

the spark



Breakthrough in AL negotiations

After more than eighteen months of negotiations on a new AL contract. UCU has reached agreement with the university on an interim settlement which was announced in March. This involves ALs being put on the full length of the normal 7 points of the grade 7 scale, with annual increments and a scheme of career development and staff appraisal for ALs which is almost identical with that for internal staff.

The interim settlement does not provide for ALs to progress to discretionary points on the scale because the details of how this would operate have not yet been worked out, but UCU negotiators are confident of reaching agreement on this long before any ALs reach the top of the normal range of the scale and so become eligible for discretionary points .

The salary settlement will be backdated to August 2008 and so involve back pay for those ALs in post then. The university expects to make backdated payments in July 2010 payments.

The agreement is subject to ratification by AL members of UCU in an electronic ballot which had not been completed when Spark went to press. The union negotiators are confident of a very positive response from members in this ballot and the branch executive has unanimously recommended a yes vote.

There remain a number of detailed issues which have not yet been agreed. The final settlement will also be subject to a ballot of AL members of the UCU branch.

University cuts — what is going on?

You might well ask. And we wish we could tell you.

But despite three fairly fruitless formal consultation meetings, the University has yet to provide much detailed information on its plans and proposals let alone made any serious attempt to engage in meaningful consultation which it is legally required to do.

Furthermore the university has refused to agree to provide UCU with unit plans when they are ready and proposes to only provide us with selective information, and has even turned down a proposal that we look at just one unit plan to assess their contention that seeing all the unit plans would not be relevant to the formal consultation process.

It seems apparent that the University intends to go through the motions of consultation whilst it wishes to make critical decisions without any meaningful consultation. UCU has made it very clear that this is totally unacceptable and called on the university to engage in proper consultation.

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University cuts...continued

Meantime discussions are taking place on some specific proposals for cuts in some areas of the university but there appears to be no overall co-ordination.

On a brighter note the University continues to maintain that it sees compulsory redundancies as a last resort - a resort which UCU has no intention of visiting - and as yet there are no indications of any likely compulsory redundancies but we cannot afford to be complacent on this.

The University's funding letter from HEFCE seems to indicate that the OU has been treated better than most other universities but there has not yet been a full analysis of this letter.

Cuts in PGCE funding

A major reduction in funding from the Training and Development Agency - the TDA - has caused the university to make changes in the way the PGCE is funded, including a change in the arrangements for organising support for the PGCE in England. In future this will not be organised by staff in each of the English Regional Centres but will be nationally co-ordinated. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are not affected by these cuts.

Discussions are taking place with UCU on how this change will impact on staffing, since most of the support work for the PGCE is carried out by Staff Tutors and Faculty Co-ordinators who have other responsibilities in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies. These discussions are taking place in a constructive atmosphere with a shared determination to avoid compulsory redundancies.

Study Leave

Members in many areas of the University have reported increasing problems around taking study leave, due to pressure of other work and about attempts to require those categories of staff with an entitlement to study leave, to secure agreement for the purposes for which they wish to take study leave, which UCU believes to contravene the study leave entitlement in terms and conditions of service - a position which the University disputes. In order to seek views on this issue and to move it forward, UCU held a meeting on Tuesday 13th April. This meeting was webcast and can be seen on: <http://stadium.open.ac.uk/webcast-ou>, where it is called a "UCU General meeting".



OU Branch website, ucu.open.ac.uk

The OUBUCU website now has a training page listing all the forthcoming UCU training events as well as a Summer 2010 training bulletin:

ucu.open.ac.uk/training

We have also added links to the last few General meetings that have been webcast so members can find the UCU meetings more easily:

ucu.open.ac.uk/meetings

And finally, we have added photos and short biographies for most members of the Exec Committee: http://ucu.open.ac.uk/branch_officer_photos and

http://ucu.open.ac.uk/branch_ordinary_photos

Mileage rate

Talks are still taking place with the University to try and get a modest increase in the mileage rate to reflect increases in motoring costs and to try and agree a formula for relating the rate to future cost increases. It is likely that the rate will be capped at 40p which is the current maximum determined by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs above which any expenses for travel by car would be taxable - this has been the maximum for some years.



Researcher Staff terms & conditions

Following consultation with research staff members, the union has agreed some changes in the role profiles of research staff. However there is no agreement on a change in titles of some research staff. The University wants to introduce a title of Research Associate on the grounds that this title is widely used in the sector, but has not produced any evidence to back up this claim which UCU disputes. The branch is now undertaking a survey of the use of titles in other universities to see whether there is any evidence to support the University's contention.

