



Higher Education
in the South-East



Have Your Say!

-

Ballot opens:
30th
August

-

Ballot hotline:
0800
0857
857

-

Ballot closes:
19th
September

UNISON is balloting members in Higher Education in August and September, urging them to vote 'Yes' for strike action for better pay.

The decision of the Higher Education Service Group Executive was taken following a consultation with branches. The employers have so far refused to increase their 1.1% offer for the majority of staff, an offer that does not deliver the Living Wage for the lowest paid.

The average pay rise for Vice Chancellors in 2014/15 was a whopping 6.1% rising to an average of £274,405!

UNISON has called the offer deeply hypocritical - as staff are offered a miserly 1.1% to cover their rising household bills - while at the same Vice Chancellors have called for a 2.8% increase in tuition fees in England to cover University 'costs'.

Despite low inflation, essential costs such as Council Tax, water bills, public transport and car parking have all gone up this year.

UNISON believes that an increase is affordable - money is available for a higher pay increase this year universities holding cash surpluses of nearly £21billion! And the need for our members is now more urgent than ever.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales reported a total surplus of £60m, while the English funding body (HEFCE) reported in March 2016 a surplus of nearly £1.8 bn! Scotland Universities posted a surplus of £166m and Northern Ireland had a surplus of £27m.

**Universities can afford to improve
their miserly offer.**

Vote 'YES' to strike action

Donna Rowe-Merriman, UNISON's head of Higher Education said:

"Pay offers below the cost of living since 2009 mean that our members have lost the equivalent of between £1585 and £8428 a year."

"This is money families cannot afford to lose," she added.

"Low-paid members at the sharp end of the Tory government's welfare reforms have been particularly hard hit."

According to recent Freedom of Information requests sent to all UK universities by UNISON, the number of staff paid over £100,000 has increased to over 5000 – so there is clearly money available for those at the very top in higher education.

In contrast, 12,000 staff are currently paid below the accredited Living Wage of £8.25 (£9.40 in London).

Across the UK terms and conditions are being eroded, job insecurity is increasing and incomes are being squeezed.

All UNISON members need to use their vote in the strike ballot.



National Pay Ballot Q&A

Why are we balloting for strike action?

We've been offered 1.1% with slightly higher increases for grade 1 and the lower end of grade 2 (spinal points 4 to 7). This is UCEA's final offer and they won't increase it unless we demonstrate that we're serious about doing something about it.

If we vote yes, does that mean we'll go on strike?

That's clearly a possibility. A substantial **YES** vote will mean that we're likely to be striking. We have to show them we mean business and a vote for action might make them to reconsider. Workers don't want to cause disruption and lose pay, but we're prepared to if necessary, and a decent pay rise now is worth more than we'd lose.

What if I vote NO?

It's a secret ballot and you're fully entitled to vote however you want, but we are a democratic union and will abide by the result. If we vote NO then we'll not take any action, but if we vote YES, then we'll expect all our members to go along with whatever action we take.

Can't we protest without going on strike?

We can do whatever we like in support of our claim, and if members want to campaign out of work time, leaflet students etc., then we'll be fully supportive of that, but we think that ultimately, the threat of withdrawing our labour is the best way to make the employers think again.

Do strikes ever work?

There's no guarantee with industrial action. The best case scenario is that we get a better offer before we get that far. What we can say for sure is that if we do nothing, then we'll have to settle for the 1.1%. What we also know though, is that without organised and effective unions, we'd have been offered less than 1.1%. The employers will offer the lowest value that they think they can get away with, without pressure from their workers.

What about the effect on the University and the students?

We're not in favour of disrupting education for no reason and we would hope that the students would support what we're doing and why. This generation of students have been treated appallingly by successive governments and we'll explain that their desire for a free education system matches our desire for a properly rewarded and fully motivated workforce.



VOTE **YES** FOR
STRIKE ACTION

UNISON
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Introducing your South-East Higher Education representatives...

UNISON's national HE work is co-ordinated by the HE Service Group Executive (HESGE). This is a committee of elected reps from around the country that meet throughout the year specifically to oversee UNISON's work in the HE sector.

