

An opportunity to have better industrial relations at UEL....

Now is the time to put the grim 2012 behind us and to consider 2013 as a year of new opportunities. Recent departures from VCG group offer the possibility of a change of direction by management that returns better industrial relations to UEL in general and halts the creeping culture of fear that many staff are voicing concerns about. It is therefore important to continue to show the strength of the union and its resolve to be the voice of staff, along with Unison and Unite colleagues, in defence of our working conditions and UEL as an institution. On your behalf UCU raised concerns last week about the student attendance monitoring policy as well as staff: student ratios & module closures, and the impact of both on the student experience & NSS. We also asked that the use of Grade Mark for online marking be reviewed after several concerns. **Come to the next meeting to hear what management had to say about these key issues.**

Together we are stronger.....

This strength and unity of purpose was clear when academic staff across all schools, joined by Unison and Unite colleagues, came together in protests and pickets for our dispute and in particular the proposals for workload allocation. We will face more challenges this year, not least the attempted imposition of a crude Performance Management Scheme, discussed further in this newsletter, and the introduction of a new Code of Practice for the Management of Sickness Absence which will probably make us sick with worry and stress.



Come to a Joint Union meeting to hear about the Performance Management Scheme and why it should be resisted by staff at UEL. Meetings will be held on Wednesday 20th February (Docklands Room EB.G.06 1.30-2.30pm) and Tuesday 26th February (Stratford Room RB1.03 1-2pm)

All UCU meetings for the rest of the academic are published on the back page. Please put in your diary and come to the Branch Meetings as there are important matters to discuss.

Verbal Instructions from a Line Manager

We would like to repeat again advice that any **verbal** instruction given by a Subject Head/Field Leader or Dean to a staff member should be confirmed back to them by email for the record if you are concerned about what you have been asked to do. This follows Disciplinary Procedures being used in RDBS when staff members were following verbal instructions. For the avoidance of any doubt confirm in writing what you have been asked to do before taking any action and await confirmation if necessary. If you are concerned about what you are being asked to do contact your School Representative or any Officer immediately for advice. Full details of UCU Officers and Representatives at the end of this newsletter.

**If you are not a member of UCU please join tomorrow- sign up online at:
<https://join.ucu.org.uk/>**

Dispute - Workload issues – update UCU contact email urgently

You will shortly receive details by email from UCU National of the workload model that is the result of the protracted discussions with management and will have an opportunity to vote on acceptance or not also by email. Therefore you need to make sure that the email address currently held **by UCU National** is the correct one. To check your membership record visit: <https://members.ucu.org.uk/>. We have agreed to remain neutral in the documentation included in mail out; we only urge you to consider the model carefully. Use this model to map your workload for this year for example, and your expectations of what a good workload allocation model should look like. Prior to the ballot closing we will hold meetings in both Docklands and Stratford to discuss the issues and to ensure that we are acting in accordance with members' views. Please check your emails regularly from UCU and make sure that you make every effort to attend these meetings. If you are unable to attend, then please make your views known to your School Representative or any Branch Officer.

Working to contract

Whilst 'action short of a strike' might be perceived by members as more attractive than taking strike action, recent changes to Employment Law mean that its impact is now very muted. For example, in the past we have withheld marks but this is no longer an option as 'partial' performance is not tolerated and could result in more than a day's pay being withheld. As part of our dispute we are still working to contract and there are things that you should be doing that will remind management of our position. For example:

1. Take all leave – many academic staff at UEL do not take their full leave entitlement – make sure that you do so this year;
2. Work no more than your contracted hours where those hours are expressly stated and in any event not to exceed the maximum hours stipulated by the Working Time Regulations;
3. Perform no additional voluntary duties, such as out of hours cover, or covering for colleagues (unless such cover is contractually required);
4. Set and mark no work beyond that work which you are contractually obliged to set and/or mark;
5. Attend no meetings where such attendance is voluntary on the part of the member;
6. Note that if your contract does not or could not require you to work in the evenings or at weekends you can refuse to work at those times;
7. Include the following message on email communications: *UCU members at the University of East London are involved in an official dispute with our employer over workload and other issues. We are currently working to contract and as a result you may experience delays in receiving a response to emails.*

YOUR UNION NEEDS YOU!

