



UCU@UWE Branch Newsletter

Autumn 2026





An Information Bulletin for Members at UCU UWE Bristol

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Welcome from Matt Proom, branch Chair

Welcome to the latest edition of the UWE UCU newsletter.

I want to begin by acknowledging the death of Jason Arday and reaffirming our branch's commitment to anti-racism and challenging the far right in all its forms. I will not repeat what has already been said about this tragedy, but we must be unequivocal: racism, discrimination and hate have no place at UWE. The University must take meaningful action to ensure that all staff and students can work and study in an inclusive and safe environment.



As we begin a new academic year, we face both significant challenges and important opportunities. Below are some of the key issues that will shape our work over the coming months.

Reduced student numbers

Student recruitment has declined across many areas of the University. UWE will need to respond to these pressures, and that inevitably creates risks for jobs and terms and conditions. Now is the time to organise within your workplace. If your School or College is facing reduced student numbers, consider becoming a rep and encourage your colleagues to join the union. We are happy to come and talk to you in your workplaces!

Workload model

We know that the introduction of the new Simitive workload model has not gone smoothly. While it is not yet clear where the difficulties lie, our involvement in the procurement process suggested a system with significant potential for improvement. We have raised members' concerns at the highest level, including with the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, on behalf of both academic staff and managers responsible for workload allocation.

It is important to be clear that the primary change to workload allocation should be the move from bundles to hours. Although significant, we support this change because it increases transparency and should ultimately make workloads easier to understand and scrutinise. No member should be allocated more than their contracted annual hours:

- 1.0 FTE: 1,575 hours
- 0.8 FTE: 1,260 hours
- 0.6 FTE: 945 hours

We also support making workload allocations within programmes visible to colleagues working in them. I have heard claims that "the unions" oppose this approach. That is categorically untrue.

Looking ahead, a major priority this year will be influencing the workload model planned for implementation in 2027/28. We have already shared a comprehensive report based on members' experiences with the Vice-Chancellor's Executive and await a formal response. Members who would like to read the report should contact the branch.

Alongside this, we continue to work with the University to develop a fairer, more timely and less punitive approach to resolving workplace issues. We will also be establishing joint working groups on AI and academic integrity, equality impacts, and future teaching models.

Many members contacted us regarding the closure of the Wild Kitchen in S Block on Frenchay Campus. The decision was made without consultation and without proper consideration of those who regularly relied on the facility. Following representations from UCU, including a petition and a report from the All Faiths and None Network, the issue was raised at the Joint Union Forum in August, where an apology was issued. We are now awaiting a formal written response.

Pay

You will have seen that employers have imposed a final pay offer of 2% for 2026/27. In the recent indicative ballot, members voted:

- **Reject the offer:** 69.3%
- **Accept the offer:** 30.7%
- **Willing to take industrial action:** 60.2%
- **Not willing to take industrial action:** 39.8%

Turnout was 30.4%.

Let us be clear: a 2% pay award is another real-terms pay cut. It fails to keep pace with inflation and adds to years of declining pay while workloads and expectations continue to rise. At the same time, we must recognise the difficult context facing the Higher Education sector and listen carefully to members' priorities.

Our task is to develop a member-led, union-supported pay strategy that builds confidence, strengthens participation, and enables us to fight effectively for the pay and conditions that staff deserve.

This is your union, and we can only act on the issues we know about, so please keep in touch and make your voice heard. I wish all members a positive start to the academic year and thank our officers and representatives for their tireless commitment to supporting colleagues across UWE.

In Solidarity,

Matt



Farewell & Happy Retirement Chris Mason.

After 13 years supporting the branch in a variety of roles, including Vice-Chair, Caseworker, H&S lead, Negotiator and CATE rep Chris Mason retired at the end of August. Chris supported numerous members with both simple and complex issues and has guided, advised and encouraged new branch exec reps and leads. Chris's knowledge, expertise and passion will be very much missed in the branch. We met Chris for a coffee and farewell and presented him with a card and gift from the branch. Thank you Chris for all your support and a very long and happy retirement.

And on that note, let's introduce the new CATE rep.....

Spotlight: Charlotte Selleck

Charlotte.Selleck@uwe.ac.uk

This year I'm taking over as CATE UCU Rep from Chris Mason, following his retirement. I'm grateful to branch members for giving me the opportunity to take on the role, and I'm looking forward to working with colleagues from across CATE. I'm always very happy to have a coffee and a chat – whether you have a union issue, a question, or simply fancy putting the world to rights.



I'm also continuing as Women's Rep and Disability Rep, so apparently my response to dropping down to a three-day working week was to acquire more union jobs...

I've worked at UWE since 2017, teaching on the undergraduate English Language and Linguistics programme. During that time, I've also been a Programme Leader – a role I have now, thankfully, passed on! Outside UWE, I'm a busy working mum of two, so the move to three days a week has brought some much-needed breathing space (in theory, at least).

I grew up in the South-East in what was most definitely not a union household! What I did grow up with, though, was a strong sense that you should stand up for what you believe is right and be prepared to put your head above the parapet – something anyone who knows me will confirm I have very little difficulty doing.

My dad was a lawyer and my mum taught in a secondary school in a particularly deprived area. My parents also fostered children throughout much of my childhood, and growing up in that environment taught me a great deal about inequality, opportunity and the importance of people having someone in their corner.

