

u+we in solidarity

Newsletter of UWE Branch of the UCU

22nd February 2012

Is this Privatisation?

By now you will have heard that Senior Managers are intending to enter into partnership with the private provider KAPLAN. There will be a new International College run by KAPLAN to be established here at UWE (probably P-Block) for pre-undergraduate courses - mainly English language.

The International College will have 750 extra international students. They will be UWE students, but the teaching will be done by KAPLAN staff who will be on different terms and conditions and not the national contract. There will be a joint academic board with UWE in the majority.

On the 2nd of February a meeting was arranged between Officers of the Branch, some members of the Branch working in the subject area of English for Academic Purposes, our Regional Support Official Philippa Davy and John Rushforth (DVC). Philippa gave a presentation of arguments against privatisation. It is UCU national policy to resist all privatisation of Higher Education. UWE Senior managers argue that this is new provision not currently being offered at UWE and therefore that they are not privatising part of our academic offer at UWE. In a statement to this newsletter, Ian Apperley (Head of HR) said that this is not privatisation, it's bringing in a new supplier to provide a new service.

Review of English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

A second but not unrelated serious cause for concern is the recent review of EAP provision based in ACE but serving the whole University Community. A flawed report has been presented to members affected that appears to conclude that there are overwhelming reasons to shut down our current in-house provision, resulting in a number of job losses. It is proposed either to provide EAP in partnership with a Federated College of Further Education, to seek a further partnership with a private provider – perhaps KAPLAN, or for staff currently delivering the service to come up with a proposal to run an improved service themselves. Members (those teaching on EAP courses) with the support of our Negotiating Secretary Mal Hughes are now assembling an argument identifying flaws in the report.

Mal Hughes said: The problems are not with the quality of the teaching and assessment arrangements with the EAP team. On the contrary this is a group of highly professional colleagues who show commitment to their students and to UWE. Any problems there are with balancing the books or with rationalising EAP provision across the University are problems with quality of management at Departmental, Faculty and University level. We have until next week to demonstrate to managers the flaws in their evidence and judgments, and to propose ways forward in the best interests of the students at UWE. Senior Managers cannot argue, in respect of EAP, that any move to privatisation is new provision, i.e. not currently on offer at UWE staffed with UWE lecturers. In this instance, it would be the privatisation of work that we would normally be doing and is a very threatening development that has robustly to be resisted.

What is clear is that for many years **management** of EAP at Departmental, Faculty and University level has been woefully inadequate, perhaps best described as 'not fit for purpose'.

TravelSmart

Thanks to all members who replied to our survey about the TravelSmart proposals for Frenchay which include a 3 km exclusion zone for staff and students, no UG 1 students to bring cars onto Campus and a University-wide hike in annual parking fees. Feedback fell into 3 groups: that which agreed with the proposals on environmental grounds; feedback from members expressing confusion; and some opposition where the proposals would have a negative impact on members. We are collating the information and submitting new questions and challenges to the TravelSmart group before the close of the consultation period. If you have further questions or concerns about travel to and from the University or car parking issues please email the Traffic Planner Steve.Ward@uwe.ac.uk and copy to our Organising and Campaigns Officer Andy.Tubb@uwe.ac.uk

March is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

10,000 men die of prostate cancer each year in the UK, but it is curable if caught early. Speak to your GP about having a PSA blood test.

<http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk/>

Workload Model

You will know that we completed the last stage (Stage 3) of the dispute on the imposition of the University Academic Workload Model with attempts at conciliation brokered by ACAS. No agreement was possible though we did achieve a number of important improvements to the model during the dispute. We also recently achieved a majority vote of the Joint Employee Relations Committee (engagingly known as JERC) – the joint unions and management negotiating committee of the University to call on Steve West to reconsider the three outstanding issues that the Branch has with the imposition of the Workload Model. (Other issues have arisen such as some work not being recognised by the model or differently recognised in different departments.)

The three remaining issues from the dispute are:

1. That 550 bundles should be recognised as the annual maximum that lecturers can and should be expected to work in an academic year. This maximum would only be breached in extraordinary circumstances, with the consent of the lecturer and the permission of an Executive Dean.
2. That Section 7 which appears to enshrine the practice of working more than 550 bundles be removed from the Model
3. That the factors and variables in the calculations of resources in the workload model be adjusted to increase the spend per student to average sector levels (UWE currently sits very low in the league tables on spend per student) and to more appropriately recognise the amount of work involved in teaching activities. (This was the old W should equal 30 not 24 argument that has been superseded by a more general argument about giving more resources to teaching.)

