



## UCU UWE BRANCH NEWSLETTER

December 2020

### Latest Update on UWE-UCU dispute with UWE Management over COVID arrangements

UWE-UCU's negotiating team met on 10 November with the Vice-Chancellor (VC) and other members of UWE's Senior Management Team (SMT) This was in an attempt to move the negotiations forwards, please see previous notes:

<https://sway.office.com/OCzxLfqlxbVSSST1?ref=email>

Negotiations did not reach beyond the first point of the UCU motion relating to 'on campus' teaching:

Our negotiators reported back some small but significant shifts on the part of the SMT not least in relation to empowering further Programme Teams to develop a suitable blended learning experience for Teaching Block 2. Although still a long way from our demand for all but the most essential teaching to occur online, this was a start.

Since this time the communications received from the SMT have refused to acknowledge the negotiated advances. Also SMT have failed to produce an 'agreed written record ... of all decisions made or meetings held' as stipulated in point 5.2 of the disputes' procedure. After discussion amongst the negotiators and the Branch Executive Committee, it was reported to the Members Meeting on 02 December that the VC and SMT will be informed that UWE-UCU will take the dispute to Stage Two of the disputes' procedure and seek another meeting as soon as possible.

The latest VC Communication sent to all employees suggests a changed outlook which contradicts the negotiated agreement with UCU.

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#### *Our UWE-UCU Plan:*

*To meet members early in 2021 to decide how we want to progress with the motion: are there key motion points to take forward? Are there key departments which are not complying? Are there members unsafe or put at risk?*

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## Further Details to UCU Motion 19/10/2020

## VC response

**“There has never been any university-wide ‘rule’ about the amount of on campus and off campus teaching.** Decisions have been able to be made locally, drawing on programme, practical and pedagogic considerations. ... This of course recognises that subjects and programmes are taught more or less intensively; we would expect that programme teams have combined on campus and off campus student engagement opportunities in ways that approximate to how programmes would have been taught in past years (in terms of ‘contact’ time). To be clear, we expect that students will receive the same levels of teaching time but teaching time does not necessarily mean on campus, in person teaching”.

## VC Update 11/12/2020

“Over the past months I have listened hard to our students and staff. ... The delivery of academic programmes will continue to be blended for teaching block two, with a balance that appropriately supports the pedagogies of the programme, as determined by programme teams. We should continue to ensure that all learning opportunities are meaningful and engaging, with on-campus delivery building on and supporting online delivery. ... To achieve this, from January, we expect that **all students will receive the maximum of on-campus learning possible, within our Covid-secure parameters. We expect this to be a minimum of 9-12 hours a month.** As in normal years, this will be higher on some programmes at different points in the year, for example when linked to placements and specialist lab, studio or simulation activity. How this will be delivered for each programme must be determined by programme leaders and teams, working with Associate Heads of Department and Faculty Executive teams to manage resources and people flows creatively. The format will be driven by local discussions and decisions, for example, it could be that students are encouraged to attend on-campus ‘blocks’ rather than every week”.

Whatever your assessment of the situation and the significance of the shift towards stipulating a specific number of contact hours for ‘on campus’ teaching, it is evident that we (UWE-UCU) have not yet mobilised enough pressure to make significant progress towards our demands as set out in our motion. So this pressure can and must be increased. As stated in our previous update, you can help to do this by taking any or all of the following actions:

- Talking with your colleagues within UCU and beyond about the issues contained in the motion.
- Casting your vote in the indicative ballot if you have not already done so. Here's the link

<https://forms.gle/C1Gg74QPQE7iA2oF9>

- Checking with your colleagues that they have voted in the indicative ballot and encouraging them to do so. You could forward the link to them.
- Attending our EGM meetings in order to share your experiences, have your say, and inform the negotiating process. Watch out for the email invitations to join using ‘Zoom’.
- Becoming a departmental representative for UWE-UCU which will enable you to gain access to the list of UCU members in your department so that you can encourage them to vote and

participate in UWE-UCU activities such as meetings. Please express your interest to [Elizabeth2.Reilly@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Elizabeth2.Reilly@uwe.ac.uk)

## Latest correspondence 14 December 2020

Dear Professor West,

Since our correspondence of the 7th December I have not received communication regarding the dispute and its escalation. I was expecting to meet before the university closes for Christmas, so that a clear message could be sent to members, however I note that the message regarding the university's expectations for face to face, on campus teaching has been provided. We have serious concerns given the rate of infection in Bristol and I ask that we organise a meeting as the earliest opportunity, and urge the university to engage in meaningful negotiations around the concerns of members and for their safety and the safety and experience of the students.

Yours Sincerely,

Phil Sayce on behalf of the UCU Membership.