I joined UCU after some very wise encouragement from a former colleague. I'll admit, at the time, I had all sorts of preconceived ideas about who joined a union and what unions actually did. Over the years, however, UCU has been there for me through maternity leave, the Covid pandemic, sickness and bereavement. Those experiences completely changed my understanding of what being part of a union means.

Union support is a big part of why I became more actively involved with the branch. I care deeply about social justice, about using our collective voice for the greater good, and about making sure that those of us with the broadest shoulders use them to protect and support colleagues coming up behind us.

I'm really looking forward to the year ahead and to getting to know more of our CATE members. Most importantly, I want colleagues to know that I'm here if they need support, advice or simply someone to talk something through with. Please do come and find me – preferably over coffee!

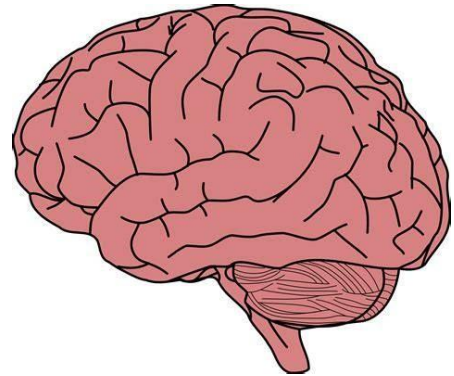
Neurodiversity at Work: Unlocking Potential Through Inclusion

by Sarah Harding

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in how human brains function. It recognises that there is no single “correct” way of thinking, learning or processing information.

- **Neurodiversity** = diversity of all human brains
- **Neurodivergence** = when someone’s brain works differently from what is considered typical.



Common neurotypes include

- Autism
- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia.

Did you know?

- Around **10% of the UK population are neurodivergent**
- Approximately **700,000 people in the UK are autistic**

Why neurodiversity matters at work

Neurodiversity is not a deficit—it is part of human diversity. When organisations value different ways of thinking, they unlock creativity, innovation and problem-solving potential.

English Naturalist and TV presenter Chris Packham was once told "you must look outside the box". Chris replied, "I don't see a box, we need people who don't see boxes."

Strengths of neurodivergent thinking

When barriers are removed, common traits translate into valuable skills: *Neurotype Potential strengths*

- Autism - Attention to detail, logic, reliability
- ADHD - Creativity, innovation, crisis response
- Dyslexia - Visual thinking, problem solving
- Dyspraxia - Big-picture thinking, persistence

Barriers neurodivergent employees face

Many challenges at work are not caused by individuals, but by environments designed for a narrow “norm.” This reflects the **social model of disability**: people are disabled by barriers, not their condition.

Common workplace barriers



- Heavy workload and rigid expectations
- Sensory overload (noise, lighting, clutter)
- Unclear communication or jargon
- Inflexible schedules and processes
- Discriminatory policies or cultures

These can lead to stress, burnout and disengagement.

The hidden cost: masking

Many neurodivergent employees “mask” their natural behaviours to fit in—suppressing traits and mimicking neurotypical expectations.

Impact of masking:

- Exhaustion and burnout
- Anxiety and overwhelm
- Reduced productivity over time

Creating inclusive environments reduces the need for masking and improves wellbeing. These can lead to stress, burnout and disengagement.

What inclusive workplaces look like.



1. Remove barriers (not just support individuals)

Instead of relying solely on individual adjustments, organisations should redesign environments:

- Flexible working arrangements
- Clear communication and expectations
- Accessible formats and tools
- Quiet spaces and sensory-aware design

2. Provide reasonable adjustments

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, employers must make adjustments to avoid disadvantaging disabled workers.

Examples:

- Assistive technology (e.g. screen readers)
- Flexible hours or workload adjustments
- Changes to workspace or environment

3. Train managers and teams

Awareness reduces stigma and improves collaboration:

- Understanding neurodivergence
- Adapting communication styles
- Recognising different working patterns

Rethinking “performance”

Traditional workplace strategies don’t always work for neurodivergent people.

Effective approaches include:

- Working *with* individual strengths
- Leveraging hyperfocus
- Breaking tasks into manageable steps
- “Body doubling” (working alongside others)



A more inclusive future

Inclusive workplaces benefit everyone—not just neurodivergent employees.

- ✓ Better communication
- ✓ Greater innovation
- ✓ Stronger engagement
- ✓ Improved wellbeing

As the UCU guidance highlights, removing barriers doesn't just support individuals—it strengthens organisations and teams as a whole.



Neurodiversity is a strength—but only when workplaces are designed to include it.

By shifting focus from “fixing individuals” to removing barriers, organisations can unlock the full potential of all employees.

Pensions: A Growing Concern for University Staff



by Judith Worthington branch Pensions Officer

**Teachers' Pension Scheme**

**Universities Superannuation Scheme**

**Local Government Pension Scheme**

PENSIONS: A GROWING CONCERN FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF

Pensions remain a significant issue for university staff across the UK. Rising employer pension costs, financial pressures on higher education institutions, and uncertainty about the long-term sustainability of some pension schemes have created understandable concern among employees.



For many academic and professional services staff, pensions form a crucial part of their overall reward package and future financial security. Any reduction in pension benefits, increases in employee contributions, or changes to scheme membership can have a substantial impact on retirement outcomes.



The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) and the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) are particularly important to university staff. Across the sector, some employers have reviewed their participation in pension arrangements as they seek to manage increasing costs. Staff are therefore rightly concerned about the possibility of scheme changes, reduced benefits, or the loss of access to valuable defined-benefit pensions.