Additional Responsibility allowances

UCU has had a protracted dispute with the University over whether allowances for such posts as Associate Deans are negotiable. The procedure agreement leaves no room for doubt about this, but the University steadfastly maintained that black was white - and when the union invoked the disputes procedure and called for ACAS intervention, the university delayed progressing this. Eventually ACAS advised that these allowances are indeed negotiable - now negotiations will take place over them.

CDSA

Problems in some areas of the university on CDSA, including local unit policies clearly at odds with the agreed university-wide policy, continue but at long last the University has issued firm advice to units that any unit level documentation should be limited to simply administrative arrangements and that they must comply with the agreed University-wide policy. Key features of this policy include the right to request an alternative appraiser, limitation of access to CDSA reports to the appraiser, appraisee and head of unit unless otherwise agreed, and no link between CDSA and rewards except for an agreed report which can be submitted to any group considering rewards or otherwise separate reports by appraiser and appraisee. If you are unhappy with CDSA practice in your unit then email ucu@open.ac.uk

ALs outside the UK

The University has agreed to bring forward proposals for a framework for how ALs outside the UK should be paid. Currency fluctuations over the last couple of years have led to a significant loss of income for non UK ALs because of the decline in the value of the pound.

Advertising of posts

The University last year introduced a new policy under which posts are normally only advertised internally in the first instance, unless there is good reason to advertise externally. UCU welcomed this as a helpful measure to avoid redundancies. However the union has expressed concern about how this policy is being applied by some areas of the university and the failure to police this adequately. In some cases posts have been advertised externally simply because no one in the immediate unit or location was interested and suitable, without any attempt to find out, by advertising internally only in the first instance, whether there was any one in other areas of the university, including ALs, who might be interested and suitable.

This policy has recently and belatedly been extended to AL posts.

Academic-Related Annual meeting, 10 March at UCU Head Office

Michael McNeil, UCU National Head of Higher Education, outlined the three factors driving public policy:

- Funding – the level and method and split between public and private
- Competition – the different student markets
- Delivery – flexible learning, virtual experience and the employers' role

Dave Anderson, outgoing Chair of the Academic-Related Staff Committee emphasised that we need a guide to career progression for A-R staff and Matt Waddup, UCU National Head of Campaigning, Organising, Recruitment and Training said it was a cliché to say that these are challenging times, with the migration towards privatisation and cuts in the public sector.

The following motions were debated: (see them in full on the UCU website at www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3149)

The motions were all passed: Motion 8 was passed as part of Motion 1.

Motion	Title:	Submitted by:
1	Equality Issues	Academic Related Committee
2	Privacy Implications of Outsourcing of IT Information and Support: more reasons to resist outsourcing.	Academic Related Committee
3	Professional development	Academic Related Committee
4	Stop deprofessionalisation of services which support learning, teaching and research.	Academic Related Committee
5	Workloads	Academic Related Committee
6	Employment issues	University of Leeds
7	Untitled	University of Leeds
8	Untitled	University of Birmingham
9	Retention of term "academic-related"	University of Liverpool
10	Promotion and professional development for academic related staff	University of Aberdeen

After lunch colleagues split into two groups, one to discuss outsourcing and privatisation, the other redundancy issues.

In Workshop 1 the discussion centred around the UCU outsourcing survey of Academic-Related jobs across Further Education and Higher Education. Out of 30 responses from institutions, there were 8 saying that outsourcing had taken place and for A-R staff, it's mainly IT provision.

At a time of insecurity for many of our members the Redundancy Workshop was well attended. Delegates discussed strategies for local campaigning against redundancies in higher education and heard from representatives from Leeds University and UCL who shared their experience of local action and successful campaigning to save jobs. The message was clear – we stand firm in our opposition to education cuts and any job losses in our sector. We continue to build our membership and increase trade union activity locally and nationally.

June Payne, Central Academic-Related Staff Officer & Pauline Collins, Regional/National Academic-Related Staff Officer



Performance review, CDSA, DALS, what does it all mean?

Not even ALs who just like to get on with their work in peace can have failed to notice at least some of these expressions being bandied about in OU publications and on websites in the past few months, and even some usually well informed ALs are admitting to confusion, so I am hoping to throw a little light on these closely related topics.

Performance review is the OU's proposed shiny new management system for ALs. It will consist of all the data that the university gathers on us: TTGAR/POTTS data, monitoring reports, tutorial observations and DALS questionnaires. The intention is that all this will be available to view online, to each AL and their line manager. We don't have a date for this yet, but when it happens ALs will have a facility to make their own comments, in case they feel that any of it is inaccurate or in some way not a true reflection of their performance. UCU can not stop the university from collecting performance data, but does have negotiating rights over some of the situations in which they can be used.