We are currently awaiting the Vice Chancellor's response. As instructed by the Branch, the Chair is also currently seeking permission from National Officers of the National Executive (Higher Education) Committee to ballot members on whether or not to take industrial action on this issue.

How has the Workload Model Affected You?

Please take the survey at:

http://kwiksurveys.com?s=LILKFL_e8ff3110

We need responses from all members

Campaigns and Disputes

Currently, there are a number of very important issues concerning our working conditions and the terms and conditions of our employment with UWE. It is one of the responsibilities of your Branch Executive Committee to seek and listen to the views of members who can and do mandate Officers and Reps to act. Sometimes action is to organise a public campaign on an issue and to lead the lobbying of Senior Managers or Governors. At other times the action may be to declare a formal dispute with the employer and to enter into the stages of a disputes procedure that forms part of UCU's recognition agreement with UWE.

Any dispute which is not settled will lead to a ballot - if permission to ballot is granted by UCU nationally - of members on whether or not to take industrial action. Such a ballot always asks whether a member is willing to take Strike Action or to take Action Short of a Strike. Both courses of action can be very effective but always lead to losing salary. For each day of strike action members lose 1/260 of their salary. For each day of any Action Short of a Strike, the employer can deduct up to a full day's pay for partial performance i.e. members could still lose 1/260 of their salary daily. So, for example, if we withhold marks, then for *each day* marks are withheld you will lose 1/260 of your salary. In previous disputes, some branches successfully have threatened to switch to a strike - at no extra penalty - unless punitive ASOS deductions are rescinded.

Any disruptive action organised by a TU as part of Action Short of a Strike can be considered a breach of contract. There are any number of ideas that members have raised in discussion over the years e.g. everybody taking out an individual Grievance or requiring to see their HR file. If this is organised by a trade union then it is considered Action Short of a Strike.

UCU to ballot members over further strikes

Members of UCU in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) will be asked if they are prepared to take further strike action in the continuing row over government changes to their pensions.

UCU's NEC has voted to take strike action on 28 March subject to the consultative ballot. The union will campaign for members to reject the government's proposals.

Motions and Delegates to UCU Congress

UCU Congress takes place 8–10 June at Manchester Central Convention Centre. Calling notice details are available on <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5860>

Expressions of interest of attending Congress to represent the Branch are invited from any members of the Branch. Branch Exec will receive nominations and will vote on who will be delegates. Please contact our Branch Secretary Bob.Lang@uwe.ac.uk

All motions must be submitted to UCU Congress organisers by the deadline of 12 NOON on FRIDAY 30 MARCH 2012. Please get in touch with Bob in the next couple of weeks if you have a motion you wish to put forward to be adopted by the Branch.

Jury/Witness Service Terms and Conditions Statement

We are currently being consulted on the University's new statement on arrangements for jury/witness service and the statement will appear on the HR web pages in the near future.

One University Administration Project

Your Officers and Reps are keen to hear about examples of any new administrative duties that academic staff have asked to take on resulting from the implementation of the OUA. If you have been asked to take on additional duties or know of somebody who has been asked to take on additional duties due to the OUA project then please let us know. You can do this 'off-line' on Mal Hughes' UCU email address mal.ucu@fsmail.net. It is important for us all to work to role and be vigilant when inadequate managers ask us to perform beyond role. Perhaps we should mount a campaign "Work to role"?

UCU National Executive Committee Elections

Please do use your vote in the current UCU Elections 2012. You should have received your ballot paper at home and the ballot closes 1st March. Included in this round of elections is that for General Secretary where Sally Hunt, our current GS is standing against Mark Campbell. The choice could not be more interesting. This is a key role for the Union and so we do encourage you to read the supporting information with the ballot paper and to vote according to your judgement of who best will represent what we stand for as a Union and as an academic community.

Branch General Meeting

Date: 7th March 2012

Time: 2.00pm

Room: 2B067

There will be a great number of items to discuss at this meeting, so please come along and make your voice heard. Remember, the branch executive can only negotiate successfully with your continued support.