At present, UWE Bristol has stated that it has no intention of opting out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). This will be reassuring to TPS members, who value the security and benefits the scheme provides.

**QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

If you have any questions or would like to discuss pension-related matters, please feel free to contact me.



ADVICE TO STAFF: KEEP YOUR EMPLOYMENT RECORDS

Members are strongly advised to keep their own copies of employment and pension-related records throughout their careers. This should include:

**Contracts****Payslips****P60s****Promotion letters****Pension benefit statements****Correspondence relating to pension contributions or service history**

While employers are required to maintain records, these may not be retained indefinitely and can often be held for only six years after they are no longer required therefore personal records can prove invaluable when checking pension calculations, resolving discrepancies, evidencing periods of service discrepancies often only surface when you are considering retirement. It is now easy to check that things are up to date using the TPS app.



**I ATTENDED A PENSIONS MEETING AND HAVE PREPARED A REPORT.**

I'm happy to share this and discuss any issues.

**Judith Worthington**

Senior Lecturer
Pronouns: she/her

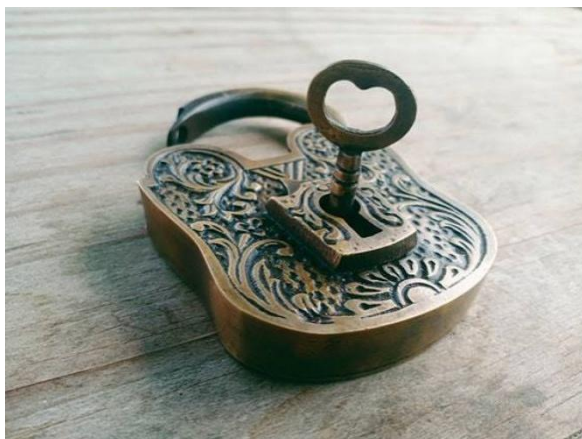
**UWE Bristol**

University of the West of England

Unlocking Accountabilities

What the Exit of a 'Head of School' Tells Us About Leadership and Governance in HE

by Clive Warn and Sarah Harding



When a senior manager departs following a protracted crisis, Higher Education institutions routinely default to a well-worn script: lukewarm praise, smooth corporate platitudes, and a swift brush under the carpet. The recent announcement regarding the departure of the Head of the School of Health and Social Wellbeing (SHSW) is a classic case in point.

While executive comms frame this departure around “dedication and professionalism,” staff across SHSW know the reality on the ground over the past three years and which tell a starkly different story.

The Reality Behind the Corporate Narrative

The departure comes on the heels of a summary publication of an externally commissioned review into the School. Yet, for years, UCU representatives and UCU members have been signalling severe structural failures that go far beyond standard operational friction:

- **Escalating Casework & Grievances:** A surge SHSW casework and individual grievances, team-level collective grievances, often evidencing leadership failures.
- **Health and Safety Failures:** Intervention via HSE safety alerts regarding management practices, alongside documented disregard for mental health, wellbeing, and staff safety during a normalised workload crisis.
- **Policy Breach:** The creation and attempted enforcement of local, "maverick" guidance directly contradicting established UWE institutional policy/process.
- **Refusal to Engage:** A prolonged breakdown in industrial relations, where the Head of School repeatedly refused to meet with UCU representatives or engage with staff concerns.

Despite early interventions, the underlying cultural and workload issues remained unaddressed until the external review made the situation untenable.

Key Thinking Points for UCU Members

This scenario raises critical questions about executive accountability, risk management, and how senior leadership handles systemic failure in UK universities.

1. **The "Glass Cliff" vs. Institutional Protectionism** Why does executive leadership allow a crisis to compound for three years before taking action? When senior managers are protected from meaningful oversight while staff suffer burnout and distress, the institution fails in its primary duty of care (Glass cliff theory (Ryan & Haslam 2005)).
2. **Transparency and the Suppression of External Reviews** Staff are asking daily: *Where is the full external review report?* Suppressing the findings of an independently commissioned review deprives staff of answers and prevents real organisational learning. Transparency is not an optional extra; it is a prerequisite for workplace recovery.
3. **The Industrial Law Context: Misconduct, Incapacity, or "SOSR"?** In employment law, exits of this nature are often managed via Settlement Agreements under "Some Other Substantial Reason" (SOSR) (*Employment Rights Act 1996, s.98(1)(b)*) to avoid public tribunal scrutiny or formal disciplinary procedures. While legally convenient for university executives, using non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) or managed exits in HE frequently insulates senior leaders from the very accountabilities applied stringently to frontline academic staff.
4. **HSE Management Standards & Legal Precedent** Under the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*, employers have a statutory duty to assess and control risks associated with work-related stress. Case law, such as *Walker v Northumberland County Council [1995]*, established that once an employer is on notice of systemic stress and management failures, failing to act exposes the institution to severe legal liability. The HSE intervention in SHSW was a clear warning signal that was largely side lined until external reviewers stepped in.

What Needs to Happen Next?

A change in figurehead does not automatically fix a broken culture. **As UCU members, we must demand:**

- **Full Disclosure:** Publication of the external review's findings and clear, time-bound action plans for implementation.
- **A "Grown-Up" Dialogue:** Direct, transparent engagement from Pro Vice-Chancellors and executive leadership with UCU representatives to rebuild trust and repair industrial relations.
- **Policy Realignment:** Immediate and strict adherence to UWE central policies on workload, safety, and grievance resolution.

