

# TALKS WITH EMPLOYERS CONTINUE

**After many months in which the University and Colleges Employers Association - UCEA - has refused to enter into any discussions with UCU but instead insisted that it will only talk through the mechanism of a new negotiating machinery with a 'single table' involving all the other unions in the sector despite the clear rejection by UCU members in HE of this mechanism in a ballot last year, UCEA has finally agreed to direct talks with UCU with the involvement of ACAS.**

However there remain fundamental differences between the two sides - over UCU's right to negotiate on issues specific to academic and academic related staff, whether employers will be allowed to opt in or out of future national pay settlements, and UCU's right to take industrial action as a last resort should the need arise.

Furthermore UCEA has consistently refused to discuss UCU's pay claim for 2009 through any mechanism other than the unagreed single table bargaining machinery.

Given the long history of UCEA stubbornness on these issues and its apparent determination to ignore the democratic decision of UCU members in the ballot last year, it would be unwise to be too optimistic about a successful outcome but UCU will make every effort to try to achieve an agreement. Therefore the union's Higher Education Committee has mandated the General Secretary to ballot all members in HE for industrial action if there is no progress in these talks in the very near future.

If it regrettably proves necessary to go down that road, members should remember who has been trying to get a peaceful settlement for months and who has been doggedly refusing to even talk.

*Roger Walters OU UCU branch president*

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## ANTI-CASUALISATION CAMPAIGN and ALs

**On November 1st last year UCU launched its anti-casualisation campaign.**

This is long overdue considering the size and nature of the problem. There are no completely reliable statistics, but UCU believes that at least half the academic staff working in further and

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# UCU tells OU to honour CDSA agreement

**UCU has expressed grave concern about continuing examples of the University's failure to honour the agreement on CDSA for internal staff, which can be seen on the intranet at the link below.**

That dispute centred on three things - firstly the choice of appraiser, secondly, the link between CDSA (Career Development Staff Appraisal) and rewards, and thirdly confidentiality.

On the first it was agreed that any member of staff has the right to request an alternative appraiser to the person suggested by the management - which is almost invariably the line manager - and for this request to be seriously considered and for reasons to be given if that request is refused. It was also agreed that it is essential for appraisers to have the confidence of their appraisees. Despite this, staff are often told, frequently in writing, including in some unit level CDSA documents, that they have to be appraised by their line manager and when the right to request an alternative appraiser is mentioned, it is often done in a way which implies that this is a most exceptional request which is very unlikely to be agreed.

On the second it was agreed that the only link between CDSA and rewards should be that a summary agreed by appraiser and appraisee could be submitted to any relevant body or individual considering promotion or a special award or such like but the University has not even changed its policy on rewards to reflect this agreement and a much firmer link between CDSA and rewards is frequently stated or implied.

On the third, it was agreed that in view of the sensitivity of CDSA, appraisal records should be kept only by appraisers, appraisees, and heads of units yet this is not being enforced and such records seem often to find their way into the hands of other people, such as line managers when they have not been the appraiser and departmental heads.

The sharpest reported example of departing from both the letter and the spirit of the agreement was of some training on CDSA provided by Human Resources in which it was apparently stated that only in exceptional circumstances could you ask for an alternative appraiser and a case would have to go to the Vice Chancellor, CDSA is linked to merit awards, and it was a matter for each unit who had access to CDSA records.

The 2007 agreement on CDSA can be found at:-  
[http://intranet.open.ac.uk/human-resources/information/cdsa/local\\_agreement\\_oubucu\\_2007.doc](http://intranet.open.ac.uk/human-resources/information/cdsa/local_agreement_oubucu_2007.doc)

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## CDSA *(contd. from p2.)*

Furthermore the University often treats CDSA as if it is indistinguishable from performance management and uses techniques and language that are more appropriate for performance management than for CDSA.

Branch President Roger Walters has written to the University to draw attention to this report about CDSA training and reminded management of the importance of sticking to agreements until and unless they are revised. 'The last thing I would want to do is to propose a renewed boycott of CDSA. However unless the University abides by the letter and the spirit of the agreement and takes

very much more seriously than hitherto reported breaches of the agreement, then I will have no alternative '

At the time of writing, no response had been received from the University.

Members are asked to object to any documents or practices which you encounter which seem to conflict with the agreement on the three critical issues above and to report any departures from the agreement to the branch if you are unable to resolve them.

