



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, we want you to join us.

You can still join UNISON easily on-line.

Just follow the link from our blog on Staff Central.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

February 2021

Hi everyone.

This month's newsletter comes ahead of our Annual General Meeting, which is due to be held at **12 noon on Wednesday 3rd March.**

We want as many of our members to attend as possible, because for many, this is the one big meeting in our annual cycle that tells members what we're doing, what we've been up to and where we expect to be going in the forthcoming year. It's an opportunity for members to hold the leadership to account and democratically decide what our priorities are and what we should be doing.

Obviously it's been very challenging since we had a series of site-based AGMs last year. We'd heard of a virus in China but none of us had much of a clue how big an effect this was likely to have on all of us. Since then, our members have been working on-site, at home, or a mixture of the two. Many will know people who have been affected by

the pandemic and some will have lost loved ones. It's been an extremely challenging year for everyone, in different ways.

Our AGM has to be held on-line, using Teams, which many of us are used to by now. Obviously that means there's no free lunch and no opportunity for people to mill around and chat, before and after. We're also losing the spontaneous nature of the meetings with people asking questions as we go, but we'll do our best to incorporate as much of that as we can into this new format.

For those who can't make the meeting at 12 noon on the 3rd, we'll be organising "mop-up" meetings later that week, so please try to attend something if you can.

Our branch thrives on the active participation of as many members as possible, so we hope to see you there.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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UNISON National Executive Council Elections

Elections to the highest decision making body of our union are due to take place in May. 68 seats from different regions, service groups (higher education, local government, healthcare etc.) and self-organised groups make up the NEC, and we get to vote on those from the South East Region, Higher Education (or Community), Black members, Disabled members and Young (under age 27) members.

For many of our members, this probably feels irrelevant, but it does affect the way UNISON operates, so please make sure you vote. We want a trade union led by the people we most trust to make decisions in our interests, to allow us to campaign effectively for us all.

Before ballot papers go out, our branch has the chance to nominate candidates for the seats in which we get votes. We received nomination requests from 30 people for 14 seats and our Branch Committee meeting on 10th February voted to nominate the following:

Seats		Nomination
<i>South East Region</i>	<i>Female x 2</i>	<i>Antoinette Solera Jac Berry</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Dan Sartin</i>
	<i>Low-paid Reserved</i>	<i>Abi Holdsworth</i>
<i>Higher Education</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Kath Owen</i>
	<i>General</i>	<i>Sandy Nicoll</i>
<i>Black Members</i>	<i>Female x 2</i>	<i>April Ashley Nimisha Trivedi</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Hugo Pierre</i>
	<i>Low-paid Reserved</i>	<i>Julia Mwaluke</i>
<i>Disabled Members</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Paula Carlyle</i>
	<i>General</i>	<i>Sharron Nicoll</i>
<i>Young Members</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Lilly Boulby</i>
	<i>General</i>	<i>Kiera Hilder</i>

Obviously how you vote when you get your ballot paper is entirely up to you. Ballot papers won't be sent out until the beginning of May, but you won't get one unless UNISON has your up-to-date address details, so feel free to check that with us, or register on MyUNISON:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison>

to do it yourself.

(It's easier to do it now than wait until you don't get a ballot paper because it's gone to the wrong place!)

(You also need to have been a member before 4th February to get a vote, sadly.)

Students returning on 8th March?

It appears that the government are going to expect school students to return on Monday 8th March and we're expecting this to also mean that some of our students are also allowed to return.

What seems most sensible would be to allow those students who need to complete practical sessions to return, with those students whose courses are classroom based to remain at home, at least until after Easter.

If and when this happens, the University will be approaching a return to normality although it's entirely possible that some students will not come back on-site at all this academic year.

This does of course raise questions about what expectation there will be over those members of staff working at home returning to work on-site and in each case, there's a complex set of circumstances over the need to work on site, weighed up against mental health and welfare, childcare and anxiety over traveling on (potentially still scarce) public transport.

Rather than speculate at this stage though, we'll wait until the announcements, expected on Monday 22nd, and see what the implications are for our members and everyone else.

In the meantime, please remember that you are entitled to special leave if you need it, and please make sure you're getting in touch with us if you're expected to do anything that you think you shouldn't be.

University of Brighton is Shrinking

STUDENT POPULATION

Total student numbers (headcount) fell by 7.2% in 2019-20, with this decline primarily coming from Home (UK) and EU students across both undergraduate and postgraduate provision. This reflects the impact of two years of recruiting at a lower base level than the University has achieved historically.