We cannot allow corporate spin to erase three years of documented staff hardship. Real accountability requires open dialogue, systemic reform, and an unequivocal commitment to staff wellbeing.

A Summary of the Address by Maria Chondrogianni, UCU President



In the President's address to UCU Congress 2026, the central theme was the need to defend post-16 education through collective action, solidarity, and sustained political pressure. Speaking during UCU's twentieth anniversary year, the President reflected on the union's origins and drew powerful parallels between the struggles that led to UCU's formation in 2006 and the challenges facing education workers today.

The speech opened by acknowledging that Congress coincided with Eid-ul-Adha, recognising the importance of ensuring that all members could participate fully despite religious and family commitments. This emphasis on inclusion set the tone for a speech rooted in solidarity and collective responsibility.

The President reflected on the events of twenty years earlier when UCU was created through the merger of AUT and NATFHE. Recalling participation in the 2006 higher education marking and assessment boycott, the President described a period in which staff faced a substantial pay gap compared with other public sector professionals. Through determined industrial action, members secured a settlement worth over 13% across three years. This victory, achieved through unity, strategy and determination, was presented as an inspiration for current struggles.

The speech argued that many of the problems faced in 2006 remain unresolved and are now evident across all sectors represented by UCU.

Adult and Continuing Education

The speech strongly condemned the government's 6% reduction in Adult Skills Funding, describing it as a direct attack on adult and continuing education. The President recounted participation in a parliamentary lobby attended by around 500 students and staff, where compelling evidence was presented about the value of adult education.

Members highlighted the consequences of funding cuts, including course closures and reduced access to education for some of the most disadvantaged groups in society. These include unemployed adults, learners with disabilities, people studying English as an

additional language, adults with limited qualifications, and low-income workers seeking new skills.

The President argued that adult education plays a vital role in supporting social mobility, employment opportunities, and community development. Funding cuts therefore affect not only educational institutions but also wider society. The union's efforts to reverse these cuts were praised as an important and ongoing campaign.

Higher Education Crisis

The largest section of the speech focused on the deepening crisis in higher education.

The President stated that approximately 30,000 jobs have been lost across the sector during the last three years and that staff salaries have fallen by more than 30% in real terms due to below-inflation pay settlements. At the same time, universities continue to pursue redundancy programmes affecting thousands of staff.

Examples cited included:

- Nottingham University, where 2,700 staff had recently been placed at risk and around 700 redundancies were expected.
- Sheffield Hallam University, where roughly 1,000 jobs had been lost over two years.
- Essex University, where 400 jobs and the Southend campus were under threat.
- London Metropolitan University, where 120 jobs faced cuts.
- Ulster University, with proposals affecting 450 posts.

Other institutions facing major challenges included Dundee, Leicester, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Heriot-Watt, Strathclyde, Lincoln, and Birmingham City University.

The President emphasised that redundancies damage not only staff but also students, local economies and regional communities. Universities are often major employers within their areas, meaning job losses have wide-ranging economic consequences.

Attacks on Pensions and Conditions

Special attention was given to developments in post-1992 universities, where employers were accused of attempting to weaken terms and conditions and reduce pension rights.

Examples included:

- Southampton Solent's proposal to move academic staff into a private pension scheme.
- Northumbria University's pressure on staff regarding pension arrangements.
- Sheffield Hallam's proposed division between research-active and teaching-only staff.

- Similar concerns at London South Bank University.

The President argued that these developments risk creating fragmented and unequal workforces. As a member representative on the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) Pension Board, the President pledged to continue defending pension provision for education staff.

Criticism of Government Policy

Responsibility for the higher education crisis was attributed to both employers and government. The President criticised Labour for maintaining what was described as a failed market-based funding model inherited from previous governments.

Particular concern was expressed about:

- University insolvency risks.
- Lack of public investment.
- Dependence on international student fees.
- The inclusion of international students within migration statistics.
- Failure to recognise higher education as a public good.

The President reiterated a long-standing commitment to free higher education and argued that substantial public investment is urgently needed.

Wider UCU Work

Beyond industrial issues, the speech celebrated the breadth of work undertaken by UCU members.

Particular recognition was given to:

- Professional and academic-related staff.
- Anti-casualisation campaigns.
- Equality work.
- Regional and national structures across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Trade union collaboration through the TUC and STUC.
- Campaigns against precarious employment.
- Anti-racism and anti-far-right initiatives.

The President stressed that UCU is not simply a lecturers' union but a union representing all workers across post-16 education.

Equality, Climate and International Solidarity

The speech strongly defended UCU's equality agenda, expressing solidarity with LGBTQ+, women, migrant, Black and disabled members. The growth of far-right movements was identified as a major concern, making collective action against discrimination increasingly important.

Climate justice was also highlighted, with the President arguing that environmental action must remain a union priority.

Internationally, the President praised cooperation with sister unions worldwide and highlighted work through Education International. Activities included speaking at conferences across Europe on subjects such as academic freedom, artificial intelligence and workers' rights.

The President also expressed solidarity with Cuba and Palestine, condemning the humanitarian situation in Gaza and supporting international campaigns for justice and human rights.

