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| The Warwick University Newsletter | Important information for UCU Members at Warwick University  Your union on campus January/February2015  After the meeting, the president and vice-president wrote to Gillian McGrattan, Director of Human Resources, and subsequently received a clear statement that participation in DPR is NOT compulsory. We are therefore advising members a) not to participate until the link with merit pay has lapsed (13 March 2015) and b) to request that their reviewer uses the previous "annual review" form for the reasons outlined on page 3.  ***USS Pensions***  There were strong feelings about the failure of the national UCU to consult members and branches about the type and timing of union strategy during the latest dispute, which resulted in the end of Final Salary pensions, the breakup of Defined Benefit and the introduction of Defined Contribution schemes. As a result, the meeting agreed to issue a vote of no confidence in the current UCU national leadership and to call on all branches to press immediately for new elections and a new consultative framework for conducting union business. This will appear on the conference order paper.  **Message from the new president**  Let me begin by expressing my thanks to the people at the AGM who voted for me. And to applaud the commitment of Dave Toulson who stood against me. I am delighted that he has agreed to be union secretary. As I write this, I have been in post only 10 days, but, already, it is clear that I will be admirably supported by a thriving UCU committee and by a wise and dedicated Vice President, Duncan Adam.  In my election "speech", I mentioned my desire to highlight "pockets of good practice" and then work towards ensuring these become embedded throughout the university. This would single-handedly transform the working environment for us all. The Charter developed by Hourly-Paid tutors in the History Department (see page 2) is just such "a pocket" and I see no reason why it could not be adopted by every other department in the university.  But it would be naïve of me not to acknowledge the enormity of some of the challenges we currently face (see pages 1,2,3 and 4 (!) for details). If we are to secure better outcomes for our members, we will need to work more strategically and to win compromises through detailed argument and compelling evidence rather than empty rhetoric or grand-standing. We will also need to build a wider and more activist membership. I hope each and every one of you is up for the challenge; the committee could certainly use your help.  At the AGM this year, members elected a new president, Justine Mercer, following the retirement of Dennis Leech. She takes over at a time when the branch is engaged in a number of vitally important struggles against a university management that seems bent on increasing its powers at the expense of the status, security, free-dom and well-being of its staff. Important motions were carried on the subject of redundancies, the new Development and Performance Review, and pensions.  ***Compulsory redundancies***  The University’s decision to make colleagues compulsorily redundant in Warwick Medical School, Life Sciences, and the Centre for Education and Industry is something that concerns us all. If it is allowed to go ahead, the University will have set a precedent that will leave all of us exposed to redundancy should it decide, for whatever reason, to impose on the department or faculty within which we work a single performance measure set by senior management.  Up to now, academics entered for the RAE/REF have been able to feel secure in the knowledge that the University has recognised that they are performing to an acceptable standard and endorsed this. However, many of those now facing redundancy in Life Sciences and the Warwick Medical School were entered in either or both the RAE and REF. This now seems to count for nothing, even though the University is happy to reap the not inconsiderable rewards of their efforts. For example, a 3\* paper in the UoA Biological Sciences will attract £10,530 p.a. and a 4\* paper three times that. This means that an academic with four 3\* outputs will pull in £42,123 a year, rising to £63,184 if one of those happens to be 4\*.  In view of how absolutely vital it is to all our futures to fight these redundancies, the AGM voted to apply formally to Head Office for a ballot of members for industrial action and to request the Higher Education Committee to institute an academic censure and boycott.  ***Development and Performance Review***  The University has introduced a new system linking Annual Review to Merit Pay. This jeopardises the principle of an ‘open conversation’, threatening to undermine the important developmental aspects of such meetings.  The meeting resolved to issue a vote of no confidence in the DPR process and call on the University to abandon the new system and return to the negotiating table.  Warwick UCU AGM: New president, tough challenges  ucu_colour |

