

UWE-UCU Workload Majority petition and the national ballot for industrial action

UWE-UCU is currently engaged in a campaign for a ***fair, transparent and sustainable workload system***. As part of this campaign it has launched a majority petition which will be published once at least 60% of members have signed it. The collection of signatures for this petition is an ongoing process as is canvassing of members to help to boost participation. Proactive canvassing will however be suspended during the two-week period during which members are being asked to participate in the national ballot for industrial action. This is to ensure that there is no confusion between participation in these two related but distinct activities. Whatever the outcome of the ballot for industrial action and indeed any action arising from it, UWE-UCU believes that a strong and effective local campaign will be required in order to help to deliver locally on any agreement that is reached at the national level.

Update on the local '3 demands campaign'

The 3 demands on workload are:

1. The WAMS system should be subject to an in-depth review by the Senior Management Team (SMT) in full consultation with staff and the union with a view to either revising it so it more accurately and fairly represents the work carried out by staff or seeking a new and better alternative. In addition, SMT must enable much greater ongoing union participation in the Workload Management Group.
2. If the results of the WAMS system review means that the number of FTE academic staff at UWE needs to be increased, then this must happen as a matter of urgency so that everyone at UWE can continue to deliver a staff and student experience of the highest quality now and in the future. UWE should plan to be in the top 30 of the Good University Guide for 'Student – Staff Ratio' by 2025 and in the top 20 by 2030.
3. All staff should have recognition and compensation for the additional work undertaken since March 2020 (including unbundled work). Acceptable and reasonable compensation should take the form of an honorarium payment of 3 weeks' pay or alternatively, Covid recovery bundles (equivalent to 15 days) as standard. Equivalent recognition and compensation should be made for research staff and academic-related staff. Additional annual leave is not acceptable, because this is a meaningless offer within the current workload system.

Many of you have taken the first crucial step to demand a ***fair, transparent and sustainable workload system***, resulting in a good initial sign up for the majority petition across all faculties. However, without each and all of you signing, it is unlikely that senior management will make meaningful changes in relation to our workload. It's not as though members haven't raised this before. A dispute has been running since 2018, whilst frequent grievances have centred on the very same workload issues we face now. But things are worse than ever.

To sign the petition, please check your inboxes (for the email address you are registered with UCU) for Monday 4th, Monday 11th October and/ or Friday 15th October. As noted above, we will cease activity on this during the national ballot, and resume Friday 5th November.

The national ballot: 18 October – 4 November

The national ballot relates to two disputes. One dispute is over the USS pension scheme and UCU members at UWE will not participate in this ballot. They will be balloted about taking industrial action over the other dispute about the 'four fights': pay, workload, the gender pay gap, and casualisation. UWE Ballot papers will be sent in the post to members on Monday 18 October, and online replacement ballot packs can be requested from Friday 22 October until Thursday 28 October (5pm), and the ballot will close at Thursday 4 November (12 midday).

Further information is available [Here](#)



The School of ill-health, ill-being and social irresponsibility?



Huge expansion in programmes without the necessary staffing resource or teaching space is generating a serious crisis and colleagues are bearing the brunt of it. Colleagues at Glenside report feeling exhausted demoralised and 'on their knees'. Colleagues are leaving more rapidly than they can be recruited. Teams are struggling to plan and deliver due to high vacancies, and in turn, members are experiencing stress, sickness, and hopelessness. Crucially, Module Leaders, Programme Leaders and Professional Leads are under excruciating pressure trying to address this worsening situation.

Appalled that action plans from previous collective grievances have not been followed through, dismayed that the restructuring has been prioritised over real, agreed, tangible solutions, staff are now considering further action. Following on from disappointing NSS scores, students are now complaining that they have been offered on campus classes of 25 but they are in fact now experiencing online classes of 60. This reflects the fundamental principle of the '3 demands' campaign - that a ***fair, transparent and sustainable workload system*** is needed to support ***excellent teaching conditions for staff, and excellent learning conditions for students.***

Glenside Members were invited to think of a collective way forward at a meeting on Thursday 14th October 2-3pm, with further meetings on Wednesday 20th October 3-4pm and Wednesday 27th October 3-4pm. Please add these to your diary and watch out for updates.



Have you been rewarded for all the extra hard work last year? The problem with honorariums is that they are not honourable.