Any AL who has not had a brush with DALS by now is lucky, but will not have long to wait, as last year it was rolled out to every AL on every course presentation. DALS stands for Developing Associate Lecturers through Student feedback, and you can find out all about it from www.open.ac.uk/tutors/development/developing-associate-lecturers-through-student-feedback.php UCU does not like DALS; we feel that some of the questions are fatuous, and that as it is anonymous it allows students who perhaps were disappointed in their marks, or were refused an extension to make unwarranted criticisms of their tutor. Not all students take part and those who do may well be unrepresentative. Last year the university agreed to develop the facility for ALs to make their own comments on DALS reports, but this has been put off until the whole performance review system is ready. Instead the university has agreed to provide an email address on the DALS feedback for the AL to register their comments, if they wish to do so. It is not possible to boycott DALS, your students will be invited to give feedback on you whether or not you agree; but you can ignore it. You can not customise the questionnaire, and not encourage your students to take part. If you are really strong minded you can not look at the reports when they arrive, and not discuss the results with your staff tutor. From discussions we know that some ALs feel that they get something out of DALS, and you must make up your own mind, but on the whole we feel it is best to ignore it if you can.



Once the university has accumulated all this data about you, it will feed into something called a Contribution Review. The OU says that it needs this in order to bring in a new rewards system which will reward exceptional performance by ALs.

CDSA stand for Career Development and Staff Appraisal. The OU has a long standing system of CDSA for all staff except ALs, and we regard its introduction for ALs as a positive development.

CDSA is:

- A look back at goals attained and standards reached.
- An assessment of strengths and weaknesses with a focus on developing performance.
- A look forward at short and long term objectives.
- A review and identification of agreed training and development activities.

ALs will have an annual discussion with their line manager, which can be on the telephone or online. The results will be confidential between the appraiser and appraisee, and can become part of the contribution review only if the AL agrees. There is a guide to CDSA on the intranet at www.open.ac.uk/foi-docs/cdsaC.doc; although this was written for establishment staff the CDSA system for ALs will be substantially similar.

UCU have some doubts whether all this management of ALs is really necessary. We hope that CDSA will help the OU towards a better means of managing AL workload than its present worn out and time wasting systems. For the rest, as usual the devil is in the detail, and we will do our best to help our members sort out problems with these systems as and when they arise.

Sue Hawthorne, ALs Officer

AL telephone costs

Some AL members may remember that telephone costs were a hot topic at the UCU session at the AL conference last November, particularly for Openings tutors, who are contracted to telephone their students. It was pointed out that Openings students often have no land line, and it is useless to ask them to phone back as they seldom have any credit on their mobiles either. The university gets generous extra funding for some of these students under widening participation schemes, but some ALs are paying the price for this. As these students are more likely to drop out if not well supported, this seems to be a very short sighted policy.



At a meeting in January OU management said that they would try to issue guidance to ALs on how to reduce their telephone costs, but conceded that ALs could make expense claims for exceptional costs. If you are in this position and make a claim which is not accepted, please get in touch with UCU.

If you would like some advice on cutting telephone costs, personal as well as OU related, you can find it at:

www.moneysavingexpert.com/phones/cheap-calls-to-mobiles#best

Research Excellence Framework Open Meeting

A meeting on the Research Excellence Framework and particularly its relevance to the careers of research staff, which was to have taken place in January but was a victim of the snow, has been re-arranged for Thursday 6th May at 12.30 pm in Christodoulou Meeting Room 3 (CMR3).

Alternative Acronyms!

ASQ	Ask a Silly Question
CDSA	Currently Doing Sod All
DALS	Doing A Lame Survey
MCT	Magic Cuddly Toy
MOLD	Making Old Luxuries Disappear
VLE	Very large experiment

Strength in numbers—recruit a colleague

At the moment, every newspaper, every TV bulletin, every university statement is riddled with numbers – numbers of billions of pounds lost, numbers of university places, numbers of jobs with uncertain futures.

Now more than ever, the numbers that really count are those in membership of a strong trade union. A strong, active union membership provides a clear voice for employees to their managers. You, as OU UCU members already know this. But there are many of your colleagues who may not.

Even with the tentatively positive news from HEFCE about OU funding, cuts will still be implemented and the responsibility for fighting these cuts comes down to UCU and other unions in the OU.

