

RIISING TOGETHER FOR BETTER PAY

HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2023/24



University of Brighton
UNISON | Branch Newsletter

July 2023

Welcome to our July newsletter!

We're in the second month of our pay ballot over the 2023-24 pay uplift, so we're looking to make sure that every university-employed member votes. Please make sure that you have done.

To recap:

After years of below-inflation pay increases, we were offered an increase of between 4% and 7% in August 2023. After some significant strike action, involving our branch and UNISON branches across the country, as well as UCU branches here and elsewhere, this offer was increased to 5% to 8%. In reality, UCEA, the employers' organisation, decided to give much more to the higher paid at the expense of our lower paid members.

Nevertheless, this showed the result of strike action, that even if you don't get what you really want, it can have an effect. UCEA agreed to bring some of this increase forward, so university workers will have seen an increase to pay in February, with a further increase now due in August, so that our pay will have increased by 5%, 6% or 7% overall from what it was in January (the 8% not really applicable to Brighton due to the agreement to pay the real living wage.)

Of course with inflation being what it is (RPI 11.3%, CPI 7.9%), and what it has been, this is still a real-terms pay cut, and just like most other working people organised in trade unions, we're campaigning for more.

We have taken significant days of strike action over the last few years, and it has made a difference, but if we're to be able to improve this offer and achieve some sort of pay justice, we'll at least have to threaten to take action again.

UCU are currently conducting a national marking and assessment boycott and many of our members are dealing with the implications of this. It is having an effect, with UCEA and UCU about to meet to try to find a resolution, but we're clear that there has to be more money available for us to be able to settle this dispute. If we're to be able to maintain the pressure on the employers and the government to find a negotiated solution to this, then it's crucial that we're able to threaten action by having a legal mandate. (continued on page 2)



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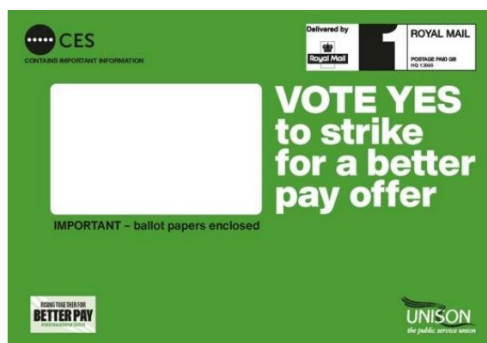


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2023-24 Pay Ballot

So, we're balloting all university-employed members throughout June and July, with a view to taking action later in the year, probably during the start of term in September/October. Obviously we don't want to have to strike, but we will do if necessary, if we achieve a ballot result.

If you work directly for the University, you should have received a ballot paper (which looks like this) at your home address:



If you've recently joined or asked for a replacement, it will be in a white envelope and probably look like a bill!

Either way, please don't ignore it. It's your chance to have a say in whether we strike or not, but if we don't get a turnout of at least 50% then all our efforts will have been a colossal waste of time (!), because the anti-trade union laws will deem our ballot irrelevant.

That's why we're putting so much effort into getting members to vote.

We know that many members have been contacted by a variety of methods and we appreciate it's really annoying, but we're only doing it because it's so important.

As soon as members have confirmed that they've voted, all our systems should stop you receiving any more phone calls etc.

We don't think it's too much to ask that being a member of a trade union, we're asking you to vote in a postal ballot every so often.



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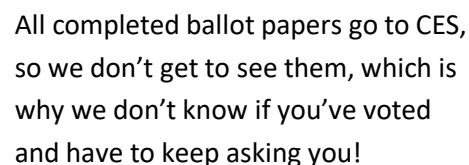


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A turnout of less than 50% will mean it's all been a waste of time, money and energy, and we can't afford to let that happen.

So, please make sure you play your part as a UNISON member and get your ballot paper returned in the envelope provided.



If you don't have a ballot paper, either because it's been lost or never turned up, or you've moved house etc, then you can call UNISON Direct free on

0800 0 857 857

to ask for a new one. They will check your address, cancel the lost ballot paper and send a new one to your

correct address. Obviously, you still need to return that one! You have until 12pm on 25 July to call.

The ballot closes on 31 July, so realistically, you would need to post your ballot by around 27 July.

Please make sure that you do.

Thanks to all those members who have already voted, and told us they have done. It really makes a difference to our ability to hit that 50%.





