



Get the Vote Out: Every Vote Counts

Good Progress So Far

Alongside Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside in our region, Newcastle University UCU branch is rebaloting. The deadline is 14 January for the postal ballot to be received. From those registering that they have vote, we are significantly up compared to this stage in our last ballot. But Christmas is likely to disrupt both the post and people’s whereabouts so there is **no room for complacency**.

Colleagues at 57 universities have taken already three days of strike action this month.



Reps encouraging people in their units and schools and we will be using a text messaging platform—ThruText—in the last couple of weeks of the ballot. A massive thanks to both Leeds and Durham University branches that have offered to help with volunteers. If anyone wishes to help with this, please get in touch with ucu.office@ncl.ac.uk.

False Claims of Consultation and Agreement for new Disciplinary and Capability Policies

12.0 Policy Agreement

The Disciplinary Policy has been agreed in consultation with the recognised campus trade unions. It is not part of the formal terms and conditions of employment and we may review and amend the policy from time to time.

Document Control Information	
Does this replace another policy? Yes it replaces the Disciplinary Policy, Procedure and Code of Practice	
Approval	
Approved by: People Matters Group	Date: October 2021
Effective from: 1 st December 2021	

Newcastle University management are claiming that our branch agreed their new disciplinary policy and their new Capability ‘Improving Performance’ Policy. In neither case has the branch agreed nor do we believe consultation to be meaningful and appropriate. They assert this does not affect terms and conditions.

These policies include **demotion** which we believe contravenes the National Framework Agreement so we will be sending this to the ratification panel of the NEC for clarification. For details:

<https://ncl.web.ucu.org.uk/branch-meeting-24th-november-2021/>

Our Health and Safety: Omicron and new government guidance

Last week’s government guidance on COVID advises working from home where possible. However, face to face teaching was still being required in the final week of term. We are trying to clarify the apparent confusion over how this applies to PS staff, with members reporting expectations to attend campus when unnecessary. The unions met the OHSS and People Services last Friday and raised whether senior management’s Bronze group for COVID response had reconsidered social distancing, one-way systems and signage. Bronze had decided that existing measures were sufficient. We asked

about a case-number threshold to trigger teaching to go fully online, as at Imperial College London and as Jo Grady is advocating. They said the existing Outbreak Response Plan already covers this. Finally, we asked if sympathetic treatment of staff with increased risks from in person activity will continue; they said: yes, this will still be the case. Please contact ucu.office@ncl.ac.uk if you need any help.

Workload, Four Fights and 'Wellbeing'

Workload is one of the four fights. HR have established a Wellbeing Committee and invited the union to participate. Despite no objection in principle, when it comes to buying branch officials out we have just over half an FTE for *all* our branch duties (the standard for a university our size is 2-3 FTEs). So we have declined. Moreover, the central issue for **staff wellbeing is workload**. How many policies increase our workload? We believe that workload drives the high levels of work-related stress at Newcastle University and mitigation measures such as online counselling are a poor substitute for addressing the problem's root cause.

<https://ncl.web.ucu.org.uk/files/2021/09/Newcastle-UCU-Workload-report-Aug2021.pdf>

We believe the employer should be doing **Risk Assessments** for stress with policy innovations such as changes to personal tutoring or the loss of a week of the Easter break.

Our Anti-Casualisation Committee Relunched

We recently relunched our **anti-casualisation campaign**. Ashley and Joseph have agreed to both head up the campaign and be co-opted onto the branch committee. We have confirmed that the strike support (hardship) fund will run as it did in our last dispute. Andy Clark has kindly agreed to sit on the strike support committee to ensure continuity and that casual staff can afford to take part in action as they did last time around.

Details of our hardship fund are here:

<https://ncl.web.ucu.org.uk/industrial-action/ucu-local-strike-support-fund/>

If you want to get involved in the anti-casualisation and PGR-as-staff campaigns please contact: ucu.office@ncl.ac.uk.



Strike Support Fundraiser at the Tyneside Irish Centre during our last dispute

Liverpool, RCA and Goldsmiths: Inspiring Industrial Action against Redundancies

After the victory against redundancies at Liverpool University, both RCA and Goldsmiths University are taking serious industrial action against redundancies.

Equality Campaigning: How Low can a University Stoop? Victimising Emma-Jane Phillips

Northumbria University is shockingly investigating Emma-Jane Phillips, the UCU Branch Secretary and former NEC member for simply tweeting that the university had not made the requisite reasonable adjustments for wheelchair users.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/11929/UCU-condemns-vindictive-harassment-of-disabled-lecturer-at-Northumbria-University>

Our message of support:

Newcastle University UCU condemn the attack on equality, on UCU, and on a fellow colleague and member by senior management and HR at Northumbria University. Universities should be agents for equality and are spaces that should foster safe and secure environments for all staff and students, but especially for those who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. When presented with evidence that this was not the case, Northumbria University management and HR preferred to investigate a disabled employee, with potential for disciplinary action, rather than investigate the problem of inequality. Their behaviour has created an intimidating and hostile environment and is in contravention of Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010. We will not tolerate the intimidation of UCU members, reps and committee members by Senior Management Teams and HR and we call on Northumbria University HR to withdraw the investigation and any disciplinary action. Newcastle University UCU stands in solidarity with both the member and Northumbria UCU and offers all support to protect equality at their university.

As we go to press ... The Newcastle University's Annual Report 2020-21 is now out

Here are the USS/Four Fights highlights

Pay inequality. Newcastle University's mean gender pay gap is 18.1%. The non-clinical ethnicity pay gap increased to 14.8%. The mean pay gap for those who have declared a disability is 12.9%.

The VC's total net remuneration is £380,000, his basic salary is 9.4 times the median average basic salary of colleagues. Of his £380K, interestingly from the perspective of the pensions dispute, £50,500 is allowance in lieu of **pension**.

Twenty more staff are being paid over £100,000 than the previous year, the number standing now at 173.

Have a Merry Christmas and Don't Forget to Vote