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| The Warwick University Newsletter | **Join us**  There can be no illusion about what sort of future the University’s actions in Warwick Medical School threatens. It has never been more important to enjoy the protection that union membership offers. The UCU has members, full- and part-time, from all areas of the university, including academics, researchers, administrators and librarians. Joining couldn't be simpler: just go to [joinonline.ucu.org.uk](http://joinonline.ucu.org.uk/" \t "_blank) and follow a few short steps. It could make a big difference to your future.  a month, around the middle of the month, and want all members to feel that they have a stake in it. If you think you have a story to tell, some interesting news, an idea for an item or perhaps a suggestion for something that would be worth following up, please get in touch with us at: administrator@warwickucu.org.uk  Please ensure that you mark your email NEWSLETTER.  **Hourly Pay – the way forward**  Work by members of the Hourly-Paid Tutor Group (HPTG) in the Department of History and an enlightened response from the Department point the way forward with respect to hourly-paid employment. The next newsletter will include a full account of the work done there and of the HPTG charter, a document developed by its members that the Head of Department and senior departmental staff have acknowledged as a means of significantly amending the handbook for hourly-paid employees. Additional work done by the HPTG will also expose some of the distressing opinions and statistics emerging from an anonymous workload questionnaire and teaching diaries that tutors completed to provide an accurate picture of the true number of hours they work every week as hourly-paid staff.**In the meantime, we include above two direct pleas from the group to senior management and to potential supporters in the University.**  We enthusiastically applaud the enlightened leadership in the Department of History in working with the HPTG to develop a code of practice and recognise the commitment this shows to delivering high quality teaching to students in the Department. At the same time, we urge the University to learn from this good practice and to support it by providing a living wage for all its employees. Until it does so, it will be hard to take seriously its professed commitment to the quality of the student experience at Warwick.  **Two pleas from hourly-paid tutors**  Firstly, a direct plea to the University of Warwick and its senior management. We want you to understand that tutoring is no longer an opportunity, it is a supply of labour upon which you are dependent. Without our commitment to work as hourly-paid tutors, departments across this University would simply not function. Furthermore, if you value the quality of teaching delivered to students at this University, you must recognise the integral role that we fulfill as hourly-paid staff in the attainment of that quality. Casual contracts with no clear job description, verbally agreed workloads, and a range of duties far exceeding our 'hourly' rate merely serve to reinforce an impression that you are unwilling to invest fairly in the workforce that defend and maintain the prestigious national ranking of your institution.  Secondly, a direct plea to all casual and full-time members of staff, academics and non-academics at this University or members of UCU. If you wish to support our growing movement, join us at [warwickanticasualisation@gmail.com](mailto:warwickanticasualisation@gmail.com).  Casualisation is so much more than an issue affecting hourly-paid tutors in 2015. It is a system of employment that the University endorses to identify teaching staff as expendable, disposable and unimportant. ‘TeachHigher’ only serves to strengthen this endorsement. Both should serve as alarming indications to all that the future of teaching is in jeopardy if we do not collectively oppose such ‘casual’ shifts in employment policy and procedures. The HPTG does not want the University to do us a ‘favour’, we want them to formally recognise us with the same respect and quality that we deliver to Warwick’s students.  The Hourly-Paid Tutor Group  **Dennis Leech**  The AGM marked the end of Dennis Leech’s time as president of Warwick UCU, though we’re delighted to report that he has agreed to remain on the committee as an ex-officio member. He has steered the branch through challenging times, standing up to what he described in his President’s Report as ‘an increasingly autocratic management’. His wisdom, experience and dedication have been invaluable, and his readiness to support members under attack from management in various ways has helped many through difficult periods in their professional life. The newsletter in its present form is the result of his inspiration and the editor has benefit hugely from his advice and support. We’d therefore like to extend a special thank you to him and wish him well in his retirement.  **Further blow for hourly-paid workers**  Tucked away in the minutes of the October 2014 meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies is reference to a proposal that threatens to undermine the status of Warwick’s hourly-paid workers even further. The University is set to establish ‘TeachHigher’, an employment franchise which will ‘eventually become the sole method of recruiting temporary academic staff within the university’, operating as a ‘commercial enterprise’. To add insult to injury, these plans have been cooked up behind the backs of those who will be most affected and whose professionalism, expertise and dedication underpins so much of the institution’s success in teaching.  What is particularly galling about this callous move is that UCU’s Regional Support Official has been pushing since summer 2013 for consultations with management to address key issues relating to hourly-paid employees. Her letter sent in March 2014 is still awaiting a reply and there is still no sign that the University is prepared to treat its hourly paid staff with the respect and decency that they so richly deserve. |