UCU provides a robust support system and collective voice for OU Academic, Academic-related, Research staff and Associate Lecturers. Therefore, I would urge you strongly to talk to your colleagues about the benefits of union membership and encourage them to join. It's as simple as going to www.ucu.org.uk/join and opens up a world of solidarity and support to all its members.

Every member recruited means a further strengthening of our position and another voice to add to our collective combating of unfair and unjust management practices. Whatever the workplace issue, UCU is here to help.

My job as a full-time UCU official in your region involves aiding branches in recruitment, organising, campaigns and training and your branch at the OU always has my ear when it comes to implementing strategy in these areas. If you want any further information on recruitment or, most importantly, would like to get more involved in UCU at the OU, please contact your UCU branch administrator, Deb Shann, at ucu@open.ac.uk



Paddy Cooper, UCU Regional Branch Development Organiser



STOP PRESS: UCU mug available for any member who recruits a colleague. When your colleague has received their UCU welcome pack from Deb, please call into room 015, Wilson C block and collect your UCU mug!

Meet the new Executive Committee members

We asked the new members of the Exec committee some questions and here are answers from one of them, Ian Stevenson, a Staff tutor in MCT at the Belfast office.

Q: If you were given a million pounds, what would you spend it on?

A: Boats, aeroplanes, cars and travel.

Q: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would that be?

A: I like Ireland a lot, but I use my boat to travel around Europe.

Q: What's the most embarrassing situation you have ever got yourself into?

A: Running aground where I should have known better, in front of the yacht club!

Q: What's the most irritating thing you have ever been told you do?

A: Make out time tables before we know how many students/tutors we will have.

Q: Can you cook & what's your special dish when you do cook?

A: I do bloke food quite well, e.g. steak, fish, BBQ, bacon and eggs.

Q: Do you have any hobbies, if so what are they?

A: Making things for special purposes, e.g. yacht fittings you can't buy.

Q: What sport do you follow?

A: Only those I can do myself, e.g. diving, sailing, flying & shooting.

Q: Who do you most admire and why?

A: The female crew of EF Education in the Volvo round the world race.

Q: What's your favorite movie of all time?

A: 2001: A Space Odyssey

Q: Are you a spender or a saver?

A: Spending my kids inheritance at the moment!

Q: Describe yourself in one word!

A: Restless



UCU Environment Conference — November 2009

UCU held its first ever National Environment conference on 25th November 2009 and a member from the OU branch (Mark Yoxon) attended along with 50 other UCU members. The conference had a practical focus: How can we support attempts to reduce damaging carbon emissions in our homes, communities and workplaces?



Daniel Voskins spoke about the 10:10 campaign which seeks to encourage a 10% cut in carbon emissions in the year 2010, further information on this campaign is available at: www.1010uk.org. So far over 750 organisations have signed up to this campaign and even with the best deal on the table at Copenhagen, we only have a 50-50 chance of preventing a 2°C global temperature rise.

Tim Baster introduced the COIN (Climate Outreach and Information Network) which is trying to deal with the denial strategies on global warming. Further information on this network is available at www.coinet.org.uk.

Iain Patten, Executive Director of the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) introduced the work of the Association that now has 280 members including the Open University. The website has lots of free resources including sustainable development curriculum guides, a projects and case studies database and practical guidance: www.eauc.org.uk.

The afternoon was spent in small groups talking about building climate solidarity in Further and Higher Education. The conference was closed by Jonathan Neale, author of Stop Global Warming; he delivered a passionate speech about the urgency of the situation, including the need these three things:

- Massively increase renewables,
- Fix leaky homes,
- Improve public transport.

Jonathan's book is available to buy from www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk/cgi/store/bookmark.cgi?review=new&isbn=9781905192373&cart_id=8839777.27668

Read the full conference report on the UCU website at this address: www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4192

IN ADDITION: House of Commons, Environmental Audit Committee - Green Jobs and Skills report, December 2009

The report calls for Government to establish a leader for the green skills agenda, stimulating demand for green skills and mainstreaming them throughout all sectors of the economy.

“A body to lead the green skills agenda must be found and low-carbon skills need to be integrated through the whole skills delivery system to encourage behavioural change across the entire economy.”

The report also states that: “...a more general green skills set will be required to provide the entire economy with resource efficiency and leadership skills needed as the economy moves to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption”.

Mark Yoxon, UCU OU Branch representative at this conference

Zero Tolerance towards Breaches of Policies and Procedures

For those of you familiar with the criminal justice system, the term Zero Tolerance refers to the strategy used first in the USA whereby no matter how petty the matter, it was prosecuted by the police. They found that this caught major offenders who were wanted for far more serious crimes.

