

STRIKE BULLETIN BU UCU 06/03/2020

The Picket Rota

For the final week of strike action our picket line will be based at Talbot Campus.

We won't be using the google doc this week, so to sign up please email Steph at ucusteph@gmail.com with your picket dates and she will collate and organise the rota.

The Decommodify Education Festival - 11th March to 13th March

The Decommodify Education Festival is a series of talks and activities in solidarity with **the UCU Four Fights campaign**. We know that better conditions for teachers foster better education for students. We host this festival to make these links and to highlight our dedication to co-creating a more equitable and sustainable world with our students.

Venue

Flirt Cafe Bournemouth

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsAtFlirt/>

21 The Triangle

Bournemouth BH2 5RG



March 11th, 14:30-17:00

Decommodifying Education, Radical Pedagogy & the Neoliberal University

March 12th, 14:30-17:00

Social Movements, Solidarity and Creative Activisms

March 13th, 14:30-17:00

Resistance, Radical Media, Politics & British Comics

17:00 - Happy Hour End of Pickets Celebrations

full programme coming soon



Strike Food Bank Donations

Next week we will begin collecting food for our food bank again, so please donate by bringing food or food vouchers to Steph and Marian in WG08, or to our treasurer Graham Goode in W420.

HE is in Crisis: An Update on Negotiations, by Marian Mayer

I thought that it would be useful to update you on the 4 fights negotiations which are complex and continue at a pace. A slow pace.

At the end of Tuesday's meeting, UCU negotiators tasked UCEA negotiators to consult with their members on our counter-proposal to their latest 'offer'. We had edited the offer with what we believe are reasonable proposals.

We also drew UCEA's negotiators attention to the leaked Russell Group document. The document appears to be minutes of a virtual meeting of Russell Group VCs. Why, I hear you ask does that matter to us? It matters because it confirms what we know, all employers are acutely aware of reputational risk, and the widespread use of casual and zero hours contracts is morally indefensible. They claimed not to have seen the document but 'were aware of it'. To their credit they did not attempt to deny its significance.

By way of concentrating the employers' attention on resolving our dispute we reminded them that the sector is facing two crises: the disputes and the Coronavirus. We suggested that a responsible employer would settle our disputes so that they can focus all energies on what is fast becoming a major risk for the sector.

What happens when we get an offer?

1. First negotiators would discuss it as a package and consider whether or not to recommend it for consultation as the best that could be achieved through negotiations.
2. At that point members would see the offer, consult over and debate it in branch meetings or strike meetings, and elect delegates to a national meeting of branch reps.
3. At that meeting branch representatives would debate it at a national level, and vote on it (in a weighted vote) to decide whether to recommend to HEC as to whether or not to put it out to members.
4. HEC would then take a vote on that offer based on the recommendation of branch reps.

It is strange to see a General Secretary proposing to recommend a deal that has not yet been made. It is standard practice in negotiations to say that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". The assessment of whether an offer is acceptable is concrete.

The second issue concerns movement on headline pay. UCU negotiators put the offer of 3% to the employers' organisation in order to give them the chance to consult their members about the potential for a rapid resolution of our dispute.

UCU have made a genuine offer to resolve the dispute. The sector has reserves of £44bn. They can afford to meet the union's claim of RPI+3% in full.

We have yet to receive an offer, when we do we will consider though the process outlined below whether to put the offer to members. Your elected negotiators would discuss the offer in its totality, i.e. all 4 elements and decide whether or not to recommend it for consultation. At that point all members would then be sent the offer, which should be debated in branch meetings or strike meetings.

We have already elected a delegate to convey our view to a national meeting of branch reps. Branch representatives would debate it at a national level, and vote on it (in a weighted vote) to decide whether to recommend to HEC as to whether or not to put it out to members. HEC would then take a vote on that offer based on the recommendation of branch reps.

If the HEC agreed to put the offer to members, you would all have an opportunity to vote whether or not to accept.

It is important to note that these negotiations have not resulted in an offer, we are still talking.

Please hold the line, grow the line and send a strong message to UCEA. We mean to win!



