

New Year Editorial : Update from Nicky Goodall

UCU UWE Branch now want to focus on stress in the workplace- campaigning tirelessly regarding the working conditions of our members.

Dear Colleagues

I recently attended an excellent seminar on stress with John Bamford, an expert on Health & Safety in the workplace.

I would encourage you to look at the Health & Safety Executive Website and consider the stress management standards. It is widely recognised that stress has implications for both physical and mental health. Change at work is a stress management standard. John discussed how it can be challenging to encourage your employer to do a risk assessment regarding excessive workload if they do not recognise that this is a problem. However if we look at the Health & Safety Work Regulations of 1999, employers must be proactive and conduct risk assessments before a hazard has been revealed.

UCU have been campaigning on workload and the workload model for years, and we have asked your opinions in a variety of ways. However events have moved on and now the most recent staff survey results have been shared with us. Staff responses that describe excessive workload and related stress are clearly evident. We have an opportunity to work collectively here to maintain a focus on this very real issue now. This is essential because collective action will stand far more chance of helping us all to work towards a resolution for everyone's benefit, including the students who need us to be both effective and creative.

A reminder here of Sandy Thomas' TEN TOP TIPS for dealing with excessive workload

- 1 Ensure your Workload allocation has a contingency plan at the beginning of the academic year (July 31st)
- 2 Monitor your allocation regularly through WAMS and ensure it does not exceed 550 bundles in an academic year. Print it off each time it changes.
- 3 Stop doing 'unallocated' work activities
- 4 Prune unnecessary tasks
- 5 Identify 'under allocated activities' and discuss with your manager
- 6 Collect evidence of workload challenges and changes
- 7 Collect evidence of management decisions
- 8 Follow the UWE process for dealing with workload allocation disagreements
- 9 Consider a collective grievance- this is always more powerful and effective
- 10 Report and document all stress related ill health



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Special points of interest for 2015

- Can you take your leave?- send us your views
- Work related stress- have your say
- Tell us about your experiences of bundle issues
- Do you know who your Reps are?
- Date for your diary:
- International Women's Day: 8th March 2015

Enjoying a life of ease at the top table.....URWelcome, the Happy Cat declares.....



Stress? What is Stress? Do I look Stressed to you?????

UCU UWE Branch recent email Ballot results:

Colleagues,

Here is the result of the 2 ballots:

Result for Ballot on Workload and Car Parking Disputes

Mandate to conclude the dispute over workload

Yes - I agree that the dispute over workload should be

concluded [48.7%]

No - I do not agree. The dispute should continue [37.9%]

Astain [13.2%]

Mandate to conclude the dispute over car parking

Yes - I agree that the dispute over car parking should be

concluded [64.8%]

No - I do not agree. The dispute should continue [20.6%]

Astain [14.5%]

We are planning for a UCU UWE Branch Social Networking event this Semester. Any ideas as to venue and resourcing this please contact the Recruitment Officer on Nicky.Goodall@uwe.ac.uk.

In the February newsletter we will be reminding everyone of important future meeting dates, where you can share your views with your branch.

Branch Executive Contact Numbers:

Branch Chair: Robert Pardoe– 88447

Vice Chair: Elaine Hall– 88781

Secretaries:

Harriet Bradley- 871150

Nicola Goodall– 88559

Negotiating Secretary : Andy Tubb– 82487

Treasurer: Matthew Godsell-88553

Health & Safety: Libby Thompson– 88921

Faculty Reps:

Sandy Thomas– 88626

Janet Miller-Janet3.Miller@uwe.ac.uk

Christopher Mason– 82949

James Costello– 82498

Frank Maddix– 85510

Terryl Bacon– 84428

STRESS.....

This winter the Branch have agreed to continue to prioritize campaigning on work-related stress. The results of the recent branch survey in workload indicates that this remains a significant issue for many staff. This is just one of the tangible consequences of working within the current workload model. It is important to be able to identify signs of stress in ourselves and others. Equally important is the will to address this on an individual and collective level.

KEEP A WORKLOAD DIARY– EVIDENCE OF ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

Workload

UCU believe that the Workload Model as it currently stands is not 'fit for purpose', leading to the majority of our members reporting to be significantly stressed as a result of excessive and unclear workloads. In order to keep a record of all of the work that you do, you might like to use software that enables you to keep a track of the range and quantity of work that you are expected to perform.

Currently we feel that management have not sufficiently addressed the issues raised formally by us in the workload dispute, and in the absence of a full written response from them (that we have requested), we do not consider it useful to continue with this current dispute as it stands at the present time.

Consider carefully what happens to your workload if you go on sick leave. Is your work reallocated? Is it still waiting for your return? You should be allocated 3 WLB's for each day that you are on sick leave.

JCU Response to Staff Survey & VC Update

Dear Colleagues, the OCR Staff Survey results echo the serious concerns revealed in the UCU survey in August 2014.

Workload and Well-being: We were very surprised to see that workload was not mentioned by the VC as the staff survey suggests that there is *still a significant problem with overload for academic staff*. We have previously highlighted the possible adverse effects of this and OCS note that their 'wellbeing measures show UWE is below the UK norm'.

Only 29% of Faculty Staff agree that they can complete their duties without regularly working unreasonable hours (compared with 61% of service staff) and less than half (48%) are able to cope with the competing demands and pressures at work (compared with 66% of service staff).

Only 46% of Faculty staff are able to take all of their annual leave (scholarly leave was not included in the survey).

Only 38% of Faculty staff agree that UWE are doing a good job of promoting well-being. This may be related to the stress related health effects of our current work overload.

Communication: Significant numbers of staff do not feel that they are being heard or enabled to contribute to decision making. The unions raised this previously and are concerned that the ACAS recommendations aimed at improving joint working between staff and management have not all been implemented. In choosing not to discuss one of the main concerns of faculty staff (excess workload) the VC is again not hearing the Staff Voice

Only 19% of faculty staff agree that the staff voice is heard within the university, and only 13% agree that they are consulted when change is proposed.

Leadership and change management: Faculty Staff do not have confidence in senior leadership (33% positive score) and do not feel supported (17%) when change is taking place. Although local management scores better, only 50% have regular one-to one meetings with their manager and only 31% believe that poor performance is currently being dealt with. Previously we found that although some academics are well supported locally, others are not, with potential adverse effects on stress and health.

Engagement: OCR have highlighted the importance of 'Engagement' in determining Student satisfaction scores, therefore it is concerning to see that the overall Faculty Engagement Score is only 57% and does not appear to have increased since 2012. The VC is pleased that colleagues feel more positive about UWE but we are concerned that this 'improvement' in attitude may be partly ascribed to the demographic changes since 2011. HR figures suggest that Faculty staff have decreased from 55% to 46% of the total workforce with a concomitant increase in staff in the 'Services' from 36% to 48%. The 'Services' show higher rates of agreement compared with academic staff and we wonder if this change was taken into account when analysing these results.

Staff Development: The VC acknowledged that only a third of staff reported having sufficient time for development and training, however amongst faculty staff that figure is only 21%. UCU have previously suggested that staff should be given a bundle allocation for staff development and an allowance for online learning and generic updating.

Overall the survey has enabled us to 'have a voice' regarding our work at UWE. UCU will continue to raise these issues at every opportunity and we suggest that our members continue to record their workload and keep their managers well informed in a timely fashion with regard to any perceived overload or changes over the year.

If you wish to discuss any of these issues further, please contact your Faculty Representative.