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| The Warwick University Newsletter | **You don't need to face it alone**  **SOAS UCU Support Warwick Students**  In a strongly worded resolution, members of SOAS UCU have called for a formal investigation into the events of 3 December that prompted the no-confidence vote and have implemented a grey-listing policy against Warwick.  Their statement notes that ‘the increasing criminalisation of protest on campuses is the direct result of the marketisation of our education system and institutions’ but even in this context sees the response here as extreme: ’while this an increas-ing trend across the university sector, the violence used to break up the student sit-in at the University of Warwick was particularly extreme and should be recognised as such.’  **Double standards?**  It was reassuring to see the University’s concern for the educational experience of its students when the recent marking boycott was proposed. In a draft note to UCU members on 12 January, the Provost and Registrar expressed the hope that because ‘members of the UCU are totally committed to delivering an excellent educational experience for Warwick students’ this would lead them to ignore the boycott, assuring them that management would be ‘working with Departments to ensure that the impact on students of any action taken is kept to an absolute minimum.’  What puzzles us, however, is why this laudable concern for the student educational experience has not been extended to the unfortunate undergraduates in Life Sciences. The academic redundancies there will see academics suddenly removed from the scene in the middle of the academic year, causing serious disruption to the studies of students affected. The change of tutors involved and the replacement of lecturers with significant teaching responsibilities by inexper-ienced teachers without the same degree of subject expertise show no regard for the quality and continuity of teaching that is such an important determinant of academic success.  **No confidence in the Vice-Chancellor**  On 6 February Warwick University students voted by whopping 70% majority to express no confidence in their Vice-Chancellor, citing many of the issues highlighted in these newsletters as reasons for their action. It would seem that the University’s decision to seek an indefinite ban on ‘occupation-style protests’, clearly designed to stifle freedom of expression, has had exactly the opposite effect.  Join your union online at: www.ucu.org.uk/join  July 2013  Join your union online at: www.ucu.org.uk/join  If you're facing problems associated with your employment at Warwick and are a UCU member, you can rely on our help. We have a team of personal caseworkers, all volunteers, who are trained to provide support, advice and represent-ation on a range of issues from contract renewal to potential disciplinary action or harassment. If you are being disciplined, or taking a grievance against another member of staff, you have a legal right to be accompanied by a union represent-ative, provided that you had been a member for 90 days prior to the incident.  If you find yourself in a difficult situation and would like to speak, in confidence, to one of our case-workers, email our administrator, Claire Duffy at [administrator@warwickucu.org.uk](mailto:administrator@warwickucu.org.uk)  A whole range of support is offered to members, from a brief informal chat to an experienced UCU caseworker to a full three-day regional course. See courses at [http://www.ucu.org.uk/4832](http://www.ucu.org.uk/4832" \t "_blank)  **Where we stand on merit pay and DPR**  As we reported in the December newsletter, management are pressing ahead with a new merit pay system.  To reiterate, we provided a statement outlining our opposition to the principle of performance related pay.  The new merit pay system represents a backward step. Actively encouraging everyone to participate in the scheme, regardless of their current point on the pay spine, pits colleagues against each other and makes it easier for the university to move away from the nationally agreed pay scales.  Management have simultaneously announced changes to annual review which go far beyond what UCU had been led to believe.  According to management, annual review would change only in respect of the timing being aligned with merit pay and to include a box as to whether the member of staff wished to be considered for merit pay. In fact, the new DPR form is radically different to the previous annual review form and much the worse for it. "Plans and aspirations" have been replaced by "agreed objectives"; questions about "factors that inhibited you achieving your goals" and "your working environment" have been removed; instead of countersigning a summary written by the reviewee, the reviewer is now required to "assess the overall contribution of the reviewee" using a box for "Reviewer's Comments".  Members should be under no illusion that this represents a hardening of management through metrics and an attempt to restate the norms of the employment contract.  We have continually questioned the wisdom of these intellectually bankrupt performance metrics, yet the university continues to embrace them.  It’s evident from the change in terminology – from annual review to development and performance review – the University will continue along this path. Members need to be vigilant against this short-termist thinking.  We can already see the damage that relying on metrics is doing – we certainly don’t have far to look. |

