

MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION—EGM 22 JULY 2020

Bristol UCU notes:

The economic dislocation caused by COVID-19 has exposed many of the problems prevalent in the university sector. Due to a reliance on student tuition fees, particularly from international students, the university estimates a budget shortfall in the next academic year of £16.3 million.

The university proposes to deal with the projected deficit by withholding the pay award for 2020/21, cancelling promotions and accelerated progressions, and halting movement for Grade M staff. The university has vacillated on reengaging fixed-term staff and continues to keep staff redundancies on the table as an option.

UCU along with the Campus Joint Trade Unions (Unite and Union) have challenged the premise of the university's proposals. The university's Senior Management Team (SMT) needs to engage more constructively with the UCU. The SMT has been pursuing a policy of engaging superficially with UCU while refusing in practice to budge on a range of issues. University governance can and should engage more constructively in negotiations going forward.

To deal with social distancing stipulations, the university proposes to move to a 'blended learning' model in 2020/21. This transition has the potential to have very severe consequences for staff workload, including requiring staff to invest significant amounts of time over the summer months to redesign units. The university suggests that further measures are necessary—staff anticipate the extension of the teaching day from 9am-6pm to 9am-8pm and increased pastoral care responsibilities.

These changes are being imposed during a time when the industrial relations situation at the university is at an all-time low. Since 2018, staff have taken industrial action in large numbers on three separate occasions to demand that the university address the deterioration in pension entitlements, unsustainable workload, gender and race inequality, and the growing precarity of the workforce.

Bristol UCU believes:

1. It is unacceptable for the university to unilaterally extend the working day and contemplate increasing workloads that are already unmanageable. That it is contemplating doing so while freezing pay, promotions and recommending no pay award for this year is unconscionable.
2. The university must unequivocally commit to protecting jobs when dealing with the crisis. This branch reaffirms its commitment to opposing redundancies, increases in workload and suspension of temporary contracts
3. University governance must be reformed to give staff a meaningful voice in the ongoing management of universities. This requires entering into good faith negotiations with the UCU prior to implementing any changes.
4. It is unacceptable that in a recent Live Stream, the SMT presented the regressive changes to pay and promotion as a collective decision made in conjunction with UCU. These changes were made unilaterally by the SMT without the consent of the UCU.

Bristol UCU calls on SMT to:

1. Negotiate with the UCU prior to implementing any changes to the pay and promotion structure and any variations with workload implications.
2. Rule out any redundancies and committing to re-engaging all staff on temporary contracts.
3. Provide complete budget transparency, including revealing the extent of any legal obligations that exist as a result of financing arrangements.
4. Conduct and share detailed analysis of the equity implications of any proposed changes for female and BAME staff.
5. Avoid misrepresenting unilateral decisions made by the SMT as collective decisions made in conjunction with the UCU.

Bristol UCU directs:

1. The Branch Officers to convene a working group comprised of representatives from the various schools to develop a political strategy designed to apply pressure on the university to accede to staff demands.
2. Present this strategy for a future EGM to endorse.

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