The Open University is a rule-governed institution, with a comprehensive set of policies, and procedures, all of which have been agreed with the union. Indeed, these are regarded as models of excellence throughout the university sector.

However, there is little point in having such an excellent set if they are ignored in practice. It matters not whether it is a small breach because every breach undermines the main policy and, in my opinion, each small "oversight" leads on to further ones because by custom and practice why should management observe the fine detail if we do not challenge them each and every time.

Sick Pay: The Terms & Conditions of Service, and the policy on sick pay, permit the extension of full pay beyond the six months to which every individual member of staff is entitled. The union and management agreed four simple criteria* which have to be met before an extension is granted. Unfortunately, in some cases the extensions have not been granted even though the criteria have been met. Not only that, the standard letter sent to staff approaching the end of their six months does not refer to the entitlement to be extended if the criteria are met. Clearly, here the University breaches the agreement when staff who meet the four simple criteria are refused an extension of their sick pay.

- "1) The member of staff is meeting all requirements (set out in terms and conditions) to produce medical certificates for absence.
- 2) The member of staff is fully co-operating with any medical investigations required by the University e.g. consenting to release information to, and attending appointments with, the University's Medical Adviser
- 3) The member of staff is fully co-operating with Unit management and Human Resources e.g. in regular communication, completing personal stress audit questionnaires etc.
- 4) There are reasonable prospects of a return to work except when extensions are granted on compassionate grounds...."

CDSA: There are two agreements on CDSA, the national one in 1987, and the local one in 2007. Each says the same thing. However, though it is not essential to have a CDSA the University has used not having one as a disciplinary matter in a couple of cases I am aware of. To complicate matters, some units created their own, inaccurate interpretations of the agreed Policies, and they then misapplied these to the detriment of staff.

Another issue arising from CDSA is the right to ask for an alternative appraiser. Yet too many staff have been refused an alternative one even though it is clear that the appraisee has no confidence in their appraiser. The need to have confidence in one's appraiser is the only part of CDSA which is essential but this essential requirement is often ignored.

Mental Health and Stress: In my experience, staff who are off sick with stress and depression or mental health problems, do not feel treated well by the University, even when their condition falls under the Disability Discrimination Act. Indeed, in one case, the University has refused to address the mental health issue, or bring in an external mediator skilled in these matters, and instead has disciplined someone whose mental health is fragile.

Flexible Working on Return from Maternity Leave: There have been complaints that some women have requested this and been refused for business reasons. This creates a barrier to their career development, and some leave instead of trying to work full-time. It makes a mockery of excellent policies if they are hard to implement.

The above is just the tip of the iceberg. The OU needs to implement all of its policies and procedures fairly and well, according to the agreements with the Union. We need to challenge every breach, no matter how small, if we are to defend the interests of the staff groups we represent. But we need your help in this matter. Please alert us to any breaches you may be aware of, or let us know if you are anxious about any situation.

John Bennett, Equality Officer



New marking time survey for all Associate Lecturers

UCU has produced a new survey on TMA marking times. We are asking ALs to keep a record of the time they spend marking every TMA, and to do the survey when they have finished. It should take no more than 5 minutes, and is completely anonymous. We need this data to persuade the OU to either cut marking times, or to raise salaries to reflect the true time we spend marking.

For some time we have been concerned that the amount of time ALs spend marking is growing, and is longer than the nominal 45 minutes that some faculties assume. There are many possible reasons for this, including changes in the nature of TMAs and changes in the nature of the student body. As marking is a large part of AL workload, and a major driver for the algorithm which calculates salary bands, this effectively amounts to a fairly substantial pay cut, as ALs are working longer hours for the same pay.

We have recently submitted general survey evidence to the OU, and have asked them to instruct course teams to collect data on marking times from ALs on every course after every TMA marking round. We think that the OU, as a learning institution, should want to know this information, it is important for course teams to know if they are setting assignments which are time consuming to mark, and also it is very relevant when ALs are being disciplined for failing to return marked TMAs within the 14 day turn round period. It is useful information for ALs when they are applying to teach more courses, and they may also appreciate knowing if they are much slower or quicker at marking than their colleagues.

At the time of writing the OU have not said that they will do this, nor have they refused, but we are keen to exert further pressure on them to gather this data and have therefore decided not to wait, but to make a start ourselves. We have set up a very short survey which we hope to get as many ALs as possible to fill in after every TMA marking round. We need you to keep a note of the time you spend marking every batch of TMAs. You should include time spent downloading tutor notes and the TMA questions if this is something you have to do. You should include time spent checking tutor conferences for corrections, and the time spent writing PT3 comments, in short everything you do as part of the marking process. **This survey is not just for members.** We need you to spread the word and get as many of your colleagues as you can to join in. We will publish the results periodically on our website.