*Roger Walters OU UCU branch president*

## Compulsory redundancies avoided

The threat of compulsory redundancies for a handful of academic related staff of OU Validation Services - OUVS - has been averted following intensive discussions between the University and UCU during which UCU made it clear that the consequences of any compulsory redundancies would include greylisting of the OU, and that in no circumstances could the union countenance compulsory redundancies. This follows the University's decision to move OUVS from premises in London to Walton Hall, a decision which caused considerable problems for many of the staff concerned who faced a choice between moving house and home, an option not open to some of them for personal reasons, or losing their job.

A number of former OUVS staff have left the University but this has been achieved through voluntary severance with a compromise agreement which underwrites their entitlements to various benefits for those who requested this.

UCU has made it clear to the university that any future job losses must be achieved through voluntary means.

## Disabled Members Annual Conference 24th Oct 2008 UCU HQ London

There were over 30 delegates from universities and colleges all over the UK. Apart from the standard business, there were some very interesting speakers: two from the PCS union about *the Welfare Reform Bill* and the EHRC (*Equality and Human Rights Commission*); and from the *Palestinian Twinning Campaign*; information and discussion of the white paper on *The Equality Bill*; and the *UNISON Equality scheme*. There was a plenary session on *Organising Around Disability Equality* and choice of two workshops: *Creating an Equality Scheme for UCU* and *How the Marketisation of Education Disables us*. There was a motion *Transforming the sector by implementing Disability Equality* which supported the formation of the Disability Equality Implementation Group (DEIG) to implement the recommendation of the Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning (CDSLL) also an emergency motion protesting about *cuts in Additional Support for Learning at the College of Northeast London (CONEL)*.

The Welfare Reform Bill green paper would abolish income support and introduce compulsory training and obligations to work for benefits. The consultation on the green paper ended on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct and the TUC has made representation to encourage giving claimants support to get jobs rather than penalties and to oppose the privatisation of much of the employment service.

The EHRC has taken over the work of the previous equality commissions. It is early days, however as yet it does not seem to have been very effective. It has withdrawn from some specific impairment groups. The PCS union is

trying to improve this situation and trying to ensure that provisions in the current equality legislation are not watered down in the new combined Equality Bill. The white paper *Framework for a Fairer Future: The Equality Bill* was introduced in June. It proposes a single duty for public bodies to replace those in disability, race, age and gender and will also cover gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion / belief. There is an undertaking to consult a wide range of organisations and that the Equality Bill will be in the next Queen's speech.

UNISON has a very comprehensive Equality scheme called *Equal Means Making it Happen*. It was developed over a couple of years with union employees doing much of the work to develop and implement the scheme, but with support from the membership. This first scheme will run for 3 years and then be reviewed. Important aspects of developing the scheme were: leadership; democratic buy-in; dedicated resource; being practical and realistic; embedding the scheme in the day to day work of the union; training and support. In the workshop, people felt that UCU needed to develop such a scheme over a period of time. There have been motions in the past for this to happen and it is important that something is seen to be starting this year. This is the work of the equality committee, whose membership is determined by a vote at the end of the conference.

*Judy Ekins*

*OU UCU Regional Academic Staff Officer, and branch delegate to UCU Disabled Members' Conference.*

## NEW CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING

Last October, a packed meeting of about 200 people, including representatives of staff and students, local communities, and a wide variety of diverse organisations, launched a Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning, CALL which has been established in the light of severe cutbacks in the provision of various forms of adult education. The six founding principles of CALL are that the education system should provide

- ◆ Equality of access to high quality education for all learners, regardless of class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, asylum status, or employment status, including a statutory right to learning in the workplace
- ◆ Universal access to basic skills, ESOL
- ◆ English as a second language - and ICT courses and a first level three qualification regardless of age
- ◆ Learner, teacher, and community involvement in all levels of decision making about their learning, wherever it takes place
- ◆ Learning for personal well-being and development and the maintenance of local authority adult education
- ◆ A path out of poverty and disadvantage, including widening participation in higher education and the provision of a second chance later in life
- ◆ A stable motivated and rewarded workforce of professional practitioners



A very diverse range of organizations have expressed support for CALL including the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Church of England. Former joint UCU General Secretary, Paul Mackney, who now works for the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, described the launch meeting as the largest and widest launch of any educational campaign he had ever attended in his many years involvement in trade union and other activity in education.

