

Motion to Support Fair & Equal Pay

Proposer: Stella Swain, CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer

Seconder: Alessandro Ceccarelli, GU President

The Graduate Union notes:

1. The University and College Union (UCU) is conducting a ballot of its members on industrial action, which opens on Monday 9th September and closes on Wednesday 30th October;
2. The ballot relates to a claim jointly lodged by the five higher education trade unions (Unison, Unite, GMB, EIS and UCU) in March 2019 on the issues of pay, the gender pay gap, precarious contracts and workloads;
3. Staff across the UK HE sector have suffered a cumulative real terms pay cut of over 17% since 2009;
4. There are large and persistent gender pay gaps across UK universities, with disparities in excess of 15% across Russell Group institutions;
5. The gender pay gap in Cambridge is worse than the sector average: the mean hourly wage for women working for the University of Cambridge is 19.7% lower than for men (<https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/Employer/cKLM2VVR/2018>, March 2018);
6. A 2016 survey of UCU members found that academic staff work an average of 50.9 hours FTE per week;
7. Early career academics and postgraduate research students are often employed on hourly-paid contracts which limit their rights as workers and provide little security of employment;
8. UCU members engaged in industrial action over a dispute on the USS pension scheme during Lent Term 2018 with strong student support, including from CUSU and the GU;
9. Many GU members are also staff and UCU members;
10. There are ongoing links between the Graduate Union and UCU in the 'Raise the Bar' and anti-casualisation campaigns (<http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/pledge-to-raise-the-bar/>);
11. At the Michaelmas I 2018 Council, GU Council resolved to adopt a Memorandum of Understanding with CUSU and Cambridge UCU, which said:

The unions' interests are aligned: staff working conditions are the conditions in which students learn. They also represent the current and future working conditions of many students: postgraduate students in particular are often both staff and students. A university education is a collaborative relationship between staff and students and each benefits from the advancement of the other's interest.

12. At the GU Council meeting in March 2019, a Policy on 'Fair Pay and Support for Teaching and Research Opportunities' was passed which resolved that:

The Graduate Union adopts a policy to support fairness and welfare in research and teaching opportunities in the Collegiate University [...] All postgraduate and mature undergraduate students, in the Collegiate University, who have teaching and/or research responsibilities, should be adequately remunerated. This should include recognizing the time spent for preparation, marking, administrative work associated with their teaching [See also:

<https://www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk/news/standing-up-for-our-university-staff>]

13. The Graduate Union also passed policy to 'support graduate students in their role as workers in collaboration with Cambridge UCU' (May 2018), committing to:

Work with the Cambridge UCU to uncover exploitative employment of graduate students and challenge the university to end bad practices where they exist.

The Graduate Union believes:

1. Workers have a right to fair pay, pensions and fair treatment and should not be discriminated against because of gender, race, ability, or any other protected characteristic;
2. Many of the issues at stake in the dispute, including precarious contracts, disproportionately affect postgraduate research students who are GU members;
3. Students benefit from working with and being taught by staff who are fairly paid, have job security, and are not forced to take on an excessive workload;
4. Support for the 2018 UCU industrial action on pensions had a significant impact on both the success and impact of the strike, and the increased collaboration between CUSU, the GU and Cambridge UCU that followed it has benefitted all three unions;
5. The decline in staff pay and conditions is directly linked to the marketisation of higher education, as the current funding system dis-incentivises universities from adequately funding their staff, and should therefore be opposed where possible.

The Graduate Union resolves:

1. To lobby the university to provide fair pay, pensions and conditions to all of its employees;
2. To educate and inform its members about membership of UCU, the ballot, any subsequent industrial action, and the GU's stance on these;
3. To support the ongoing ballot by sharing materials relating to UCU's Get the Vote Out effort on GU social media, the GU bulletin, and in person;
4. To produce a statement of support for the dispute, to be shared with UCU;
5. To continue to engage with Cambridge UCU and other trade unions during the period of the ballot and potential future industrial action on this dispute, and to support those trade unions as the executive see fit;

6. To allocate budget where necessary to actions in support of the ballot and industrial action, including but not limited to flyers and posters providing information about the strike;
7. And, in the event that the ballot is successful and results in industrial action:
 - a. To fully and publicly support staff and GU members in their upcoming strike action and action short of a strike, including but not limited to sharing and producing publicity, organising and funding picket line support and supporting actions UCU decide to take during the strike;
 - b. To make provisions to mitigate the negative impact of disruption on GU members while not undermining industrial action;
 - c. To provide information on the industrial action that is taking place to members of the GU, including details of how to support the industrial action, how we are supporting students during the strikes, and the work we are doing as the GU on this issue;
 - d. To encourage students to show solidarity by where possible not attending lectures, seminars or other university-organised activity still in operation on strike days;
8. And, should the ballot not result in industrial action:
 - a. To empower the GU Executive to continue to lobby the University to address the issues of pay, pensions, the gender pay gap, precarious contracts and workloads. This may include having consultation with UCU on further action short of a strike as well as raising awareness and sharing and producing resources;
 - b. To continue to provide information about, and publicly promote, UCU membership for those who are eligible.