You can access the survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7XRHDYW>

Sue Hawthorne, ALs Officer



Grievance procedures

The University and the union reached tentative agreement last summer on a revised grievance procedure. However all agreements at the Joint Negotiating Committee are subject to ratification by both sides through due process and it is rare but not unknown for one side not to ratify an agreement. When this procedure went to the branch executive for ratification, a potential ambiguity was identified concerning time limits for the submission of grievances and so the executive ratified this conditionally subject to agreement on our interpretation of what this meant - something the negotiators did not expect to be a problem—and this was communicated to the University. However it subsequently became apparent that the university did not accept this interpretation. After protracted discussions the executive decided that since the condition on which the agreement had been ratified had not been met, there was no agreed new procedure and so the previous procedure should prevail. At the time of writing the University has refused to retreat from its position that the new procedures should be used despite the lack of agreement on them. ACAS has been called in to try and resolve this dispute.

Make Education Count

Local general election candidates from the Labour, Tory, Liberal Democrat and Green Parties and national UCU Vice President for Higher Education, Terry Hoad spoke to and answered questions on higher education policy at a meeting in the Berrill Lecture Theatre in March. The meeting was part of UCU's campaign to ensure that higher education issues are pushed up the political agenda in the run up to the general election .



National negotiations

A Special Higher Education Sector Conference in February did not set a specific figure for the 2010/2011 pay claim but left this for UCU negotiators to set in consultation with other unions in HE. This claim will include an element to make good the difference between the derisory 2009/2010 pay increase of 0.5% and cost increases in that year. The conference rejected an OU branch motion to submit a supplementary claim for UCU represented staff, to start to catch up with comparators in other areas of employment, on the grounds that this was likely to cause friction with other unions. As part of the negotiations, all the unions will be renewing pressure for a national redundancy avoidance agreement.

Dealing with work-based problems

In addition to talking to your UCU rep, there are a number of things you can do that will help to resolve problems at work.

1. Firstly try to resolve the problem informally on a one-to-one basis directly with the person who is causing you the problem, if you have not done that, and you decide to make a formal complaint, the complaint may be dismissed.
2. If that fails to resolve the problem, or if the lack of communication with that person is the problem itself, take the issue, still informally, to your appraiser or line manager (unless that is the same person against whom you have the complaint), seeking to settle the issue amicably and productively.
3. If the problem is not unique to you, and is shared by others in your department or subject group, then the union would advise you to try to resolve it collectively, as a collective issue may more easily be settled long-term than an individual problem. It may be that this is the point were, logistically, you are best advised to approach the UCU rep, asking him/her to “chair” the informal gathering of affected staff and give advice as appropriate.
4. Throughout this process of informal attempts, build up a record of the process—of the problem and of the attempts to resolve it informally—listing dates of emails, meetings, events, incidents, etc and keeping whatever evidence may be relevant.
5. If the problem is still unresolved by informal approaches, then go to your UCU rep or office to request a rep/caseworker. Only if your rep cannot resolve the problem, or if the advice is sought, will the next stage in the process be activated by the rep, i.e. referral upwards through the union’s system.
6. If you are called for a disciplinary hearing, you should of course contact your UCU rep immediately and should make no attempt to resolve the issue informally after that.



College and University Support Network

The College and University Support Network (CUSN) offers support services to all staff in further and higher education and their families, including:

- Counselling: confidential, solution-focused counselling on personal and workplace issues
- One-to-one coaching: personalised practical and emotional support via a secure email system
- Information, advice and support material: news, guides and factsheets on relevant topics such as well-being, work-life balance, workload problems, stress management, coping with bereavement, and dealing with difficult people
- Financial assistance: a needs-based grants and loans programme
- Money management advice: individually tailored strategies to address financial difficulties, restructure debt and secure benefits
- Signposting to relevant organisations: the information you need to take the next steps to a better future.

All these services can be accessed online at CUSN's website at www.cusn.info or through a 24/7 telephone support line, on Freephone 08000 329952

Department & Regional/national centre reps

Department/Faculty/Unit	Name
AACS	Dianne Sutton d.i.sutton@open.ac.uk
CLAC (Centre for Language & Communication), FELS	Daniel Allington d.allington@open.ac.uk
Estates	Matt Griffin m.d.griffin@open.ac.uk
Health & Social Care	Wayne Taylor w.w.taylor@open.ac.uk
OU Business School	June Payne j.a.payne@open.ac.uk
OU Validation Services	Lesley McGrath l.f.mcgrath@open.ac.uk
Marketing	Jeni Aldridge j.r.aldridge@open.ac.uk
Social Sciences	John Bennett j.e.bennett@open.ac.uk
Strategy Unit	Bethan Norfor b.norfor@open.ac.uk

**WANTED: MORE DEPARTMENTAL/
FACULTY REPS AT WALTON HALL**

We are looking for any members at Walton Hall who would like to become active by handing out UCU application forms and acting as a general union contact point.