UCU nationally was instrumental in setting up CALL, together with, among others, NIACE, the NUS, UNISON, and the WEA. The OU branch was represented at the launch meeting, as was the OU itself, and the branch executive subsequently agreed to sign up as a supporter of CALL, as has the Open University Students Association. The University is still considering whether to do so.

An early day motion supporting the campaign has been tabled in the House of Commons and has attracted support from all three major parties. CALL is planning a major lobby of parliament on Wednesday 25 February between 10:30 and 4pm.

For further details about this campaign visit the CALL website at <http://www.callcampaign.org.uk/>

## AL ROLE WIDENED

The University has recently issued a finalised statement on the AL role following a consultation period. The university felt this was not a matter for formal negotiation with UCU but did consult the union through the AL Role Negotiating Group, which has been established to negotiate on contractual changes arising from this review.

As a result of our comments, the university has agreed to a significant widening of the AL role. Where ALs carry out activities which the University does not regard as core components of the AL role but which draw very heavily on skills and expertise acquired from and necessary to the AL role, they will be seen and, crucially, remunerated, as part of the AL role.

Such activities include, among others, examination and end of course assessment marking, monitoring, mentoring, supporting electronic academic forums, critical reading of course materials, and serving on Exam Boards and on Review Teams.

This will end the current nonsense in which such activities are contracted and paid for quite separately from the main AL contract and payment, and it will mean that the payment ALs receive for such activities will be pensionable and attract an employer contribution to ALs' pensions, so it is a major and very welcome change in policy which the UCU branch has been pressing for strongly.

Meantime the negotiations on the AL role are proceeding and whilst inevitably there are areas of disagreement, UCU negotiators are confident of reaching a successful outcome, which will be then put to a ballot of all AL members. Occasional joint statements on the progress of these negotiations are being put up on TutorHome and the intranet.

## Major recruitment campaign imminent

UCU nationally is to launch a major recruitment campaign in order to increase significantly the number of eligible staff who join the union. This follows research which shows that many University staff do not do so simply because they do not get round to it, or in some cases because they have never been asked to, rather than a conscious decision not to join.

Recruitment material will be sent to all eligible staff that are not members and all current members will be asked to encourage non-union colleagues to join. The OU branch is planning to participate in this campaign fully and is in the process of considering ideas to increase the branch's public profile.

## Anti-casualisation (contd. from p1)

higher education in Britain are on some form of casual contract. These include zero-hours contracts, fixed term contracts, agency staff and those erroneously described as "self-employed".

The reality underlying these statistics is that a large number of very well qualified and well-meaning people are forced to live a hand-to-mouth existence not knowing where the next contract or appointment is coming from, or not knowing how many teaching hours they will have next year.

This inevitably impacts not only on lives and career prospects, but also on the quality of education, when we consider the effort that affected staff have to put into simply staying on board, into personal contingency plans, and/or looking for other work, that could be going into teaching or research.

In the context of the national anti-casualisation campaign, it is appropriate to look at the employment conditions of the OU's Associate Lecturers, who are almost certainly the largest single group of staff in tertiary education who are on casual, or at least semi-casual terms and conditions.

Some things have improved for ALs over the last few years. We are now able to join USS, which is a benefit many casually employed staff do not have. On the other hand, many aspects of our current contract, while well-intentioned, simply shifted the uncertainty of work and income from one moment to another instead of resolving it. After a course has started we do know how much we will be paid for the presentation, but a single



student drop out at the last moment can reduce our expected pay by 20% of standard salary.

The history of AL employment is, of course, rather different from that of casually employed staff generally in the sector. There was a time when the AL job was seen as a chance for full-time academics from other institutions to earn a bit of extra money doing something socially useful.

However, times have changed. In our recent union branch survey of AL members 58% of respondents said that their AL job was their main employment in terms of salary. There are, of course, still some full-time academics from other universities working part-time as ALs, but many fewer than was once the case.

There are probably many contributory factors for this change in composition of the AL body, amongst which the fact that full-time academics are much busier than they once were and have less time to do socially useful things on the side.

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## Anti-casualisation *(contd. from p7)*

Other universities have become more competitive and, in some cases, more possessive of their academic employees' time. There has also been a shift towards vocational courses that are best taught by practitioners or former practitioners.