Currently there are three representatives working in HE in the South-East region that sit on HESGE.



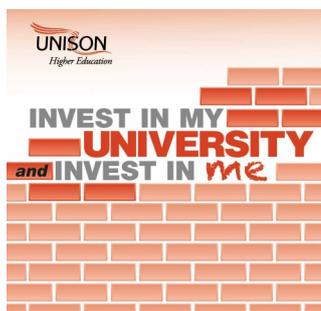
Sarah Pickett

I work at Brighton University for the Students' Union. I am LGBT officer for the UNISON branch and have been a steward for the Students' Union since I joined in 1997. I joined a trade union when I got my first 'proper' job in my twenties and have been a member of a union ever since and I strongly believe in democratic member led unions.

I have been one of the two HESGE members for Higher Education in the South East for the past three years. Some of the areas I have been working on are how to get more young members involved in UNISON, and encouraging branches and Student Unions to work more closely in areas such as joint campaigns, for example the campaign against the removal of the nursing bursary would be an ideal joint campaign.

I am chair of South East regional HE committee to which all Universities in the South East can send delegates. I would urge all South East branches to send delegates to our meetings so we can share experience and best practice, co-ordinate campaigns and look at putting on an event with speakers and workshops that would prove useful to SE branches.

If want to know more about the regional HE committee, have some suggestions for the committee or have any other questions then please email me on: s.e.pickett@brighton.ac.uk



Tomasa Bullen

I work at Southampton Solent University. I am Chair of Southampton District Branch and I have been one of the two NEC members for Higher Education for the past three years. Being a member of the NEC means that I also sit as an ex officio member on the Service Group Executive. I am also active regionally sitting on the Regional Council and Regional Committee and Vice-Chair of the Education, Training and Development Committee.

As an NEC member I can, and do put forward the views of individual and groups of HE members at the highest level of UNISON and ensure that our voice is heard despite being one of the smaller service groups. It is increasingly important that our voice is heard. Access to education, especially higher education is subtly restricted by fees and numerous other hidden charges and the depreciation of wages. This has already been seen in the huge decline in the number of part-time/mature students attending University and the stagnation in the numbers of traditional undergraduate students. At the same time we see more and more jobs requiring first or second level degrees which means that by stealth, social mobility and high quality, well paid jobs are reverting to the narrow range of potential employee that free education was designed to overcome.



Adrian Dolby

I work at the University of Southampton where I have been a UNISON representative for about twelve years now, and I hold the SE General seat on HESGE. I have held a number of positions with the University of Southampton Branch, including serving for a number of years as branch secretary.

My main aim as a representative on the Service Group is to ensure that we remain completely focussed on the core basics for our members; pay and pensions. These are the central issues that make the biggest difference to the lives of our members, especially important in these times of welfare cuts and austerity. Every penny matters for our members, and this is why I urge everybody to vote YES for strike action in the pay ballot.

The current Government is aggressively creating an open market for HE. In this environment, universities are unable to plan for the long term with any degree of confidence, which in turn leads them to attack our members' wages and pensions. We need to push for our HE to be fully-funded so students do not have to take on debt, and universities can plan and grow their teaching and research with confidence, whilst preserving and improving the pay and pensions of their employees.



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UNISON
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Mind the Gender Pay Gap! Living Wage

The continuing gender pay gap in universities is shameful.

There has been a drop in engagement with the trade unions on local job evaluation panels. These panels are responsible for grading job roles. If UNISON is not involved this means we cannot be sure that the grading structures in place are sufficiently robust.

We want proper involvement, transparency and accountability for pay and grading.

The current pay offer does provide more for the lowest paid in percentage terms .

However, the lowest paid employees working in UK universities that have a working week of more than 35 hours would still not achieve the Foundation Living Wage of £8.25p per hour (£9.40p in London).

The current offer will provide our lowest paid employees with the 2015 Living Wage — but not until 2017! Even then only if you work a 35 hour week!

The truth about casualisation in HE

An investigation by UNISON has revealed that nearly £200m was spent on agency workers in the last year. This is an increase of 62% since 2011!