If you are interested then please contact Deb Shann on 01908 653069 or ucu@open.ac.uk

Region/National centre	Name
London	Helen Peters h.peters@open.ac.uk
South	Moira Wilson m.e.wilson@open.ac.uk
South West	<i>vacancy</i>
West Midlands	Ian Martin i.w.martin@open.ac.uk
East Midlands	Judy Ekins j.m.ekins@open.ac.uk
East of England	<i>vacancy</i>
Yorkshire	<i>vacancy</i>
North West	Lynne Connolly lynne.connolly@open.ac.uk
North	<i>vacancy</i>
Wales	Ceri Phillips c.j.phillips@open.ac.uk
Scotland	George Callaghan g.s.callaghan@open.ac.uk
Ireland	Alan Carr a.v.carr@open.ac.uk
South East	<i>vacancy</i>

**WANTED: 5 MORE REGIONAL/
NATIONAL REPS NEEDED**

We are looking for any members in Regional/National centres who would like to become active by handing out UCU application forms and acting as a general union contact point.

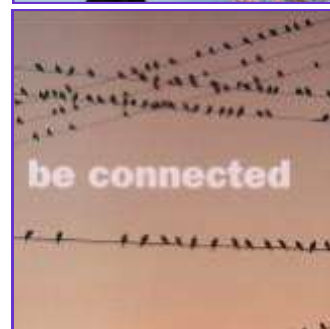
We have just found 2 new regional reps and so only need to find another 5 to have a complete set of one per regional/national centre!

If you are interested then please contact Deb Shann on 01908 653069 or ucu@open.ac.uk

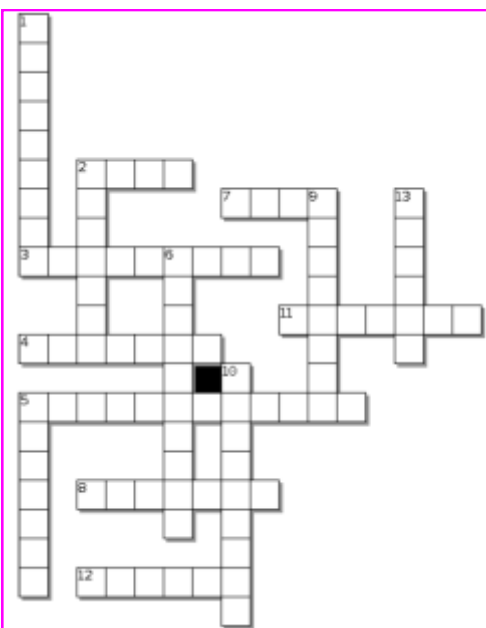
Associate Lecturer Regional/national reps

The AL regional reps committee includes the elected regional representatives elected by AL members in each region, and the branch's elected ALs officer, Sue Hawthorne.

London	Marion Reichart mrr6@tutor.open.ac.uk
South	Tim Parry tim.parry@tesco.net
South West	Malcolm Jenner & Richard Bradbury msj49@tutor.open.ac.uk & rb872@tutor.open.ac.uk
West Midlands	Jon Williams & Stephen Pattinson jdw47@tutor.open.ac.uk & smp487@tutor.open.ac.uk
East Midlands	Karen Angelosanto & Phil Hill ka854@tutor.open.ac.uk & 1ph@sky.com
East of England	John Robson jr38@tutor.open.ac.uk
Yorkshire	Peter Piper & Lois Kennedy pwp3@tutor.open.ac.uk & lvk3@tutor.open.ac.uk
North West	Tom Saunders & Paul Flodman tom.saunders3@ntlworld.com & pdf46@tutor.open.ac.uk
North	Mike McNulty mbm4@tutor.open.ac.uk
Wales	Eric Bowers eab5@tutor.open.ac.uk
Scotland	Bruce Heil bh24@tutor.open.ac.uk
Ireland	Pauline Collins p.a.collins@open.ac.uk
South East	John James jj63@tutor.open.ac.uk



The Spark crossword — April 2010



Across

- 2) Country where Lima is the capital (4)
- 3) Country where Carlos Teves (footballer) was born (9)
- 4) 3rd word in HEFCE (7)
- 5) What sort of tree has been planted near Walton Hall? (6,6)
- 7) Apple's latest gadget (4)
- 8) World's top university according to THES (7)
- 11) People on thrones (7)
- 12) President of Afghanistan (6)

Down

- 1) Where are Angel falls? (9)
- 2) Animal that was on OU Christmas card (7)
- 5) Vehicle for up to 15 passengers (4,3)
- 6) Which birthday is Eastenders celebrating? (6,4)
- 9) Flower for St David's day (8)
- 10) Type of equation (9)
- 13) New student email accounts will be...