If you are interested in helping out, come and hear what the roles in the Branch Committee involve and meet the current Branch Committee after the Branch Meeting on 13th March 2.30-3.00 in Room EB.G.06.

Officers are often asked, "What are you going to do about it?" Firstly you are the union and any strength is a collective one. Secondly your branch committee is also made up of colleagues just like you. Following retirement of key Officers we need more colleagues to put themselves forward to be Officers or co-opted to work for the Branch; remission hours are provided for this vital work and excellent training is offered by UCU National. You will also have the support from experienced branch committee members. **In particular we need colleagues prepared to become Branch Representatives in ADI, RDBS and School of Psychology.**



Branch Representatives and Officers play an important role at UEL. A brief summary of each role can be found in the Local Model Rules which we will make available again on our website below. If you are interested in helping with UCU Branch Committee work please contact Jacqui Mitchell or Rae Beaver for

an informal chat or come to the meeting on 13th March and stay at the end to meet the Branch committee and hear about our work. We will also have lunch time stalls in Docklands on 20th February (main atrium East Building) and Stratford on 26th February (main entrance foyer), if you would like to come and discuss getting involved with the work of the Branch Committee.

Finally, we wish to thank Peter Mottershead and Phil Marfleet for all their hard work and dedication to UCU over many years and in particular their support for colleagues, often at times of great need and distress. They will be missed by many.

Proposed Performance Management Scheme- disappointing and crude

As we have advised members in Branch meetings, UEL management seek to replace the current SDR (Staff Development and Review Scheme) with a Performance Management Scheme (PMS). This is a move back to the discredited HR policies of the 1980's, and is a really disappointing approach for a university. It is also opposed by all trade unions at UEL. Staff will be judged collectively but, as you will see by the proposed workload allocation model, there may not be a level playing field. Factors outside the control of an individual member of staff, such as large class sizes or inadequate resources, will not be considered. It will have a corrosive effect on working relationships, vital in a learning community, as we all seek to ensure our own good personal score. Finally a staff member will be measured against 'individual attributes' that are frankly inappropriate, especially for academic staff, and impossible to measure. The proposed scheme is not one from HE but from the NHS. Other institutions have successfully fought off the introduction of similarly crude schemes and we need to do the same. Indeed there is little support for what is currently proposed by some Deans and Directors so hopefully good sense will prevail and a more reasonable approach will be adopted.

The unions are still in 'negotiation' with management about their proposals but have made their views clear; union officers are not ideologically or philosophically opposed to performance management as will be claimed by management; this is nonsense as it is already part of the existing negotiated SDR. We are just opposed to crude schemes and wish performance management to remain but one element of the current SDR. It is crucial for the unions that any scheme is about **staff development** not outdated and punitive performance management.

Joint unions meetings about this policy will be held on Wednesday 20th and Tuesday 26th February (see below for details). Please make every effort to attend. These changes will have a profound effect on your working conditions and job security. UEL staff have been treated with respect under the SDR system; in fact it was the one thing in the Staff Survey that staff rated highly, but management has ignored this inconvenient truth. As one member said passionately at our last meeting: "We should start with a performance management scheme for managers of this institution, and staff should do the appraisal!" Indeed at two well attended joint union meetings held last semester, staff asked Union Officers to explore the possibility of a 'vote of no confidence' in senior management which is still under discussion currently. The joint unions have already contacted the Governors with our objections to the proposed scheme. It really does not need to be like this at UEL; creating a culture of fear and bullying is a counterproductive strategy. UEL staff are committed and loyal to the University of East London and such staff do not deserve to be treated in this manner. The whole stance and tone of management towards staff is wrong at the moment **but there is now an opportunity to change direction; let's hope management seize this opportunity.** If not, all trade union members at UEL will stand together to challenge a management that it could be considered is out of touch with its staff and endangering the whole institution.