This month, UCU began their indefinite strike over compulsory redundancies at the University. 25 academic members of staff have been issued with redundancy notices, in addition to the 79 who volunteered for redundancy. Also threatened with losing their jobs are support staff in areas across the University that UEB had deemed too expensive to continue.



Whatever you think about the wisdom of reducing the number of staff at the University, UCU members have put up a heroic fight over this, sticking to the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all. They are demanding that the notices to the 25 are rescinded, so that their strike action will end, and the start of term will not be affected by further industrial action over this.

For the University to press ahead with a relatively small number of redundancies, when they've already achieved the majority of the savings they set out to make voluntarily, looks like a deliberate attempt to confront UCU members head on.

It is true that the University faces financial challenges. Nobody is denying this, but it is also true that millions have been spent on buildings that the benefit of hindsight would have told us not to build. The future finances of the University are complex, with the £9,250 tuition fee set to fall to around £6,600 in value next year as the government has starved post-92 universities of income. Sales of buildings, especially at Eastbourne, will generate more cash.

There can be a solution to this, as well as saving the jobs of the small number of support staff who are deemed surplus to requirements through redeployment.

In the middle of a massive redundancy programme, the University is showing no recognition of the effect of this on people's lives, by congratulating its Vice-Chancellor on being awarded a CBE. The whole situation is ruining the reputation of the University more than anyone has ever done with a badly judged tweet or Facebook post.

We support UCU's struggle to save jobs and urge the University to recognise the damage they're doing by refusing to back down.



Trans Pride

We'll be marching alongside other trade unions in this year's Trans Pride protest march on Saturday 15th.



We've always been clear that trade unions must demand maximum unity between working people and support for everyone to be able to assert their gender identity is an important part of that.

Our branch's motion to national delegate conference (which was not debated due to it not being prioritised), fully supported the rights of trans people and supported UNISON's campaigns against the government's "culture wars", designed to whip up prejudice and hatred as a distraction from the real issues of low pay and exploitation.

Trade unionists have to campaign for the democratic rights of all and for working people to campaign against the real enemy - the rich and the powerful.

[Trans Pride Protest March](#)

Saturday 15th July, 11:00 – 13:00 @ Jubilee Square, BN1 1GE. BSL Interpreted.
Please meet at 11am for the speeches, and the March will start at 12pm heading towards Brunswick Square (BN3 1EH).
Please assemble for the Accessible March at 12:10pm in front of the Hilton Metropole (BN1 2FU); the March should arrive there by 12:40.

[Trans Pride Park Celebration](#)

Saturday 15th July 13:00 – 18:00 @ Brunswick Square, BN3 1EH. BSL Interpreted.

Please come and join us if you can.



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UNISON National Delegate Conference 2023

As always, our branch was represented at UNISON's national event in Liverpool in June. This year's attendees were Lydia Freeman and Ivan Bonsell as the shared delegate, Sarah Pickett and Carole Chick as visitors.

The four days of conference were hard work, but rewarding, as delegates agreed the way forward for the union after continuing pressures on working people, as a result of the government's decision to reward the rich and the expense of the rest of us.



Motions on opposition to the cost of living crisis and our collective response dominated the debates. In a motion on strike action with the continuation of the government's anti-trade union laws, Ivan spoke about the need for branches to be willing and able to deliver strike ballots where necessary, and what a transformational effect a ballot, followed by

industrial action can have on a trade union branch and its members. Of course, not every single member of a trade union will see collective struggle as their main reason for being a member, but individual support for members flows from the collective strength of a branch, and having a ballot where every vote counts, with a clear deadline for delivering votes, will force branch activists to talk to members and propose a clear course of action that most members will understand.

The biggest debate was over a proposal to ask branches with significant reserves to contribute to the national strike fund, to enable strike pay to help deliver meaningful victories over pay. After a massive debate with more delegates queued up to speak than was ever realistically going to happen, the motion was lost very narrowly on a card vote (where each branch delegates' voting strength relates to the number of members in their branch.) We voted for, and it's disappointing that some delegates saw an genuine attempt to put members' money where it's needed as a "smash and grab" on the ability of their branch to hoard funds through inactivity. Our branch is proud to spend resources on campaigning and donations to other trade unions fighting for their members, like UCU.

It was also a shame that Lydia, as a first-time delegate, did not get chance to speak on a motion restating UNISON's commitment to abortion rights, due to the need to catch a specific train, but there's always next year, when the conference will be in Brighton.

All members are welcome to come along then, and see how our union works.



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