BECOMING ACTIVE

We are looking for members to volunteer for any of the roles below. In most cases members being trained for these roles should be allowed time off work.

Union Learning reps - A learning rep is a union rep who is trained on advising members on learning needs and opportunities.

Health and safety reps - At the moment we have only three H&S reps, one AL, one regional staff member and one MK-based. Ideally we should have one in every region, as well as several AL H&S reps. Anyone who has a knowledge and/or interest in health and safety issues would be invaluable. Time off work for training and other functions is a statutory right.

Department or unit reps at Walton Hall - We are interested in hearing from anyone who is willing to serve as a point of contact for the union, and/or maintain a notice board for members.

DAN is a community and a resource:

It's a community of every member who wants to get involved in the life of their union. Join the DAN community to receive direct and regular information on becoming active, campaigning and on developing your skills as an activist. It's a resource for everyone who wants to be active in UCU, whether you are a new member looking for answers and guidance, or a more experienced activist who wants quick access to web based tools and resources.



Whatever it is you want to do, DAN can help you do it. The UCU website gives you access to information, guidance, tips from the UCU DAN team and from other UCU activists, and a huge range of tools and resources to help you to effect change in your workplace. www.ucu.org.uk/dan

We have a list of all members who have expressed an interest in DAN and we will be contacting you shortly.

THREE things in THREE minutes:

1. Put up a UCU poster, please phone 53069 or email ucu@open.ac.uk and we can send you a UCU poster!
2. Recruit a colleague: send a colleague the link to our online joining page, www.ucu.org.uk/join
3. Sign up for training, please phone 53069 or email ucu@open.ac.uk for further information.

YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2009-10)

President: Roger Walters (r.j.walters) x 58810
Honorary Secretary: Lesley Kane (lhk4@tutor.open.ac.uk)
Treasurer: David Knowles (d.w.knowles)
Vice Presidents: Mike McNulty & Alan Carr
Immediate Past President: John Bennett
Equality Officer: John Bennett
Central Academic Staff Officer: vacancy
Central Academic-Related Staff Officer: June Payne
Regional Academic Staff Officer: Judy Ekins
Regional Academic-Related Staff Officer: Pauline Collins
Associate Lecturers Staff Officer: Sue Hawthorne

Ordinary Members:

Chris Bollom
 Eric Bowers
 Gill Clough
 Bruce Heil
 Phil Hill
 John James
 Malcolm Jenner
 Maria McCrea
 Meridian
 Bethan Norfor
 John Peters
 Peter Piper
 Ceri Phillips
 Ian Stevenson
 Eric Wade

NEC Members:

Alan Carr
 Pauline Collins
 Angie McConnell
 Lesley Kane
 Roger Walters



NEED HELP?
 PERSONAL CASEWORKERS ARE HERE

One of the most important services provided by UCU is support for individual members experiencing problems in their employment, or with other members of the University.

If you want any advice on employment related problems, please email ucu@open.ac.uk. Any such emails will of course be treated in strict confidence.

The Open University branch of UCU

OU UCU
 Room 015, Wilson C Block, Walton Hall,
 The Open University,
 Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Phone: (01908) 6-53069
 email: ucu@open.ac.uk
 Web: <http://ucu.open.ac.uk>

Crossword Solution — the Spark December 2009

ACROSS		
1	Name of Xfactor twins	JEDWARD
4	First name of new European President	HERMAN
6	Which rock band could Roger have been in?	PINK FLOYD
8	Surname of academic recently retired, known for his special tie	WILSON
9	UCU members get free personal contents insurance with which company?	ENDSLEIGH
11	Colour of wellies on new UCU application form	PINK
12	Age of Girl Guides in 2010	HUNDRED
DOWN		
2	Old museum just refurbished	ASHMOLEAN
3	Name of Mr Benn's road (old kids TV show)	FESTIVE
5	Dance in Limerick?	IRISH JIG
7	Room number of UCU office	FIFTEEN
10	Regional official's first name	LYDIA