An interesting rider on this change in composition of the home based AL workforce is the proportion, about 13% in the case of our survey respondents, who are either disabled or carers for disabled relatives. Some of these are former OU students who had to study at home for their qualifications, and for the same reason have to work from home.

So how stable is AL employment? Our appointments are usually for course life, but with the important exception of falling student numbers. The increasing tendency towards offering smaller courses has meant that an AL working, say, 0.25 of an FTE (full-time equivalent) may well be teaching four or five small courses instead of two 60pt courses. This means that as courses end, or student numbers fall, many are continually having to re-apply for work in order to maintain their level of employment.

The process of applying for replacement courses isn't always straightforward, and ALs in this position are required to repeatedly show at interview that they meet the basic AL person specification for the AL job they are already doing, as well as the course specific person specification for the new course. This can lead to the somewhat surreal situation in which an AL can be interviewed five or six times against the basic AL person spec, and told they

meet it, only to be told a few weeks later in similar circumstances that they do not meet the basic person spec for the job they are already doing.

The resulting insecurity of employment can have similar effects on ALs as on any other vulnerably employed group. At a recent OU event union reps were approached by an AL who tutors several courses with etmas, and who said she had been concealing the early symptoms of RSI because she was concerned that this might count against her while in the process of having to apply to tutor a replacement for a course she was tutoring.

With the increasing commitment that the OU expects from ALs these days, the AL job needs to be recognised as a serious academic job, with proper continuity of employment and at least a minimum guaranteed level of duties.

*Lesley Kane OU UCU branch secretary*

### ALs outside the UK

UCU has objected strongly to a number of University statements, including in letters to some ALs outside the UK, which suggest that UCU is not recognised as having collective bargaining rights for ALs outside the UK. This is completely inconsistent with the procedure agreement between the University and UCU, which clearly accords UCU negotiating rights for all ALs irrespective of where they live.

UCU will continue to act on behalf of all ALs, including those outside the UK, and has pressed the University to abide by the agreement on this matter.



## Expenses and Receipts

Repeated examples are being reported to the branch of departures from the careful agreement reached in 2007 on expenses, especially in relation to receipts. This agreement can be found on the intranet in Appendix E of Section 10 of the MOPP on the HR site.

The University and UCU agreed that receipts should be provided where available, and it should be stressed that the stated maxima are not allowances but normal maxima. However it was recognised that it was not always possible to provide receipts, especially for relatively small items like cups of coffee. It was also recognised that receipts for larger items of expenditure may not be available or may be lost. In these circumstances it was agreed that those claiming should keep a log recording such expenditure.

However incidences of demands for receipts for completely trivial items are often reported and there have also been occasions when the University has insisted on an itemised receipt or refused to accept a handwritten receipt. The Finance Division which is responsible for reimbursing expenses seems to be particularly guilty of issuing edicts and demands which are completely inconsistent with the agreement.

UCU has no wish to in any way excuse or justify making false claims but what the University is doing is not targeting abuses of the expense system but rather quite unnecessarily annoying the great majority of staff whose expenses are perfectly reasonable and modest by subjecting them to totally unreasonable hassle.

Furthermore the university has recently unilaterally changed the declaration on expense forms - which already asked people quite reasonably to verify that they have incurred the expenses claimed - to one which asks everyone each time you submit a claim to acknowledge that you realise that making false claim is fraudulent and would render you liable for possible disciplinary action.

UCU believes that it would be reasonable to include a statement to that effect on the notes that accompany claims, but to require everyone to sign on each and every claim that you are not trying to defraud the university is insulting and inappropriate.

### Bullying and harassment review

The University has agreed to a UCU request for a major review of the bullying and harassment policy following a number of personal cases, which have sharply thrown up deficiencies in the current policy.

The UCU branch is itself carefully reviewing this issue before presenting proposals to the University but the key objective is to make it easier for genuine complaints of bullying and harassment to come forward quickly so that the problems can be resolved swiftly whilst deterring frivolous or even in some cases malicious complaints which can be extremely threatening to those wrongly accused.

## Personal development in the OU

One of the best things about the Open University is that no one need get stuck in a rut. You can move into a different role either temporarily or long-term, adding value to your new post and your own job satisfaction because of the experience you bring with you.