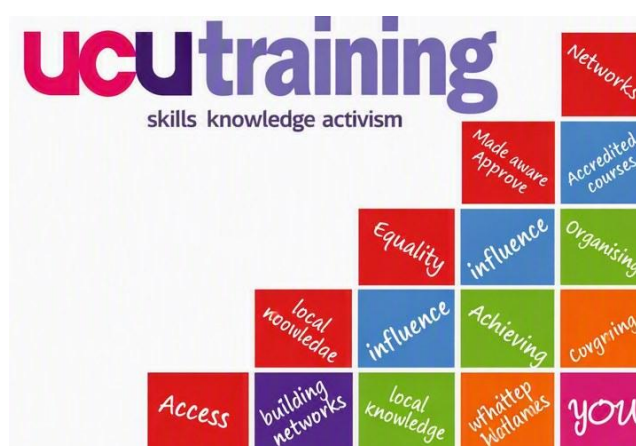
Conclusion

The speech concluded with a message of gratitude and determination. The President thanked union staff, branch activists, elected officers, former leaders and family members for their support. While acknowledging that not all ambitions had been achieved during the presidency, the President emphasised that the collective work of defending education continues.

The overarching message was that post-16 education is facing a profound crisis across FE, adult education, prison education and higher education. Drawing inspiration from the industrial victories that helped create UCU in 2006, the President urged members to unite around a combination of political campaigning, industrial action and collective solidarity to protect education, staff, students and communities for the future.

UCU training

UCU run a number of courses for Reps and Branch Officers specifically designed to improve understanding of health and safety rights and the duties in law of employers, workplace regulations, hazards, risk assessment, and tackling stress and bullying at work. [Check your regional listing in UCU training for further information](#)





What is JUF? by Anne Foley

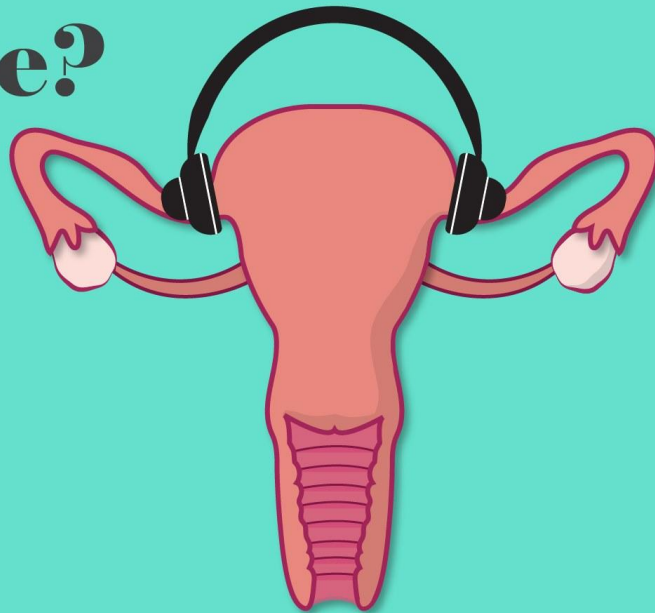
Each month the branch is invited to a Joint Union Forum (JUF) which are meetings between the Unions: UCU, Unite and Unison, and the Vice Chancellors Executive (VCE representatives Jo Midgley and Amanda Coffey) and Human Resources (representatives Dan Wood and Catherine Parker).

The purpose of these meetings is for the unions to raise concerns about issues that are affecting union members and for the VCE to update the unions on strategic planning. It is also an opportunity for the Unions to hold the VCE to account. Some of the information shared at these meetings is 'confidential' and the unions are sometimes unable to share everything discussed. However, where information is confidential, the unions work in the background to mitigate against issues that may be detrimental to union members.

The Unions use this space to keep members updated about what is raised at JUF and share the outcomes of these discussions. We invite members to alert their branch of any concerns you want the branch to raise on your behalf.

One of the big topics of last year, the branch raised, were the issues around the new workload system and the hidden work that is not accounted for. As the unions move to negotiations around this new system, the branch will continue to fight for a workload that is not only resembles the work the members do, but one that is safe and manageable.

What's Up With Your Down There?



Menopause Matters: Everyday Actions for Supportive Managers by Charlotte Selleck

Five simple things every line manager can do to better support colleagues experiencing menopause

Line managers are increasingly expected to support colleagues through a wide range of health and wellbeing issues, often while managing heavy workloads, competing priorities and limited training. Menopause can feel like another complex issue to navigate, but research suggests that supportive management does not require specialist expertise. Instead, small, consistent actions and a willingness to listen can make a significant difference to an individual's wellbeing, confidence and ability to remain at work (Griffiths, Hardy and Hunter, 2018; Rees *et al.*, 2021).

1. Start the conversation

You don't need to be a menopause expert to be a supportive manager. Creating opportunities for confidential, non-judgemental conversations helps reduce stigma and allows colleagues to raise concerns before they become crises.

Simple questions such as *"Is there anything we can do to better support you at work?"* can open the door to meaningful discussions. Research consistently identifies supportive conversations with line managers as one of the strongest predictors of positive workplace experiences during menopause (Griffiths, Hardy and Hunter, 2018).