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| The Warwick University Newsletter | **Do you have a story to tell?**  We aim to send out this newsletter once a month, around the middle of the month, and want all members to feel that they have a stake in it. If you think you have a story to tell, some interesting news, an idea for an item or perhaps a suggestion for something that would be worth following up, please get in touch with us at: administrator@warwickucu.org.uk  Please ensure that you mark your email NEWSLETTER.  In the next issue: The work of the Hourly-Paid Tutor Group; ‘Outside the Box’; Meet the committee  **Being a caseworker**  *Caseworkers are at the heart of the union’s activities, providing advice and support where it is needed. In the first of a series of interviews with Warwick’s caseworkers, we interviewed Sam Adelman about his experiences.*  *What led you to become a caseworker?*  I initially began when there was an email saying that there was a workshop. Somebody from the regional branch in Birmingham was coming to have a session on what it was like to be a caseworker, and then I just gradually got involved and realised how important it is and how we really need caseworkers. It’s very important as some-thing that the union does. It’s the most visible evidence, in a way on a daily basis, of the importance of the union, of defending people against discriminatory, unfair work practices, bullying, intimidation, and just trying to ensure that workers’ rights are actually defended to the greatest extent possible in a culture of increasing-ly vicious line management.  *What’s at the core of your work?*  The most important thing is to support the member as much as possible. How it unfolds in any particular case depends on the case itself and on the desires of the member. Some members are quite firm and strong about what they want to do and how they want to do it and just require somebody to accompany them for moral support; other people would prefer a more interventionist stance from the caseworker. There are no hard and fast rules about how to undertake it.  *What qualities do you need to be a caseworker?*  You just try to be as empathetic as possible and to spend as much time supporting a member as possible but you also try to be honest. Sometimes there are difficult conversations with members… because it’s their jobs, it’s their identity. They get very emotionally involved. I think part of being a caseworker is just to maintain a certain level of objectivity while being empathetic at the same time. It’s kind of tough love. You don’t have to be a lawyer to do it. Sometimes if you feel you’re fumbling in the dark, that happens to everybody and you do learn more from experience – and if anybody just needs to talk or ask advice, there’s a group of caseworkers who are available.  *What are the challenges?*  The difficult bits are often the feeling that I wish that I or we could do more; almost despair at the length of time that it takes for cases to be resolved; a real concern about the apparent unwillingness of Human Resources, of the University, to acknowledge how devastating a lot of these processes are – disciplinary processes, grievances, whatever they are – and the impact that they have on the health, both physical and mental, of members; the way in which the University tends to support heads of department almost no matter whether they’re right or wrong. I understand that the union does not have endless resources, but I really would welcome a greater level of support, particularly legal support… and a greater willingness to take on the universities.  *Do you get any support?*  It’s possible for any reasonably intelligent person to be able to understand what’s happen-ing and to use each other as caseworkers, as a group, as a resource to ask for advice. We had a meeting recently where we just exchanged ideas and experiences about what was happening. It's important to understand the range of cases, it’s important to understand whether there are repeated patterns in what the University does, in what Human Resources do, and just to communicate to each other and just to introduce ourselves to each other and say well, you know, if anybody ever needs to talk or just ask advice, then there’s a group of caseworkers who are available.  *Why does it matter?*  This is an institution with the soul of an accountant. It’s important to emphasise that we need more caseworkers. It’s basic solidarity – that’s what unions are for. That’s how we support each other. It’s giving something back, it’s contributing. Just give it a go; it’s not a commitment for ever and ever, but any help would be great. The University is very happy to pick us off one by one, to engage in divide and rule tactics, and the more we stand together, the more we support each other, the stronger we are. It’s important to know that the union is there if you need the union, that you will have that support. I just want to give a little bit back.  Join your union online at: www.ucu.org.uk/join  July 2013  Join your union online at: www.ucu.org.uk/join |