That at least is the theory. But what is it like in practice? The university is going through turbulent times and needs its workforce to be flexible and adaptable. It may be that in some situations redundancies will only be avoided if staff are willing to be redeployed. Yet in the last few years I have come across a considerable number of people who have attempted to change their career direction but have found it difficult to get advice. Others have reported on the unhelpfulness of feedback they have received when they have applied for a post and failed to get it, and yet others have complained of difficulties in returning to a substantive post after a secondment. In some ways the most worrying complaint (and it seems to be common) is that the home unit takes no interest in using the experience the person seconded has acquired during their time away. That is no way to become the 'learning institution' the OU aspires to be.

If, in future, more staff need to change or modify their roles and responsibilities, then processes to support them must be developed. A pro-active UCU branch should not just be prepared to support members who have been frustrated in their career development. We should be urging for the development of support which would prevent such frustrations arising in the first place.

To do this, it would be useful to hear your comments. Has the feedback you received when turned down for a post been clear or obfuscatory? Did it help you to take steps to improve your prospects in future? Did you feel encouraged to make further attempts to change your situation? If you took a secondment, what was your experience of returning to your substantive post? Were you able to put to use the experience gained while you were away? Let us know!

*Cicely Havely, OU UCU Vice Ppresident*

### **No more monthly pay slips**

The University is proposing to abandon the automatic provision of monthly pay slips in hard copy to all staff since these are anyway accessible in electronic format. Any staff who wanted to continue to receive pay slips in hard copy for whatever reason will be able to ask for this provision to continue.

The UCU branch executive has indicated that we have no objection to this proposal in principle provided that the provision of hard copy pay slips on request continues without question but has also asked that given these new circumstances, the current policy of levying charges for those who request duplicate hard copy pay slips, often after they have left the University, should be lifted.

The University will continue to supply P60s automatically in hard copy form.

## Gender Equality – Women Members’ Conference



Approximately 30 women attended UCU’s Women Members’ Conference on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November. The day began with an address from the keynote speaker, Sarah Veale Head of the Equality and Employment Rights Department at the TUC.

Sarah talked about the single equality bill, the Equality Act, which is currently going through parliament. Under this Act the government proposes bringing together disability, sex, race and other grounds of discrimination within one piece of legislation. There is also some proposed strengthening of existing provision especially in relation to procurement including a proposal to develop ways of improving how public bodies use their purchasing power to support the delivery of equality outcomes. Sarah also warned of some of the difficulties that the current economic situation might bring for trade unionist concerned with equality. She suggested that ‘the boss class’ might use the current economic climate to push back positive changes relating to equality by arguing that they are unaffordable. She also pointed out that employers may well use current economic conditions to argue that pay rises are unaffordable when this might not be the case and she warned against trade unions getting sucked into choosing between pay rises and redundancies. Sarah also discussed the TUC’s three key campaigning issues in relation to gender equality. These are reproductive rights, violence against women and equal pay.

The conference then heard the report of the Women Members’ Standing Committee, which highlighted the work they had been doing over the past year. This included work on the gender equality duty and the gender pay gap, work on organising women, work around pension issues and women’s health issues. The report also highlighted the work the committee had been doing more widely within the trade union movement including international work, involvement in the Charter for Women Conference and in UCU’s Congress in Manchester and the TUC Women’s Congress.

In the afternoon there was an opportunity to take place in two out of six workshops on offer. There were workshops on reproductive rights, pensions, the gender equality duty, the structure of UCU, campaigning in UCU and race and gender. Several of the workshops developed motions which were voted on. The successful motions although only advisory, are likely to inform the work of the Women’s Standing Committee, the Equality Committee and the National Executive Committee over the next year. Other motions which had been put forward in advance were also voted on during the day. The conference also elected members to vacant positions within the Women’s Standing Committee. Finally, there was some discussion about UCU’s National Organising Plan and the possibility of carrying out an equality audit on this.

*Maria McCrea, OU UCU Equality Officer and branch delegate to UCU Women Members’ Conference*

## **OU agrees to continue contributing to pensions.**

The University has finally agreed to continue to contribute to pensions after staff have reached forty years of pensionable service, something that became possible in the light of changes in the legislation affecting pensions which came into force in 2006, after several months of pressure from UCU. Staff in that position will have to continue to contribute to their pensions themselves in order for the OU to contribute.

The University has written to all staff in this position about this change.