2. Listen first and avoid assumptions



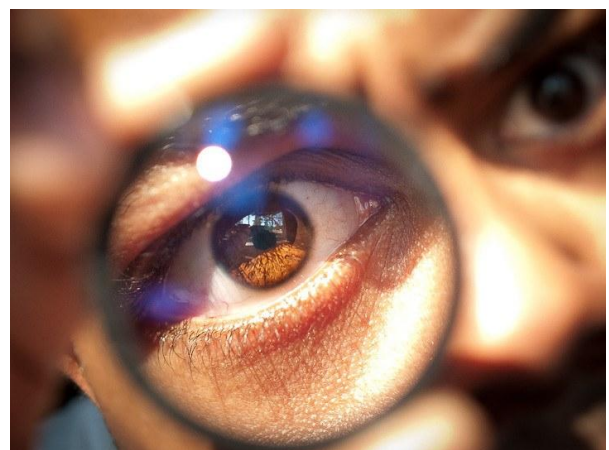
Menopause is highly individual. While some people experience relatively few symptoms, others may experience significant fatigue, anxiety, sleep disturbance, hot flushes or cognitive changes such as "brain fog". Symptoms can fluctuate over time and affect work in different ways.

Rather than assuming what someone needs, work collaboratively to identify practical solutions. Evidence suggests that personalised support is considerably more effective than standardised approaches (Rees *et al.*, 2021).

3. Focus on simple, practical adjustments

Many of the most effective workplace adjustments cost little or nothing. These might include flexible working hours following poor sleep, hybrid working where appropriate, access to fans or cooler workspaces, flexibility around medical appointments, regular breaks or temporary adjustments to workload.

Recent reviews suggest that timely workplace adjustments, supportive managers and organisational commitment to menopause



awareness improve wellbeing, reduce sickness absence and help organisations retain experienced employees (Griffiths, Hardy and Hunter, 2018; McCarthy *et al.*, 2023; Taylor *et al.*, 2025).

4. Build your confidence – it isn't about having all the answers

Many managers report feeling uncertain about discussing menopause because they worry about saying the wrong thing. The evidence suggests that colleagues value empathy, curiosity and a willingness to learn far more than clinical knowledge.

Developing a basic understanding of menopause, knowing what support is available within your organisation and signposting colleagues to appropriate services can increase managers' confidence and improve workplace experiences. Education and awareness initiatives have also been shown to improve managers' knowledge, confidence and attitudes towards supporting colleagues experiencing menopause (McCarthy *et al.*, 2023).



5. Recognise menopause as an equality, inclusion and retention issue

Supporting menopause is not simply about individual wellbeing. It is also about creating inclusive workplaces where experienced colleagues can continue to thrive. Menopause may affect cisgender women, trans men and some non-binary people, and experiences are often shaped by other factors including disability, ethnicity, caring responsibilities and socioeconomic background.

Research increasingly argues that menopause should be considered within broader equality, diversity and inclusion strategies, rather than solely as an occupational health issue (Rees *et al.*, 2021). Creating inclusive, supportive workplaces benefits individuals, teams and organisations alike.



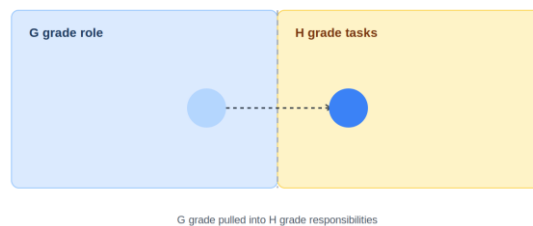
Good menopause support is good management



By creating open conversations, making reasonable adjustments and fostering an inclusive culture, line managers can help ensure experienced colleagues remain healthy, valued and able to contribute their skills and expertise throughout every stage of their working lives.

For further support and guidance, please contact your UWE UCU reps. You can also access resources like this - [Menopause in the workplace: guidance for employers | EHRC](#)

Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, and Grade Encroachment edited by Sarah Harding



Members will be aware that the [job description](#) for Senior Lecturers (H-grade salary) covers several additional responsibilities and duties compared to that for Lecturers (G-grade salary). In practice, however, these roles are sometimes interpreted differently across the university, and even within teams as working practices change over the years. This can lead to situations in which **staff are undertaking work of comparable responsibility but being paid at different salary points.**

There are many scenarios that might lead to this problem. This might happen, for example, at the point of recruitment, where a more junior member of staff is appointed at G-grade (based on their prior experience) but is then asked to undertake more senior responsibilities attributed to an H-grade. **Underpayment for higher-level work which has been assigned by management and completed by staff is not acceptable.**

This might relate to duties such as module leadership, where UCU at UWE has identified cases of 'grade encroachment'. There is widespread ambiguity relating to module leadership; the [2007 Pay Equality Project agreement](#) states module leadership is a duty suitable only for Senior Lecturers, and that Lecturers should only be asked to undertake this temporarily and with uplifted pay for that period.

In practice, this line has become blurred over the years, and UCU has found these prior agreements are not always being upheld. There are [national agreements and UCU-negotiated job evaluation schemes \(e.g., HERA\)](#) which are designed to ensure **salary grading is related to the work undertaken**, and not to staff members as individuals. Furthermore,

these policies are in place to maintain standards of fairness across the higher education sector.

The **good news** is that **UCU** at UWE **successfully supported** a member over the past few months **challenging their salary** through the grievance process! This was a great outcome and helps to set institutional precedent around this issue. **Members are encouraged to speak with their college rep** if they believe they may also be affected by grade encroachment.