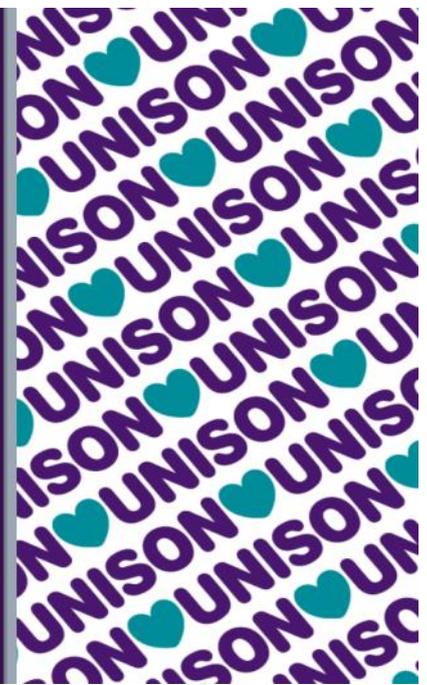
Student Headcount	Full-Time	Part-Time	2019-20 Total	2018-19 Total	Change %
UNDERGRADUATE					
Home and EU	12,494	1,863	14,357	15,575	-7.8%
International	1,039	135	1,174	1,186	-1.0%
Total	13,533	1,998	15,531	16,761	-7.3%
POSTGRADUATE					
Home and EU	1,180	1,825	3,005	3,183	-5.6%
International	369	82	451	524	-13.9%
Total	1,549	1,907	3,456	3,707	-6.8%
TOTAL	15,082	3,905	18,987	20,468	-7.2%

This is not good! The University population has been steadily falling for a number of years, and this in turn drives the income (overwhelmingly made up of tuition fees) and in turn, the need for the University to control costs. This is why we've seen several years of voluntary severance, a plan to reduce the number of schools and cost control measures in place.

The pandemic hasn't helped of course, but fundamental to the University's focus on "maintaining financial discipline" is the number of students, successful recruitment, (particularly of undergraduates on the more economically lucrative, classroom-based courses) and retention. We've been warning for years that the marketisation of education would create this situation, but Brighton's experience may be a graphic illustration. More on this in a future issue.



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UNISON makes our
voices louder.
public services better.
workplaces safer.
rights stronger.**



Mid February is the Trade Union Congress's "I heart unions" week.

I think it's fair to say that our branch is a bit meh about this. Obviously we're very keen to emphasise the need for strong and organised trade unions, but we don't necessarily think that people hearting them is enough to inspire people to join or to get active.

Trade unions are necessary because working people will always need to collectively organise to advance their claims for better working conditions and defend what previous generations have won for us. Fundamentally, it's about where the resources generated by all working people go - to the rich and powerful or to those creating the wealth. The stronger and more willing to fight for it the organisations of the working class are, the more the wealth goes in that direction. The fact that we work in a service industry does not alter that, because we're all part of a worldwide economy, providing education so that others can involve themselves in producing commodities and creating real wealth.

Whether people see the need to join trade unions or not is largely down to what we'd call class consciousness, that is, how conscious a given individual is of their role in the productive process and that they are almost certainly being exploited. Billionaires have not got their wealth from nowhere. It's either been generated from paying their employees less than the real value of their ability to work, or it's been inherited from previous billionaires who stole it, either legally or otherwise, through exploitative working practices, theft or plunder.

What Margaret Thatcher and others managed to do just at the end of the post-war boom, was to promote the idea that society is wealthier if we all look after ourselves. To some extent, combined with many other factors, this has crept into consciousness, no thanks to successive Labour governments which never challenged this, but the underlying ideas of sticking together to defeat a mutual enemy hasn't gone away, and won't do until we have a very different way of organising society, one which does not take private profit as its main driving force.

So, by all means, let's heart unions and we should encourage all working people to join one and all current members to get involved, but this has to be on the basis of collective struggle to achieve better terms for all our members, not about how lovely trade unions are or what they are going to do for the individual. It's the collective that's decisive.

LGBT+ History Month

Hi
I am currently the LGBT+ Officer for the branch and thought you might be interested to hear what UNISON is doing for LGBT+ History month here in the South East region.

If you are an LGBT+ UNISON member and want to know more about the LGBT+ self organised group within UNISON, or how to get more involved there are links in the below page on the UNISON South East website.

[UNISON SE celebrates LGBT+ History Month | Article | News | UNISON South East](#)

Also I have been wondering if people might be interested in forming a UNISON LGBT+ group here at the Uni so if you are interested in that or just want more info contact me on s.e.pickett@brighton.ac.uk

Thanks

Sarah Pickett (she,her,hers)



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

12 noon, Wednesday 3rd March on Teams

All members welcome!



It's going to be different this year, but we're still hoping that all our members can attend.

The meeting will be in the Group-UNISON Meeting , which we've been using for all our members' meetings. If you've not been before, you can join the Team using the code we'll email out - please keep an eye out for the invite emails.

The AGM will feature:

- * A guest speaker from a food bank**
- * Reports from the Branch**
- * Questions and Answers**
- * Election of the new Branch Committee**

If you can't make it, we'll be having shorter mop-up meetings at different times afterwards, so we can tell you what you've missed.

We'll let you know when, nearer the time.