This will initially only affect staff who have either made additional contributions or who have accrued pensionable service from previous employments since no one has yet been employed by the OU for forty years.

This provision has been backdated to September 2008 which means that some staff will have lost potential employer contributions if they reached pensionable service before then. UCU is continuing to press for further backdating of this provision.

## **Attack on Nottingham Trent UCU repelled**

The attempt by Nottingham Trent University management to de-recognise the local UCU branch has been repelled. If local management had succeeded, then this could have set a precedent for other universities so it was essential for UCU to prevent that happening.

The successful UCU action culminated in a threat to grey list Nottingham Trent, that is to ask members to suspend normal professional relationships with that institution including being external examiners, conference speakers, giving guest lectures or contributing to academic journals or research projects, among other things.

Other hard line University managements will now think very carefully before trying to take on UCU in a similar way.

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## **Flexible working policy**

The University has agreed to a UCU proposal for a joint review the University's current policy on requests for flexible working, i.e. changes in working patterns. This review is likely to also involve other staff unions.

This was in the light of some personal cases which demonstrated that the current policy has been designed simply to comply with the minimal legislative requirements rather than being family friendly, and could be argued to be discriminatory against female members of staff.

## OU Worldwide Pay

*We received the information below from a member working for OU worldwide. Amongst other things it serves as a warning of what can happen when HE institutions separate part of their operation from that of the institution by setting up private companies:-*

While OU staff get a cost-of-living pay rise consistent with inflation (5%), the OU Worldwide Board, chaired by PVC Prof. David Vincent, limits the increase for OU Worldwide staff to 3.5% on the ground that it is "performance related". So effectively they receive a pay cut.

Staff learned from Managing Director Mr Antony Gribbon via this gnomonic message:

"We are sending you all today notification of this year's pay round. The cost of living increase is 3.5%. This figure was given to us as usual by the Hay Group, our consultants for OUW salary policy, and it represents the average rate of increase in 2008 of jobs in the commercial sector in the Milton Keynes region that are comparable to ours. As you may know, it was agreed in 2003 by the OUW Remuneration Committee, which acts for the OUW Board, that OUW cost of living rising should be in line with the local commercial sector, and not with University rates.

The Remuneration Committee has considered the situation we face this year and has resolved that cost of living policy should not change. The Committee is of course aware that the University has recently been awarded a 5% cost of living increase under a national agreement, but takes the view that OUW cannot operate on the basis that it works to the external Hay Scale, or the OU pay scale, which is the highest in any given year."

What does it mean? Well, your guess is as good as theirs, but make hay while the sun shines, for tomorrow it rains.....

## Stalemate on mileage rate

The University is continuing to resist UCU pressure to renegotiate the standard University mileage rate on the grounds that any increase in the rate would not be 'green' as it might encourage people to use their cars when they might otherwise use public transport. This implies that people use cars out of choice for financial reasons whereas in fact, it is completely impractical to undertake many journeys by public transport.

UCU has proposed a staged increase in the mileage rate until it reaches Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs rate, figure above which payments for travel by car become taxable, currently 40p but the University has so far rejected this proposal but has failed to come up with an alternative formula.

## Changes in catering

Those members who work at or visit Walton Hall will be aware that the University is undertaking a major catering refurbishment which involves closing a number of outlets, including the refectory, for well over a year. UCU and Unison were invited to a 'consultative meeting' about these changes just a week before Xmas -but we pointed out that this was rather late in the day for such consultation since the plans were already decided on and about to be implemented.

Rather than discuss the future and ambitious plans for catering provision after the refurbishment, both union representatives preferred to discuss the more pressing matter of ensuring adequate catering provision during the refurbishment so that staff who choose to use the catering facilities can take their lunch in what is often a limited time so they can get back to work. Regular meetings to review the situation are planned and any members who have views on the current ad hoc arrangements should email [ucu@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@open.ac.uk).

### The OU UCU branch AL regional reps

R01 - Jonathan Jewell  
 R02 - *vacant*  
 R03 - Malcolm Jenner  
 R04 - Jon Williams  
 R05 - Karen Angelosanto  
 R06 - John Robson  
 R07 - Peter Piper, with assistant rep Lois Kennedy  
 R08 - Tom Saunders, with assistant Paul Flodman  
 R09 - Mike McNulty  
 R10 - Eric Bowers  
 R11 - Pauline Collins  
 R12 - Bruce Heil  
 R13 - John James

## UCU tells OU to stick to agreed grievance procedures

Following a discussion at the last meeting of the branch executive about a number of reported occasions when the University had not complied with its own rules, policies and procedures, with particular reference to grievance procedures, the UCU members of the Joint Negotiating Committee called on the University to stick with these procedures more rigorously in future. The branch will be monitoring future grievances more closely in future to ensure the University honours these agreements.