Members have been contacting UCU about the Honorarium system, resulting in UCU seeking clarification from HR about how these are awarded. Like our workload system, this was found to be far from 'fair and transparent'; rather it is murky and divisive. People thought they were being nominated by their managers, but then found out they hadn't actually been put forward. The process was in fact decided by an internal committee, on what appears to be obscure criteria. Moreover, the actual payment to the 41 staff receiving honorariums does not reflect the additional work undertaken. Some staff reported that it amounted to approximately £5/ her hour. This of course is £5/ hour more than that

received by the rest of UWE staff for all of the extra work that we have contributed since the pandemic began.

The practice and process of honoraria is an insulting response to the additional time, effort and sacrifices made by ALL staff during the pandemic. UCU's third element of our workload campaign demands that UWE compensate all staff for this.

Changes to Academic Regulations



On Sunday 26th September 21, you will have received an email about changes to the Assessment Regulations. These include introduction of a "3 day grace period", amended rules to 7 day extensions for all students and 14 day extensions for students with RA. Moreover, the new FAQ's seemed to confirm the retention of the uncapped resits policy introduced in last year. The latter created a range of challenges for staff managing their workload, and a number of concerns have been raised about implications of further changes.

Here are just a few concerns from members:

The new changes may compromise some good student-focused working practices that have been developed at subject and programmatic level, e.g. extra early assessments to identify student need.

Subjects with higher proportions of students requiring reasonable adjustments are likely to be disproportionately affected.

The changes will increase pressure to workload and workflow. This will create extended marking periods and more negotiation with SAT for tight deadlines.

The 3 day grace period may increase the temptation to work at weekends, when marking could become available.

These changes add to the creeping challenges to scheduling uninterrupted annual or scholarly leave. It is likely, for example, to exacerbate the impact observed following the introductions of uncapped resits. Reports from members is that this greatly increased the marking load in the summer.

Finally, members are angry about the lack of consultation with staff about these changes. **Imposing changes without due consultation hampers understanding and therefore acceptance of them. It runs counter to the culture of collegiality that we expect in a university setting.**

Lecture capture – Does the university control your ‘performance’?



The expectation to record lectures has accelerated rapidly and is becoming normalised practice across the sector. This is raising issues and questions for UCU members including at UWE.

A number of members have contacted the branch executive to raise their concerns, with regard to the ownership and future use of recorded lectures. Some have been told by their managers that the university own all rights and can do whatever they want with the recordings in the future without consent. However, UCU’s lawyers suggest that giving a lecture is regarded as a performance and that employees would subsequently have legal rights. Giving a lecture is regarded as a 'performance' for the purpose of intellectual property law. There are two important rights when making a recording of a lecture/teaching session: the right to make a recording of the performance and the right to make available the performance. It is the second part that members have control over. UCU recommends that agreement could be reached by way of an agreed licence. The branch does not believe that an agreed licence exists. Accordingly, the university does not have the right to release the recordings without the member’s consent.

Why should members be concerned?

Issues across the sector include where recorded lectures have:

- been passed on beyond the intended audience.
- been used instead of an actual lecture (e.g. when someone is striking, used the year after instead of a resourced person etc.).
- not been acknowledged as part of teaching allocation at the time and in subsequent years.

- been used for purposes that were not intended by the 'performer' (e.g. performance management, quality assurance, surveillance etc).

We are consequently seeking to negotiate an updated policy which will clearly set out what recordings can and cannot be used for. The branch has also requested that the matter of ownership is discussed with management and that the University's position is clarified. At this current time UCU does not believe that the university possess rights relating to the release and future use of recorded lectures.

We have encouraged members to consider ways to protect their performance rights, for example, adapting the following wording that can be adapted for module handbooks and other materials:

"Jenny Doe affirms their authorship and performance of the lectures that they delivers as part of this module. These lectures are also licensed solely for use in the academic year 2021-22, although reuse may be possible for the subsequent academic year at their discretion. Students are reminded that these recordings cannot be copied or disseminated further and certainly cannot made available to anybody other than current staff and students at UWE Bristol".

Moreover, we would like to offer space at our next members' meeting to share your ideas for protecting your rights.

Your voice matters, but your actions matter more

The passion, ideas and solidarity demonstrated at members meetings, and through individual contacts sent to UCU give branch activists the necessary ear to the ground that's needed to reflect the many voices and experiences at UWE. You are therefore welcomed to our next members meeting on Wednesday 20th October at 2pm. We can drill down on some of the issues above and more.

However, the only thing that will change local UWE practices for the better is your action. We urge you to sign the majority petition in support of the workload campaign, to get your colleagues to sign the petition, and to commit to further action to demand the working conditions you need and deserve.