

u+we in solidarity

Newsletter of UWE Branch of the UCU

18th November 2011

University Academic Workload Model

The university remains intransigent on the academic workload model. Last May, representatives of this UCU branch met with senior university staff at a meeting moderated and chaired by a representative from ACAS. At that meeting we strenuously argued that the model is incorrect and needs major changes to make it work properly; however, all our arguments were to no avail. This exhausted all our options for negotiated changes to the model. To make matters worse, over the summer, the university made further changes to the model without any form of consultation with this branch. These changes made a bad model even worse.

Having exhausted all possibilities for negotiated changes, our options now are to settle for a model which we know is badly flawed, with no guarantee that the university won't make it worse, or to start to move towards taking Industrial Action on the issue. Clearly, taking action is a serious step and it isn't one we'd contemplate without consulting our members, so last week the branch executive decided to run an indicative and informal ballot of members to judge their views. By now, all members should have received their personal electronic ballots via the university email. Please be sure to use your vote. If you haven't received your ballot then please contact the branch secretary: Bob.Lang@uwe.ac.uk

On a related note, members' workloads for 2011 to 2012 should now have been finalised by Heads of Department. By now you should have a full breakdown of your personal workload and the workload across your department. One of the defining principles of the UWM was transparency and we can hold managers to account for any reason why they refuse publication of workload allocations within departments.

Health and Safety

The UCU Health and Safety Officer informed the Executive Meeting on the 9th of November of a particular case where a member had previously been given an eye test voucher but had now been refused. Our advice to members remains that of a Branch Newsletter of April 2010:

Free Eye Tests and Glasses!

If you are a "user" of "Display Screen Equipment", then UWE, as our employer, must pay for eye tests (and also glasses in some circumstances). We have raised this issue with UWE because for the most part the university (unlike others) does not consider us to be "users" under the Health and Safety regulations.

The latest publication from the HSE, *The Law on VDUs: An Easy Guide* (link at end of this newsletter), makes it clear that:

People using a VDU more or less continuously on most days will be covered by the Regulations. So, usually, are others who normally use a VDU for continuous or near-continuous spells of an hour or more at a time; and use it in this way:

- more or less daily
- and have to transfer information quickly to or from the display screen equipment
- and also need to apply high levels of attention and concentration
- or are highly dependent on VDUs to do the job or have little choice about using them
- or need special training or skills to use the equipment.

If you believe that you fall into this group, please refer to the procedure for obtaining vouchers for eye tests on the HR web pages. If you are refused, please refer back to your faculty rep or a member of the Branch Executive.

Cold Offices

It has been brought to the attention of the branch executive that some offices at Bower Ashton and Glenside are too cold. The Health and Safety Officer noted that the temperature should be at least 16°C and is taking up the matter with appropriate managers.

Pay Equality Project

This UWE project to implement the New Pay Framework is now almost complete with the final few appeals being heard this term. It is open to any employee to ask for a review of their pay scale and Reps and Officers can support you in gathering the evidence in order to complete an appeal form. Check the UWE HR website for further information or email Mal.Hughes@uwe.ac.uk

Report on ‘Decent Pensions’ Lobby of Parliament Wednesday 26th October 2011

The Negotiating Secretary (Mal Hughes) attended a lobby of parliament on changes to the Teachers Pension Scheme to represent the UCU Branch at UWE. Mal Hughes made the following argument to the MPs he spoke to:

That the TPS was already reformed in 2007 to secure the long term health of the scheme; that we had agreed to pay more should the TPS be valued and it was clear it had become unaffordable; but that the Coalition have refused to value the pension scheme before making the changes and the proposed changes.

It was a very well attended lobby and there was a great atmosphere. Mal overheard one MP asking another what it was like down in the Central Lobby and he said: “Carnage, it’s full of teachers”.

Preparing for action on Pensions Nov 30th

At the last Exec Meeting it was agreed that there would be a joint union picket at the Frenchay Main entrance and members would be encouraged to attend a rally in central Bristol. It was also agreed that a statement should be presented to students. More information will become available in the next day or two.

The Law on VDUs

To download a copy of *The Law on VDUs: An Easy Guide*, please visit this link:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg90.pdf>

Please use your vote in the Workload Model Indicative Ballot

Your electronic ballot paper should be in your email in-box

Ballot closes: Friday November 25th at 5pm.