



*Our newsletter is free to all members.  
If you're reading this and you've not yet  
joined, why not strengthen our union and  
join today?*

## University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

***August 2017***

[blogs.brighton.ac.uk/unison](https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/unison)

**Facebook: UNISON at University of Brighton**

Welcome to our August newsletter.

For some, this is a quiet time, when not very much happens and people are away, but there's always loads going on for trade unionists and so this addition has more on University communication, training and inevitably, voluntary severance.

As always, we welcome your comments on anything that takes your fancy.

*Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary*

### **University Communication**

In our last edition, we asked if you had any comments on the demise of Uni-info:

"Uni Info had relevant and non-relevant info (& it was quick to delete the latter). It really helped me to feel part of the University culture and to keep abreast of things going on across the departments. It potentially enabled staff to feel part of a holistic community approach, whether or not we contributed to the discussions. It was good to see what was going on for people and a valuable tool for communication. I feel that reducing discussion to individual departments is a 'divide and rule' approach that does not contribute well to a healthy culture. I hope it will be possible to re-evaluate the system so that the University of Brighton becomes more inclusive for staff again. The benefit to staff morale will ultimately be beneficial for students too."

*"I can see why some people didn't like the emails from people selling things, but you could easily delete them. The uni-info emails reminded me that there are other things going on at UoB and that we're not always just thinking about the next task to do. It's a shame we have to be censored in this way."*

**"The so-called discussion boards are not a suitable replacement for the ability to just let everyone know what you're thinking. I've already missed out on stuff when a quick uni-info email would have been all that was needed to let me know. Communication is now just what they want you to know."**

We think turning off Uni-info was a mistake that can be corrected.

If you agree, please read and sign the open letter...

You will be aware of the decision of the University Executive Board (UEB) to abolish the UniInfo facility. You will also be aware that the decision was implemented 'with immediate effect' so that there could be no discussion about the decision between staff, since UniInfo was the only mechanism through which such a public discussion could have taken place.

This is a retrograde step. One of the attractive features of our Institution was the sense of an educational community created, in large part, by an awareness of the initiatives being taken by colleagues across the University, across all of its existing five sites, and their multiple schools. This was one of the features of Brighton that set it apart from the increasing corporate character of universities whose managements treated education as a commodity, and expected to be able to make decisions without fear of staff debate or dissent.

It is hard not to conclude that this decision expresses the UEB's intention to run the University as if it were a private or public company in which managerial prerogatives cannot be challenged. This stands in sharp contrast to an attitude in which those leading an academic institution would welcome challenge, debate and discussion.

UniInfo was not universally favoured amongst staff, of course. A small minority objected to receiving messages in which they had no interest, even though they had, as part of the facility, an ability to filter out UniInfo messages. Nonetheless, the damage its abolition does overwhelms any benefit to this minority of colleagues. It is not simply the loss of the sense of a university community that results from this decision but also a loss of the ability to advertise conferences, seminar series, research projects, etc., etc. At a time when funders of all types are pushing towards interdisciplinary research and teaching, the abolition of the platform that allowed open and fast communication of academic events and opportunities in other disciplines and areas of the university is regrettable.

It is for these reasons that UniInfo needs to be restored. If the overwhelming majority of staff demand its restoration, the UEB will naturally comply with the request. Were it not to do so it would be show contempt for the judgment of the staff who work at the University, and would reveal a nervousness about open discussion that is entirely inappropriate for managing a university community.

We urge all colleagues, whatever your job in the University, and all doctoral students, to sign this Open Letter to the management. Even if you rarely or never use or read UniInfo, and even if you resent UniInfo messages, we urge you to sign in the interests of those of your colleagues who value the facility highly.

In the absence of a UniInfo facility, could you please forward this to all the members of your department or school, and urge them to add their names as well?

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/open-letter-calling-for-the-reinstatement-of-uniinfo>

If this link is automatically blocked by the University server, please copy the address and paste it into a new browser window.

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**IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH. JOIN THE FIGHT FOR OUR NHS**



## **SUNDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER MARCH & RALLY**

**GATHER at 11 ON THE LEVEL FOR SEND-OFF BY LOCAL MPS AND OTHERS. MOVE OFF 11 30.**

**RALLY 12 30 OUTSIDE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE BRIGHTON CONFERENCE CENTRE**

Speakers on the day: John McDonnell; Dr Alex Scott-Samuel - Socialist Health Association; Danielle Tiplady; Lloyd Russell-Moyle. Invited: Caroline Lucas, Gail Cartmell Unite, local nurse and consultant and others.

### **WHY WE ARE MARCHING FOR THE NHS**

**TO:**

Show solidarity with NHS workers, working under most extreme pressure. Still saving our lives.

Support "Scrap the Cap" movement. Return the lost income of NHS and other public sector workers.

Oppose outright the government's Sustainability and Transformation Plans and the £22 billion (25%) cut in the NHS budget.

Reject the privatisation of our NHS and other public services. Support the NHS (Reinstatement) Bill and the RE-NATIONALISATION of our NHS.

Show our anger at the extreme crisis in social care and the consequences for the elderly and vulnerable

Call on the Labour party to prioritise urgent opposition to government plans and action on the NHS.

## Voluntary Severance—further details

As trade unionists, assisting people to leave their jobs is not, ideally, what we'd be doing, but we aim to provide help and assistance to all our members, whatever the circumstances.

