

UNISON

the public service union

University of Leeds Branch Bulletin

October
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Our Response to HE Pay Dispute Outcome

Our branch has written to the UNISON national office to express our disappointment at the national Service Group Executive's (SGE) decision not to take any industrial action following the imposition of the university's derisory pay offer. In our letter we told the national office we thought it was conceding the fight too early and that it would have adverse effects on our membership's confidence in the union as well as our ability to recruit new members in the future; we have yet to receive a reply. Regardless of this decision, our branch remains committed to continuing the fight on all other fronts affecting staff in HE.

The Branch Secretary and Chair would both like to thank the branch reps, the regional reps and all the branch members who helped to organise and run what was a vibrant and energetic local campaign.

Employees of the University of Leeds and of Leeds Trinity University should now have received the 1.1% (or greater for those at the lower end of the pay scale) pay award backdated to 1st August. As mentioned in earlier communications, this payment was imposed by the employer following suggestions from the employer's national body, UCEA. UNISON has condemned the university's pay offer imposition as unnecessary and premature.

Since the pay increase imposition, the national ballot run by UNISON to determine whether to take industrial action in furtherance of our pay claim, closed. Although the result of that ballot was 55% to 45% in favour of industrial action, albeit on a low turnout, UNISON's national SGE decided that the support for the industrial action was not

Meet the Rep: Martin Pelan



- 1. What's your role?**
Student Support Officer, School of Education.
- 2. Why did you become a UNISON rep?**
I enjoyed being a rep while in the Civil Service. After working at the University for several years I was keen to build on my previous experience to help members across the campus.
- 3. How long have you been a rep?**
I was elected rep for the School of Education in 2014.
- 4. Most frequent member question?**
I'm often asked about the additional 'non-workplace' services, such as car insurance, holidays, legal services etc. One member was pleased UNISON now offered pet insurance!
- 5. The best thing about being a rep?**
Helping people find out more about UNISON – people are usually surprised to hear we have nearly 1,000 members on campus.
- 6. And the worst?**
Non-members saying "There's no point joining a union", when they're enjoying terms and conditions that are better than those in non-union workplaces.
- 7. Is it easy to balance your rep responsibilities and your role?**
Yes, the School of Education has always been very supportive of my role.
- 8. How was the training?**
It was relatively easy – the main challenge was resisting the weekly fry-up at the café next door to the college!
- 9. Would you recommend being a rep?**
Absolutely. It's an opportunity to develop new skills in really interesting areas, such as negotiation, marketing, recruitment etc.
- 10. Anything to add?**
Don't believe the media's anti-union stories – our branch is growing and will grow even more, especially if more members get involved as reps and help us continue to improve the working environment for university staff.

Brexit Concerns

Following the government's decision to go through with a 'hard Brexit', our branch and UNISON in HE are becoming increasingly concerned about how this will affect two things: workers' and human rights; and the effect on the HE sector regarding things such as loss of research income and the consequences for HE jobs.

The Conservative government, led by the unelected Prime Minister who parrots the nonsensical, circular refrain "Brexit means Brexit", is already showing worrying signs it intends to repeal or dilute some of the rights and much of the protection for individuals and workers secured variously in the European Court of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. Nationally UNISON leaders are part of a broad Trade Union coalition that is campaigning to mitigate the worst effects of this.

Locally, we welcome the initiatives taken by the University to reassure staff and students who are EU nationals, by providing information sessions and contact details for staff concerned about the implications for them of the result of the vote:

www.leeds.ac.uk/forstaff/homepage/390/eu_referendum%20

Thankfully, our branch has had very little reported to us by way of discrimination on campus, although there have been incidents reported in the city. Racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia, alongside all other forms of hate crime and incitement, are things which have no place in modern society and we would like to remind UNISON members that should you find yourself the victim of, or a witness to any such act, then you should feel free to report it to your UNISON branch. We will treat your approach in confidence (please see our contact details on page 2).