Forty-five universities each spent £1million **or more** in the financial year to August 2015 on agency staff.

This is out-of-control spending on agencies that could be better used to put staff on more secure contracts - and pay them properly.

Casual contracts cause anxiety and fear, with staff not knowing if they will have any wages from week to week.

Casualisation affects in-work benefits and can cause real hardship for individuals and their families.

UNISON's Freedom of Information requests showed that more than 8,000 support staff has a zero hours contract.

Nearly £200m was spent on agency workers in the last year — an increase of 62% since 2011.



Vice-chancellor and senior management pay

More than 5,000 university employees are now paid over £100,000 a year.

The average salary for a vice-chancellor is £274,405 and the average pay rise for vice-chancellors in 2015 was 6.1%.

Employers are choosing to reward the highest earners rather than the majority of their staff.

Pay austerity is a 'choice' being made by universities – not a necessity. There is clearly money available for some – we believe it should be available for all.

UNISON has called the offer deeply hypocritical.

Staff are offered a miserly 1.1% to cover their rising household bills - while at the same Vice-Chancellors have called for a 2.8% increase in tuition fees in England to cover increasing University 'costs!'

Despite low inflation, essential household costs such as Council Tax, water bills, public transport and car parking have all gone up this year.

12,000 University employees earn less than the accredited Living Wage of £8.25 per hour (£9.40 in London)

A pay rise is affordable

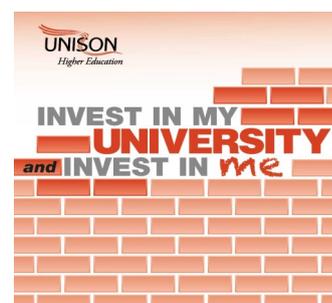
Since 2010 the amount spent on staff by universities has dropped 3%, but total reserves have rocketed by 72% to over £21bn!

There is enough money in the sector to pay all staff properly!

English Universities have argued for an increase in tuition fees of 2.8% to meet their 'annual costs' - but only want to pay staff an average of 1.1% to meet their costs of living!

There are growing calls for fee increases in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Universities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all posted surpluses that were better than projected and have diversified to look at other sources of income as well as teaching grant.



VOTE **YES** FOR STRIKE ACTION

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Not a UNISON member?

Ready to join 1.3 million public service workers in UNISON?

Join online, ask your local steward for an application form or call **0800 0857 857** to join

Keep in touch!

“Like” the UNISONinHigherEducation Facebook page

“Follow us” on Twitter via @UNISONinHE

Keep up to date via the website www.unison.org.uk

News from the Chair

Pay is becoming increasingly important to UNISON members – or rather the lack of a decent pay rise!

Workers in Higher Education and other public services should receive fair pay for the work that they do.

They should not have pay austerity imposed if there is money available to pay people fairly. This is definitely the case in higher education.

Vice-chancellors and senior managers are receiving large salary increases. Yet, for the vast majority of Higher Education employees the final pay offer made is effectively a pay cut after taking into account increases in national insurance and increases in household bills.

Living standards of our members have fallen as their

incomes have been squeezed with other costs such as fuel, food, energy bills and childcare rising.

Our lowest paid members should not be in poverty while they are in work, and UNISON will continue to campaign for Universities to become Living Wage accredited employers.

However, the reality is that our members across the pay scales are being affected. Let no one kid themselves that a fair pay award is not affordable.

The money is there but our employers are choosing to spend it elsewhere.

Low pay awards have not led to job security. The reality is that there have been many job losses in Higher Education, so no one should think that by accepting this year's unjust offer of 1.1% that does not deliver the independently

calculated Living Wage for the lowest paid will protect their job. We need to send our employers the message that they cannot do what they like and get away with it. For this reason I urge you all to stand up for what you deserve and send our employers the strong message that we deserve more than 1.1% , we know the money is there.

Our members can rely on the support of their elected committee.

Many of you will be experiencing challenging times in your branches and I urge that we all work together – there is strength in numbers.

Denise Ward,
Chair of the Higher Education Service Group Executive (HESGE) committee