Joint Union Meetings to discuss Performance Management Proposals (all staff welcome): Wednesday 20th February (Docklands Room EB.G.06 1.30-2.30) and Tuesday 26th February (Stratford Room RB.1.03 1-2pm).

Semester B: Key Branch dates

Dates of UCU Branch Meetings: (1-2.30pm unless specified): 13 Mar (Docklands – Room EB.G.06), 17 Apr (Stratford – Room RB.1.03), 24 Apr (Docklands - EB.G.06) – AGM 1st May (1-3pm Docklands EB.G.06) – see below. Please note however that we may call an Extraordinary Meeting to discuss the proposed Workload Allocation Model earlier than 13th March following the ballot going out from UCU National. Please check emails.

Dates of UCU Branch Committee Meetings: (1st Wednesday in each month unless specified – times will vary): 6 Mar (Docklands) Room EB.1.39 12.30-2.30), 10 Apr (site/TBC), 8 May (Docklands WB.2.09), 5 Jun (Stratford/TBC) , 3 Jul (Site/TBC). If you have any issues you wish the committee to consider please let the Branch Secretary know at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Joint Union Meetings to discuss proposed Performance Management Scheme (all staff welcome): Wednesday 20th February (Docklands Room EB.G.06 1.30-2.30) and Tuesday 26th February (Stratford Room RB.1.03 1-2pm).

Joint Union Stalls in Docklands (Atrium) East Building and Stratford (Computer Centre) on 20 Feb (Stratford), 5 Mar (Docklands), 11 Apr (Stratford) 18 Apr (Docklands). Come and tell us what your issues are.

UCU General Meeting: 1st May (Docklands) 1-3pm EB.G.06 – **light lunch to be provided.** Call for nominations for Branch Committee will be made on 20th March and any nominations should be received by Wednesday 3rd April by the Chair. They will require a proposer and a seconder. A returning Officer will be sought and appointed at the 13th March Branch Meeting to adjudicate if elections are required. In accordance with our Local Rules if elections are required these will commence 2 weeks before the AGM, i.e., 17th April and those standing will be invited to address the Branch meeting on 17th April in Stratford and 24th April in Docklands as well as communicate with members an election address. If you interested in standing come to an informal meeting to hear what the roles involve after the Branch Meeting on 13th March or call Chair or Branch Secretary for informal discussion.

Branch Officers:		Contact
Chair & Membership Secretary	Rae Beaver	R.E.Beaver@uel.ac.uk
Vice Chair	Steve Martin	S.Martin@uel.ac.uk
Secretary	Jacqui Mitchell	j.mitchell@uel.ac.uk
Assistant Sec	Steve Martin	S.Martin@uel.ac.uk
Equality Officer	Abiola Ogunsola	A.M.Ogunsola@uel.ac.uk
Health & Safety Officer	James Beale	j.beale@uel.ac.uk
Treasurer	Mike Griffiths	M.Griffiths@uel.ac.uk
School Representatives		
CEC	Abiola Ogunsola	A.M.Ogunsola@uel.ac.uk
ADI	Vacant	Please contact Branch Secretary or Chair
ACE	Mike Griffiths	M.Griffiths@uel.ac.uk
RDBS	Vacant	Please contact Branch Secretary or Chair
LSS	Vacant	Please contact Branch Secretary or Chair
HSB	Neil Simmonite	n.s.simmonite@uel.ac.uk
SOP	Vacant	Please contact Branch Secretary or Chair
Co-opted Roles or ordinary members		
Anti-Casualisation	Jill Daniels	j.daniels2@uel.ac.uk
Pensions	Rae Beaver	R.E.Beaver@uel.ac.uk
Disability	Vacant	Please contact Branch Secretary or Chair
Other co-opted members: Delia Langstone (D.J.Langstone@uel.ac.uk) and Tim Hall ()		

If you are not a member of UCU please join tomorrow- sign up online at:
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