCE

Personal reflections on the new teachers pension scheme

Reaching the age of 50 triggered me to have a rethink about my pension arrangements. At the start I was confused due to the changes in the teacher pension scheme (TPS) and I found the TPS website to be a useful starting point. From this I discovered that I was a 'tapered' member with a normal retirement age (NPA) of 60 for all of the contributions I will make up to June 2018, but with a NPA of 67 for those made thereafter. I will still receive a lump sum of three times my pension aged 60, but will need to wait until 67 for the remainder of my pension. This triggered me to look into what are called 'flexibilities' which will enable me to make additional contributions to buy additional pension. This is an expensive, but tax-friendly way of ensuring that I will have more money to live on if I decide to retire aged 60 and also of raising the money payable to my partner after I pass away.

Getting to grips with how the TPS now works was not an easy process, but it was worth the effort. It raised several fairly complicated issues on which I needed a 'second opinion'. UCU's pension officer (Geraldine) provided clear answers to my queries over the phone and she seemed

only too pleased to be able to help when I thought that, as a national official, she would not have the time to provide assistance on an individual basis.

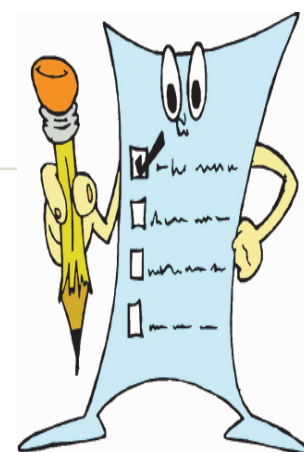
Finding out about the changes to the TPS also convinced me that taking industrial action to defend it had been worthwhile. Initially I thought that we had lost the dispute completely and was angry about not being able to claim my full pension at 60 (I still am). This will mean that I will lose out financially as will the increase in the cost of contributions. However, the new scheme being introduced is by no means as dreadful as I had thought. The employers initial offer had been to calculate benefits based on 1/100 but our industrial action (with our colleagues in schools and colleges) had a major impact by revising this to 1/57. This means that for each year worked after June 2018 my likely annual pension will rise by £830 per annum rather than £473 (or £591 under the previous arrangement of 1/80). For new starters this will clearly have a major benefit over their whole career and will by far and away exceed the money lost due to the industrial action.

A Member



Visit our new web site
for current local UCU
information

[http://uwebranch.web.
ucu.org.uk/](http://uwebranch.web.ucu.org.uk/)



Sickness absence

We have highlighted some key issues from UWE policies regarding sickness absence and workload. We hope these are helpful. Please consult the Human Resources pages for further information and policies.

Reporting Absence <https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/knowledgebase/Pages/Sickness%20absence%20FAQs.aspx>

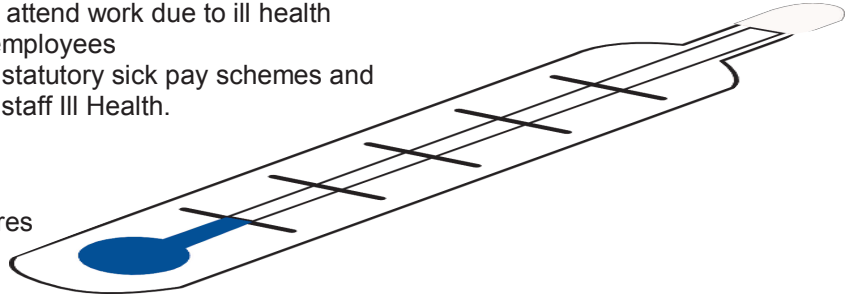
On the first day of absence you should telephone your Executive support office. You should contact your manager again on Day 4 of your absence to update them if the absence is continuing

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all employees are aware of the absence management processes and procedures
- Supporting employees who are unable to attend work due to ill health
- Maintaining communication with absent employees
- Understanding the occupational sick and statutory sick pay schemes and the Procedure for dealing with matters of staff Ill Health.

Employees are responsible for:

- Keeping their attendance to a maximum
- Following the absence reporting procedures
- Submitting necessary certificates/ medical documentation
- Attending OH appointments, as required



WAMS recording

<https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/Pages/Academic-workload-model.aspx>

- 9.4 Within the workload model staff who are absent will have their workload allocation **recorded as absence** at three WLBs per day. All long term absences (typically over 5 days) must be accounted for in the workload through *Staff Support allocation* so that staff workloads do not show a shortfall as a result of sickness.
- 9.5 Where staff support bundles are allocated, discussions should take place with the manager and the member of staff about what work has **not** been completed and therefore whether other adjustments should be made to WAMS to reflect this.
- 9.8 It is the responsibility of the individual member of staff to make a record of what work was not undertaken so that as necessary WAMS may be adjusted.

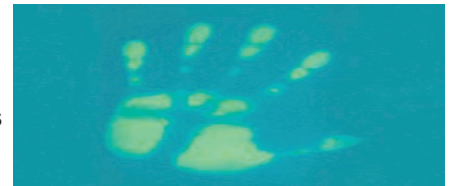
Return to work meeting

<https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/Pages/Managing-sickness-absence.aspx>

A return to work discussion should be conducted by your manager after each period of absence or at the earliest opportunity after your return to work.