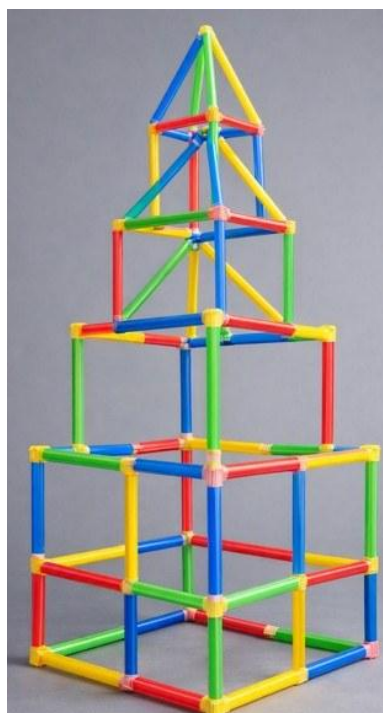
College reps are:

- **CHSS Frenchay** Greta Squire Greta.Squire@uwe.ac.uk
- **CHSS Glenside** Judith Worthington Judith2.Worthington@uwe.ac.uk
- **CBL** Rick Ball Richard.Ball@uwe.ac.uk and Mary Young Mary.Young@uwe.ac.uk
- **CATE** Charlotte Selleck Charlotte.Selleck@uwe.ac.uk

The Post-92 National Contract – Why It Still Matters

The Post-92 national contract and national agreement remain central to protecting fair, transparent and sustainable working conditions for academic staff in post-1992 universities. Although first negotiated more than three decades ago, these agreements continue to shape the employment framework for thousands of lecturers today — and they remain a vital reference point in local negotiations.

A National Framework That Protects Staff

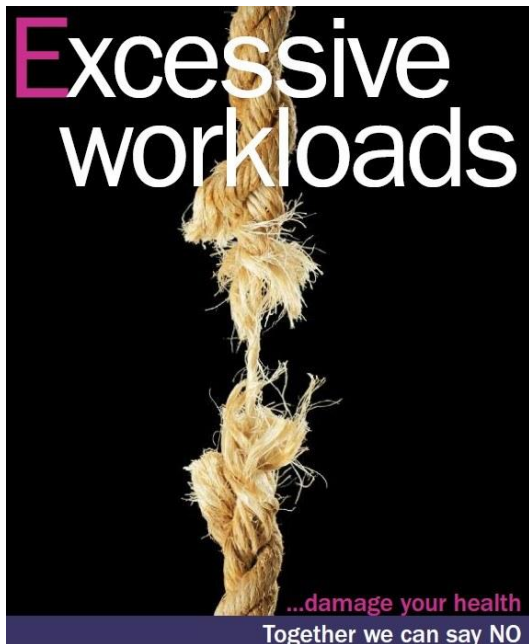


The contract of employment, agreed in 1990, established a consistent set of terms for full-time and fractional lecturing staff. Crucially, it guarantees continuity of service across institutions, meaning staff retain key entitlements such as sick pay and maternity rights when moving between FE and HE sectors. This portability is one of the agreement's strongest protections.

The national agreement also sets clear boundaries around workload and working time. Formal scheduled teaching is capped at **18 hours per week** and **550 hours per academic year**, with recognised flexibility for subjects where teaching patterns differ. The working year is limited to **38 weeks**, including two weeks for teaching-related administration, and staff are entitled to **35 days of annual leave** plus statutory holidays and closure days.

Workload Allocation Based on Fairness and Transparency

Both documents emphasise that academic work extends far beyond classroom teaching.



Duties include assessment, curriculum development, student support, professional practice, research and scholarly activity. Heads of Department are required to take these factors into account when allocating workload, ensuring staff have a reasonable balance of responsibilities and the opportunity to maintain and develop their expertise.

The national agreement reinforces this by setting expectations for consultation, transparency and equity in workload planning. It also highlights the importance of professional development and the need for institutions to support staff in maintaining high-quality academic practice.

A Foundation for Local Negotiation



While the national contract provides a shared baseline, local agreements may vary. UCU branches therefore play a crucial role in monitoring how institutions interpret and apply the national framework. Ensuring that workload models, teaching allocations and annual leave arrangements remain consistent with national standards is essential to protecting members' rights.

Why It Matters Now



In a sector facing increasing pressure — rising workloads, expanding responsibilities and growing expectations around research and student support — the Post-92 national contract remains a vital safeguard. It offers clarity, stability and fairness, and it ensures that academic staff are not left vulnerable to unreasonable demands or inconsistent local practices.

UCU continues to defend this national framework and to support branches in ensuring it is upheld. Protecting the Post-92 contract is protecting the profession.

Stressed?

Report stress to your line manager as soon as possible so action can be taken to help eliminate or reduce stress to a safe level.

Your manager will work with you to identify the specific causes of your stress and help you address them.

If your stress is related to a personal issue, your manager could allow you some flexibility and time. They will advise you of any appropriate leave (such as [carer's leave](#) or [compassionate leave](#)), or consider allowing unpaid leave. Your manager may review your work to see if some could be prioritised or deadlines extended to reduce additional work pressures.

If your stress is work related, your manager will work with you to identify the specific causes of stress. The [HSE's set of management standards for stress](#) (external link) cover the six primary causes of stress at work. Your manager should carry out a wellbeing at work action plan to identify the issues and the actions to effectively manage stress. Follow-up meetings will be scheduled to review progress against the actions and check whether further support is required.



If reporting stress to your line manager would not be appropriate you should contact [People Services Advice Team](#) for advice and guidance or [Click HERE](#) for more staff support and [HERE](#) for EAP.