A View from Student Activists on the Picket Lines, by Sadie Fulton

Increasingly, students are speaking out in support of striking university staff. A poll conducted by SUBU showed that 90% of students either fully supported or sympathised with the strike. More students have been on the picket lines this year than before. Students have expressed anger that the university system has been allowed to be corroded to the point that staff are working precarious contracts, excessively long hours, and that women and BAME staff are paid less. This is not the kind of system we want to be a part of and not the world we are hoping to inherit when we graduate.

In the first week of strike action, a contingent of students went to the Vice Chancellor's office. We were told he was on vacation, and came away incensed that he saw fit to take a holiday in the middle of term (our lecturers are strongly discouraged from doing anything like this). Further, we were told to raise our concerns "through the proper channels" - I was told I should have attended a meeting which I organised and spoke at, to make my concerns heard there, instead of requesting a meeting with the Vice Chancellor. Very helpful advice.

Students know that our lecturers and university support staff are the ones who make or break our education. You are the source of our drive, our inspiration, our motivation to achieve on our courses and going forth into the world. You are the ones who equip us with the tools that we need in order to succeed in this world. When the university system doesn't support you to support us, we feel like our own university is undermining our education. Instead of being centered in our university experience, supported to become our best selves and get a solid start on life, we are being reduced to consumers, a mere source of income for the university as a business. That's not what we came to university looking for. That's why students support the strike. We are also starting to wake up to our own power and realising that when we stand in solidarity with you, we can be a very powerful collective force.

As BU student Hayley puts it, "my four years (so far) at BU has not been made enjoyable by the fancy buildings or equipment, but by the lecturers who have taught me. Their passion for their subjects has caused a passion in me to do well not just for me but for them as well [...] I want to thank my lecturers for all they do, not just the lectures themselves but also all the work they put in behind the scenes, in a time when they may otherwise feel they are letting down their students. I for one refuse to be a pawn in the University's game against you. See you on the picket line."

BU student Bhagath adds, "I've seen a number of schools and education systems all over the world. I've watched them corrode, I've seen them deteriorate. I've watched men in suits walk in, strip the environment down and take it from us, box it back up and sell it back to us piece meal. I've seen them do it to people. And now I'm seeing it happen here in the UK. [...] The people that look after my education are not stations in an assembly line. They're human and it's only fair that their working conditions reflect that. As a student, I support the strike wholeheartedly. I'll support the strike whenever and wherever. If I don't, I might as well just leave university, because what's the point of an education if I'm not helping to fight for a better tomorrow?"

We are rising, we are standing with you. Your struggle is our struggle. Rain or shine, we'll be on the picket line right by your side.

Bridge the gap! A Message from BU UCU Treasurer, Graham Goode

BU UCU's local hardship fund is up and running! Looking to fill the gap for the first day(s) of strike action where the UCU National Fighting Fund does not make payments, the local fund, which is donation-dependent, aims to assist all striking members losing income due to strike action.

The branch has received generous donations totalling £1,800 as of 6th March 2020. We have also received supermarket vouchers, which have been added as cash equivalent to the hardship fund. Thank you to our wonderful donors!

Even with this level of generosity, the branch does not have a money tree, so the branch will endeavour to give priority of payment to members in most need of support.

Details of the application process to the local fund will have been communicated to members. The application deadline is Tuesday 14th April 2020. This date allows those members who were unable to strike in November 2019, but did strike in December, to make applications. All applications received by the deadline will be looked at by an assessment panel of three officers and an independent assessor. Successful applications will be paid by bank transfer swiftly once assessed and approved by the panel.

BU UCU would like to add an independent member to the panel, to ensure the process is fair and transparent. This a call-out for a fully paid up member to act as an independent UCU volunteer. Please email UCUsteph@gmail.com if interested.

Beyond the first one or two days of strike action, striking members are asked to use the **UCU National Fighting Fund** for compensation of loss of income (depending on gross salary). UCU see the strike action in November/December and February/March as one continuous, single period of strike action of 22 days and are actively encouraging members to apply to the national fund, where appropriate evidence of loss of income can be provided.

Please call Hamish Park on 0207 756 2500 to discuss your specific situation. Alternatively, please use the UCU website: (https://ucu.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/429/~/ucu-fighting-fund), or email fightingfund@ucu.org.uk

The local hardship fund and the capacity to help alleviate hardship comes as a result of generous donations.

**Please continue to donate to the local fund,
so that as many applications as possible can be met.
Thank you!**