Fit Notes

If your Doctor gives you a FIT note which states that you can return to work but doing less than your normal hours, remember that any days not worked will be paid as Sick Pay .



Phased Return

This may be offered by your manager in conjunction with Occupational Health advice following a long period of absence. If this is offered you will normally receive full pay even if working less than your normal hours .

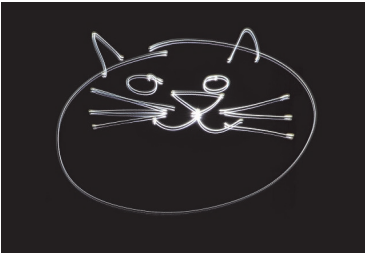
Non-Permanent Staff Network

The Branch thought it would be timely to highlight the Non-Permanent Staff Network events that Mel Fraser (your Rep) will be continuing to run this academic year. So we are continuing our commitment to include recognition of the contribution of non-permanent staff. Mel will get those details circulated as dates are fixed up.

It is also very important to highlight to all ALs that there are opportunities to transfer to Perm contracts. This is in the HR documentation available via: https://docs.uwe.ac.uk/ou/hr/IntranetContent/AL_Guidance_Dec_11.pdf

Amongst the Branch there is a consensus view that HR should be taking the lead in ensuring that ALs are informed of their rights – we are keen to see that happening. Please share your experiences with us.

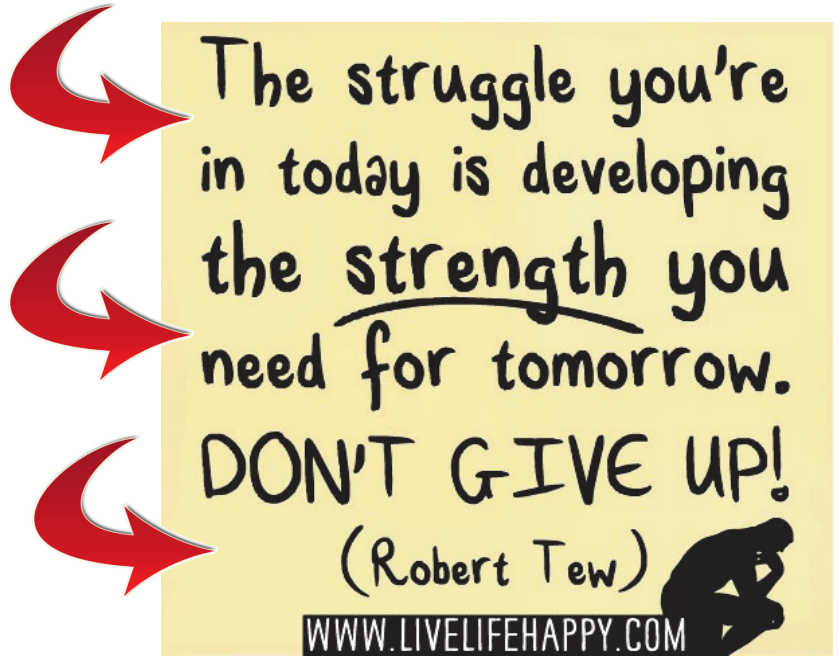
Mel can be contacted on Melanie.Fraser@uwe.ac.uk



Autumn Issues: Branch Priorities



- ⇒ **Protecting employment rights**
- ⇒ **Making sure the Workload model is fairly managed**
- ⇒ **Facilitating advice on pensions**
- ⇒ **Protecting workplace well being**
- ⇒ **Negotiating on pay**



Key messages from Harriet Bradley, UWE UCU Branch Secretary

***YOU WOULDN'T DRIVE A CAR WITHOUT INSURANCE:
WHY BE AN EMPLOYEE WITHOUT JOINING A TRADE UNION TO PROTECT
YOUR RIGHTS!***

Trade unions do many things: bargaining for pay and conditions, promoting equality, lobbying politicians for change, but a great deal of local trade unionists' time is taken up with helping members with the problems they encounter in the workplace: problems about promotion, bullying, contracts, workloads, reasonable adjustments for disabling conditions and many more.

Consider these amazing figures from the national union. In the past year one in four members - 28,000 people - sought advice and help from UCU; 7,000 members were represented by a UCU representative at a grievance or disciplinary case; and £10 million was raised in compensation for members treated unfairly at work.

Your union representatives at UWE also spend a lot of time working on cases for our members on all these kind of issues - and in the majority of cases we do manage to gain a good result for them. In order to be even more effective we now are starting to log our cases so we can put more pressure on managers where there are evidently recurrent problems in certain departments and we ask for your help with this.

We will continue to work to help our members when they come to us with problems, but we can only help people when they ARE union members and to get legal assistance they must have been a member for three months. If you are somebody who has benefited from our support, please can we ask you to point out to your colleagues the advantages - indeed the necessity in these challenging times when restructuring and redundancies loom - of joining the union.

It is too late to insure your car when it has crashed....



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