UCU member benefits



There are lots of [benefits](#) from being a UCU member including

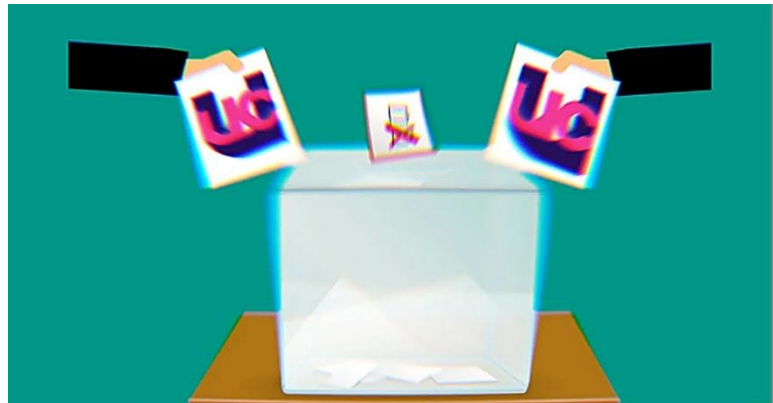
- [UCU Law extra](#) - Legal help for you and your family
- [UCU CPD](#) - a comprehensive programme of CPC
- [Personal Injury Claims](#) - Specialist personal injury lawyers to help you
- [Financial advice via Quilter](#) - Achieve your aspirations through expert financial planning
- [Educational Support](#) - Counselling, support, financial assistance and more.



Electronic Balloting is Coming: Be Prepared!

from Jo Grady- UCU General Secretary

Democratic participation in UCU has always been a key issue for me. So I am pleased to report that statutory changes now give trade unions options for conducting industrial action ballots and union elections by electronic means, under certain conditions.



While some of the details in these provisions may not be exactly what unions hoped for, it is nevertheless an exciting development, and UCU is working hard to take advantage of this welcome change.

I know many members would prefer to vote electronically, for speed, the environment, and convenience and I hope we can use these changes as another tool to increase members' participation across the union. However, as we look at the changes we need to put in place, we need your help.

In order to receive balloting information by email in the future, it is a legal requirement that a personal email address is recorded with UCU. So please [go to the union's online membership portal MyUCU](#) and check your membership details.

The relevant statutory provisions prevent trade unions from giving members access to a statutory union ballot—including industrial action ballots—via an email address that belongs to your employer. UCU has no choice but to follow this provision.

Union balloting is a devolved matter and Northern Ireland is not covered by these changes--though we hope it will be in future.

As we start to change our approach, the arrangements for specific ballots will be confirmed on a case-by-case basis.

But don't miss out on e-balloting. Help make sure that UCU can take advantage of these changes--[check your membership details today](#).

In solidarity

Jo Grady UCU general secretary

UCU at UWE Signal group: Information



UCU at UWE members have set-up a [Signal](#) group to help facilitate communication and coordination within the union at UWE. The group is **exclusively** for members of UWE UCU. To ensure the group's security and its GDPR-compliance (see below), members must opt-in to the group using the link below. All requests to join are vetted by our branch Administration Assistant and only UWE UCU members will be approved. **Please note that, just like on a WhatsApp group, members of a Signal group can see one another's phone numbers. If you do not consent to this, you should not join the group.**

Members can request to join the group [HERE](#) new and current members welcome to join.



Join Signal by scanning the QR code

How to use (and not use) the group:

Signal is used for groups that have many users, so it is important to have guidelines that help ensure the group remains an effective communication tool. A high volume of messages, especially non-essential messages, can cause people to disengage, which defeats the point of having the group. So, here are some guidelines that we can use:

1. Make sure all messages are relevant to UCU members and keep chat to a minimum – individual conversations and extended discussions of particular topics should be had outside the group.
2. Avoid messaging early in the morning or late at night.

3. Bear in mind that this is not the best place for making collective decisions. People engage in groups at different times and with different levels of attention, so important decisions should be left for dedicated meetings when things can be discussed properly.
4. Remember trade union membership is 'special category data' which is afforded additional protection under GDPR legislation. Under no circumstances should messages from the group be forwarded anywhere else.
5. Mute notifications to avoid unwanted interruption.



GDPR

Members of this Signal group can see each other's phone numbers. As this group is only for trade union members, joining the group will also make your trade union membership known to other members. If you are not comfortable with this, please do not join the group.

Both phone numbers and trade union membership are protected under GDPR. To help protect everyone's privacy, members should join using the link provided above or give their explicit permission to a group admin to add them. This also helps keep the group secure and limited to UCU at UWE members. Trade union membership is classed as *special category data* under GDPR, which means it requires extra protection. Because this group is intended only for members who have chosen to share this information, it is GDPR-compliant.

However, **please do not forward or share any content from this group outside of it**, as doing so could breach GDPR and compromise members' privacy.

Why Signal not WhatsApp?

Signal works almost exactly like WhatsApp in terms of its user experience, but it is much more secure. Signal is an independent, open-source platform made by a non-profit organisation that cannot be acquired by any of the big-tech companies (unlike WhatsApp, which was acquired by Meta in 2014 which is [currently being sued for privacy breaches](#)). For these reasons, Signal is the first choice for activists and investigative journalists and is the most appropriate platform for a trade union communication tool.

Your thoughts count. What do you think of this newsletter? Scan the QR code or contact ucusecretary@uwe.ac.uk



Please contact us:

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