We appreciate that some of our members are about to leave through voluntary severance, so if that's you, here is a rough guide to the process and what we can do to help you.

If you've indicated by the deadline of 18<sup>th</sup> August that you want to go ahead with the settlement, during the week commencing 21<sup>st</sup> August, HR will send out hard copies of the legal document as well as emailing a pdf to you.

You need to have legal advice and a signature from a solicitor who is qualified to sign this type of document. The University will pay the £300 plus VAT that should cover the cost.

As a UNISON member, you can either use UNISON's solicitor, Thompsons or find one yourself. There is no real advantage to using Thompsons and if you'd prefer a face-to-face discussion then you may opt to go to a high street solicitor, but the option of using Thompsons is available.

If you want to use Thompsons, the process is as follows:

- You read the document, check the amount and make sure there is nothing that you are unhappy with. Please note the aspects of confidentiality that the agreement commits you to.
- You send the pdf of the agreement to [unisonhelp@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:unisonhelp@brighton.ac.uk), and we will also need you to confirm your contact details – name, address, email, contact number. The phone number is important because Thompsons will use this method to contact you.
- We will send off the electronic version of the agreement and your details to Thompsons.
- Thompsons will check the paperwork and contact you directly to discuss it with you.
- They will check that you're happy, answer any questions and make sure you understand the nature of what you're about to agree.
- If you are still wishing to go ahead, Thompsons will sign the document and arrange to send their signed copy to you. This is your last chance to withdraw from the process if you change your mind.
- On receipt, you sign the document yourself and then return it to the University by the deadline.
- The University will sign the document and this then becomes a binding agreement that neither party can withdraw from.
- You will leave on the agreed date, and if the timing works, your final salary payment will include your wages for the month as normal, the settlement amount (which should be non-taxable) and any outstanding annual leave that is owed to you. It's worth checking that this is what you anticipated.

Thompsons will reclaim their costs from the University, so there's no need to worry about that.

If you'd sooner use your own legal people then the process will be similar, and again, the responsibility of getting the signed paperwork back to the University on time will be yours.

We can recommend <https://www.pureemploymentlaw.co.uk/> (01243 836840) or you might want to use a solicitor you are familiar with.

There's no need to panic about the timescale, but we would suggest that this is done as early as possible to avoid the University potentially withdrawing the offer if the process is not complete on time.

We would, however, urge all members wanting to use Thompsons to get the agreement back to us as soon as possible.

An added complication is that we are due a pay rise from 1st August, which is not going to be implemented until October. So, if your leaving date is before 31<sup>st</sup> October, as it's likely to be, then you may need to contact the University Payroll team to ask that a) they pay you the small uplift that you are due and b) they check to see if this has any effect on your pension, whether you're retiring or not. (Sadly, the pay award will not affect the agreed settlement amount.)

At the time of writing, HR have told us they are considering how to deal with the backdated pay award for those accepting voluntary severance.

If you end up leaving the University, we hope you go on to greater things. Thanks for being a member and giving us the strength to campaign for all workers at the University.

We'd suggest you to make sure you're in a trade union in your next job and encourage others to join.

If you're retiring or just taking a break, we would encourage you to think about becoming a retired member or an unemployed member.

Retired membership costs £15 for life – just fill in a form and send us a cheque.

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/08/233691.pdf>

Unemployed membership costs £4 a year and lasts for two years – just send us £4 and we'll amend your membership status.

If you have any questions on any of this then please feel free to get in touch with your local rep.

## National Shop Stewards Network, lobby of the TUC

1pm, Sunday 10th September, Arundel Suite, Holiday Inn, 137 Kings Road



Speakers:  
Len McCluskey, Unite  
Mark Serwotka, PCS  
Steve Gillan POA  
and more

All welcome!

## **Free Courses for MEMBERS: Trade Union Education in Sussex**

TUC Education, Sussex Downs College, Newhaven Campus, Denton Island,  
NEWHAVEN BN9 9BN

**ONLINE OR COURSEBOOK FROM HOME**

**NO CLASSROOM SESSIONS OR RELEASE REQUIRED**

**Level 2 Certificate in Equality and Diversity**

**Available free of charge to all TRADE UNION MEMBERS**

**Dates: 25 September – 13 November 2017**

**Duration: 8 weeks**

You choose whether to use a course book or whether to complete the course online, both with tutor support giving ongoing feedback and assessment.

The last few years have seen an increase in the amount and complexity of equalities issues at work. Managers and workers need to be able to keep up to date with equality legislation and handle issues such as flexible working, reasonable adjustments and discrimination. That is why large organisations have a focus on training staff to help make workplaces fairer and more equality aware.

We can promote fairness in the workplace by raising the equality agenda among fellow workers; by encouraging employers to make equality and diversity part of mainstream collective bargaining; by working with vulnerable workers and trying to ensure that every worker receives fair treatment.

**The course will help you to:**

find out more about discrimination law

understand how equality and diversity affects individuals, communities and the whole of society

find examples of good practice

understand key terminology such as stereotyping, harassment and victimisation.

promote equality in the workplace and community

**Costs** There are no costs for TUC affiliated trade union members, unless you fail to complete the course without good reason. The withdrawal charge is £125 per learner per course.

**If you experience difficulties or need more information please call 030 300 38699**

**Email: [vicki.gibbs@sussexdowns.ac.uk](mailto:vicki.gibbs@sussexdowns.ac.uk)**