The text of a motion passed at the branch executive meeting can be found at <http://www.oubucuforum.org.uk/motion.doc>

### SALARY SACRIFICE / OPEN SMART

This issue continues to be a running sore and the University continues to incur significant financial loss (around £250,000 per year) as a result of their intransigent refusal to honour a freely negotiated agreement.

The issue has now moved to national level where UCU is seeking to resolve the dispute by collective agreement, to the mutual benefit of members and employers.

In the meantime, renewed thanks for your overwhelming support on this issue - and for your determined resistance to the university's attempt to impose contractual changes without collective agreement. You have demonstrated - once again - that UCU is a force to be reckoned with at the OU"

*Alan Carr, UCU national treasurer*

## Becoming active

We are looking for members to volunteer for any of the wide variety of 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.

### AL Regional reps

These are points of contact, and local representatives for ALs, and collectively they function as the AL regional reps' committee, which plays an important role in advising the branch executive committee on matters relating to AL employment. We are looking for a regional rep for R02, and for assistant reps in all regions except R07 and R08. The assistant reps job is to help the regional rep, and stand in for him/her at the regional reps committee when necessary.

### Health and safety reps

At the moment we have only three H&S reps, one AL, one regional staff member and one on MK-based. Ideally we should have one in every region and in every department at MK, 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 MK

We are interested in hearing from anyone who is willing to serve as a point of contact for the union, and/or maintain a noticeboard for members.

## Contacting the branch

If you have any problems to do with your employment, or if you want to draw any more general issues to our attention, please email us at [ucu@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@open.ac.uk)

Or write or phone

OUBUCU  
Room 015  
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Phone: (01908-6)53069)

## 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 <http://www.cusn.info/> or through a 24/7 telephone support line, on **Freephone 0800 329952**

# OUBUCU General meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March

We have a general meeting at 12:30 on 12th March in the FELS-ICT Conference Room. A full agenda, including any motions to be discussed, will be circulated before the meeting.

Amongst other things, this meeting will discuss any motions put forward by branch members for Congress or HE Sector Conference.

Our branch can send one motion to UCU National Congress and two (which must be specific to higher education) to UCU HE Sector Conference.

If any members wish to put forward motions they need to be sent to [ucu@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@open.ac.uk) by or on 25th February. There is a limit of 150 words on these motions, with the exception of motions that propose rule changes.

Any local motions (i.e. not for Congress or HE Conference) for consideration on 12th March should also be sent to [ucu@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@open.ac.uk) by or on 25th February.

## YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Officers:-

**President:** Roger Walters ([r.j.walters@open.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.walters@open.ac.uk)) x 58810

**Honorary Secretary:** Lesley Kane ([lhk4@tutor.open.ac.uk](mailto:lhk4@tutor.open.ac.uk)) (AL)

**Treasurer:** David Knowles (AL)

**Vice Presidents:** Cicely Havelly (*retired*); Mike McNulty (AL)

**Equality Officer:** Maria McCrea (R11)

**Central Academic Staff Officer:** Donia Scott (MCT)

**Associate Lecturers Staff Officer:** Sue Hawthorne (AL)

**Regional Academic Staff Officer:** Judy Ekins (R05)

**Central Academic-Related Staff Officer:** Chris Bollom (OUBS)

**Regional Academic-Related Staff Officer:** Andrew Wright (R07)

**Past President:** John Bennett (*Soc Sci*)

### Ordinary executive members:-

Eric Bowers	Meridian	John Peters
Peter Hamilton	Bethan Norfor	Roger Rees
John James	June Payne	Daniel Valentine
Malcolm Jenner	Peter Piper	Eric Wade

### Ex-officio members:-

**Alan Carr** (*UCU national treasurer*)

**Pauline Collins** (*UCU NEC member*)

**Jon Pike** (*UCU NEC member*)

**Peter Lee** (*NUJ father of chapel*)