**OPEN UNIVERSITY BRANCH OF UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE UNION**

**Minutes of the Branch meeting held on 18th September 2019, at 12.30pm in CMR01, Walton Hall.**

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| **Present**: | Executive Committee members, Caitlin Adams (Chair), several members in the room and connected via Skype for business. |
| **1** | **CAITLIN ADAMS, BRANCH PRESIDENT, OPENED THE MEETING**Caitlin welcomed members to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. |
| **2** | MINUTES OF THE LAST BRANCH MEETING – 25th june 2019These were approved and will be put on the branch website. |
| **3** | **MATTERS ARISING – A QUESTION FROM AN AL MEMBER**A member taking part by Skype asked about the new AL contract. Judy Ekins replied that we are currently in the transition period and the new AL contract is expected to be implemented by October 2021; there is no set date and there is lots of work to be done. A skills audit pilot is about to start and there is a meeting for all OU Staff Tutors in December. |
| **4** | **PRESIDENT’S REPORT****REF and study/research leave** are two great victories for UCU – we refused to sign off the REF code of conduct until the OU agreed to a proper review of study and research leave. The OU are planning to create a video of how academics can claim that time. Caitlin thanked Philip, Kit and Severine for their work on this issue. We are planning to send an email to all members about this news.**20th September Climate emergency** – the OU will be sending an email to all staff encouraging them to take part, the references to UCU have been removed. There’s a climate emergency forum taking place in MK on 15th October, this is being run by Josie Fraser and Stephen Peake.<https://openuniv.sharepoint.com/sites/oulife/Pages/Save%20the%20date%20%20Climate%20Emergency%20Forum.aspx><https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/> **New Vice-Chancellor** – Caitlin has a date for a meeting with Tim Blackman, please send questions you want us to ask the new VC to ucu@open.ac.uk.**New HR Director** – Caitlin has met with Caragh Molloy the new People Services Director and is going to have regular monthly meetings.**Camden office update** – Caitlin and Kit went to a second meeting with the deputy University Secretary. The OU are looking at properties in London; 85% of OU meetings will take place at the new London office but some larger events will still need to be held at external venues. There will be hot desks at the new London office, but it will not be suitable for tutorial venues. The new London property will be for one or two years only, it will be an OU branded office. There will be disabled access and gender-neutral toilets. The new London office should be available in the next 2 or 3 months. This is a reasonably positive outcome. The OU has said that there won’t be any financial issues if faculties go over budget due to booking external offices in London. If you have any problems booking rooms at the Camden office then please let us know. Please contact the OU Venue Management team to book Camden or the new London office when it is available.<http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/student-services/main/access-careers-and-teaching-support-acts/venue-management-team-vmt>. Faculties should have a dedicated person to book rooms and these people are listed on the link above.**Senate House boycott** – please do not use the facilities at Senate House as it is still subject to a trade union boycott. |
| **5** | **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS** A member reported that all the office space close to Euston Station in London has been taken by the HS2 train project.Another member noted that the new London office will need to have printing facilities. Milton Keynes is not the easiest place to get to by public transport and London is easier to get to for many staff.Caitlin asked members to keep us informed on using the new London office. |
| **6** | **OTHER OFFICERS’ REPORTS – HON. SECRETARY**Lesley reported on issues with the FTC white slip process and we know that in some cases FTC staff nearing the end of contract have not been informed of their rights; it’s meant to help staff on a FTC that is within 6 months of ending find another OU job. The white slip is attached to their job application. Lesley asked members to let us know if they hear or experience this process not taking place. There are also issues with permanent staff who are at risk of redundancy being re-deployed to temporary roles and being asked to sign away their permanency - it is legally questionable, and we need to ensure staff at risk of redundancy know their rights and do not sign fixed term contracts. A temporary role does not require giving up permanency.**AL Voluntary Severance scheme** went live on 16th September – there have been some problems understanding the scheme. Lesley has advice on how the VS payment is calculated and one of our Exec members has created an AL VS calculator. If ALs are subject to the standard redundancy procedure, then they will get a payment equivalent to the payment that they would get if they were taking VS. All the files for the ALVS scheme are on the HR intranet:<http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/human-resources/policies-and-procedures?path=v/voluntary-severance#documents> **Election Cycle, Ballot on Branch Rule Changes** – we sent an email via SurveyMonkey on 16th September, please use your vote in this branch ballot which closes on 1st October 2019. |
| **7** | **OTHER OFFICERS’ REPORTS – AL’s OFFICER**Judy reported on the redundancy issues with DD103, 27 ALs lost their appointments. There have been MOLD issues and excessive recruitment exercises. External advertising – there have been issues with HR asking UCU about external advertising at very short notice.**New AL Contract** – a pilot of the skills audit is about to start. IT systems for the new AL contract are still to be sorted out. There is to be a Staff Tutors conference in December to discuss the new AL contract. Caitlin reported that we’ve asked for a better mechanism with the OU for handling and minimising AL redundancies.A member asked a question about AL job applications and external advertising and said the OU is not informing internal candidates when they do external adverts. Judy replied that the OU is not following its own procedures. Judy reported that the OU should only use external advertising if there are not enough internal candidates, and candidates should be selected in the following order:ALs with PC, (prior consideration) followed by ALs with MOLD, (maintenance of level of duties), followed by all the other AL internal candidates and the lastly external candidates. Judy agreed to talk to this member outside of the meeting.Caitlin reported that all OU Line Managers are going to be asked to attend a Management Practices training. |
| **8** | **USS AND PAY DISPUTES UPDATE**Caitlin offered our new USS Pension Justice T-shirts to any member who wants one. We posted a paper copy of a UCU and UNISON newsletter on 9th September. We are planning to create a second USS newsletter.We need all members to tell us if they have returned their ballot papers, please email ucu-payballot@open.ac.uk. Caitlin asked if any more members can help us with getting the vote out – thank you to the three members who volunteered.A member asked if we are likely to get the required 50% turnout threshold. Kit replied that we are hopeful that we will get the 50% turnout, but we still need members to help us in contacting other members.We are planning to produce some short video messages which we will share on the branch website. |
| **9** | **ANY MOTIONS OR NOMINATIONS FOR UCU’s NATIONAL EQUALITY CONFERENCE**A member read out her nomination statement to attend UCU’s Equality conference. Lesley thanked the member for her statement and proposed that the member be nominated to one of UCU’s Equality Committees. We can nominate up to 3 members to each of the Equality committees.  |
| **10** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**A member asked about the FASS Review of space utilisation at Walton Hall; they are going to monitor office usage for 3 weeks, 9am to 5pm on working days. Caitlin reported that we will raise this with Estates and the Arts faculty did do one of these surveys about 5 years ago.Richard wanted to share the Stand up to Racism statements and he and Kit have statements that members can sign up to. |
| **11** | **DATE OF NEXT BRANCH MEETING:** Monday 14th October 2019 at 12.30pm in S0049, the Systems Seminar Room, ground floor Venables building. |