



**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
UNISON HIGHER EDUCATION
SERVICE GROUP
2017**

Introduction

Dear Members

A warm welcome to UNISON's Higher Education Service Group Conference 2018. I trust that you will find your time here in Chester informative, inspiring and a valuable experience.

It has been a challenging year for the sector and our movement. With the Trade Union Act now firmly in place recruiting and organising are more crucial than ever. New regulations on DOCAS and changes to facility time are placing tremendous pressure on the Trade Union movement, but we will not be defeated. Despite the challenges, regions and branches continue to make gains in supporting members and protecting our terms and conditions of employment.

UNISON's higher education (HE) members will continue to be in the firing line for all sorts of reasons including Brexit, outsourcing, low wage increase and redundancies. All these things and more pose a major threat to our members' who continue to work very hard trying to make ends meet.

As Chair of the Higher Education Service Group Executive (HESGE) I can assure you that we have continued push those issues affecting our members, including getting employers to sign up for full accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation and to close the gender pay gap in the sector. A woman paid less than their male counterparts is an inequality issue that we must eradicate. Pay restraint continues to be a major issue for our HE members, especially in comparison with soaring levels of pay for senior managers.

Higher Education support staff will not be left behind. We are a significant and important group providing a first class service for those following behind.

Cuts to budgets have us working harder for less, but nevertheless our campaigns on behalf of our members will continue. UNISON is the lead organised union for Higher Education support staff.

We have had a difficult and worrying year and on behalf of the HESGE I want to say a special thank you to all for your unwavering support and commitment.



Denise Ward
Chair of the Higher Education Service Group Executive

In line with motion 17 agreed at the 2006 HE conference this annual report highlights the implementation of policies agreed at 2017 HE conference — with individual motions highlighted in bold.

HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Section A

UNISON Objective 1: Enhance our capability to meet the recruiting, organisational and representational challenges posed by austerity measures including cuts, workforce reductions, reorganisations, attacks on facility time and privatisation. Ensuring the union is relevant to all members who provide public services – including those who work in the private sector – regardless of the economic sector in which they work. To identify and develop leadership from across the union membership. To enhance our democracy by increasing and widening participation amongst our activists and members.

1. Recruitment

Table 1 Joiners by region

	2015	2016	2017	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May 2017	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17
Eastern	223	217	241	19	17	23	21	18	25	15	19	23	29	32
East Midlands	296	256	253	33	29	29	25	14	16	15	20	21	31	20
Greater London	967	1,006	866	62	78	85	84	89	91	78	82	58	77	82
Northern	200	229	201	15	30	25	15	19	19	12	8	21	23	14
UNISON Northern Ireland	41	27	59	8	6	4	5	4	2	4	1	2	22	1
North West	463	514	523	41	34	61	39	36	44	38	28	40	108	54
Scotland	342	468	412	36	28	46	32	38	51	61	29	29	40	22
South East	428	522	469	53	47	42	28	30	45	38	49	32	51	54
South West	270	303	273	12	27	23	21	31	28	20	23	22	23	43
Cymru/Wales R	258	252	301	27	28	28	41	30	52	18	19	11	22	25
West Midlands	323	320	362	56	46	31	20	28	27	19	31	29	32	43
Yorkshire - Humberside	434	546	570	54	62	76	43	56	31	45	34	45	71	53
	4,245	4,660	4,530	416	432	473	374	393	431	363	343	333	529	443

In common with the wider union, 2017 was another challenging year for recruitment in HE. Eastern, East Midlands, Northern Ireland, North West, Scotland, South West and Yorkshire and Humberside regions all saw a net increase in HE members. However, overall the higher number of leavers in other regions led to a net reduction in HE membership during 2017.

Regions and branches continued to campaign, organise and recruit around key local and national issues in university workplaces across the UK.

UNISON's Freedom of Information (FOI) request to universities again highlighted the growing number of private companies working in areas such as catering, cleaning and security services across the sector.

The HESGE has acknowledged that recruitment and branch organisation is a continuing priority and this will form part of the HESGE work programme for 2018/19.

Section B

UNISON Objective 2: Protect and secure fair pay and terms and conditions, high quality employment and pensions for UNISON members, building confidence for industrial action when required. To break the Westminster and devolved governments' pay cap policy and deliver real pay increases for members. Promoting equal pay and equality and challenging all forms of discrimination, including racism, supporting migrant workers, and promoting UNISON's alternative economic strategy.

Pay

2.1 Pay 2017/18

In 2017 UNISON worked with other unions to submit a joint pay claim that reflected UNISON's policy agreed at Higher Education (HE) conference 2017 (**2017 Motion 11**).

Pay 2017/18

UNISON HE Conference 2017 agreed that UNISON's aim for the pay negotiations should be a fair and decent pay increase for all staff. **2017 Motion 11** called for the claim to include a pay rise for all pay points of £1,200 or 7.5%, whichever was greater and for all universities to become Foundation Living Wage accredited employers. Additionally, **2017 Motion 12** called for £10 an hour minimum pay rate to be central to the pay negotiations, to eliminate low pay, and this was incorporated into the joint trade union claim.

The joint higher education trade unions met in January 2017 to review the previous year's pay negotiations and joint working. Negotiations commenced in March with a further 2 meetings held in April.

The unions submitted a joint pay claim in March 2017 that incorporated UNISON's key demands as well incorporating elements from the other unions. The final claim called for an increase to all spine points on the national pay scale of RPI plus – either £ 1,200 or RPI plus 3% whichever was greater. The claim was underpinned by a call for £10 per hour minimum wage with all HEIs to become Foundation Living Wage employers. Other elements included an increase to London Weighting, nationally agreed minimum rates of pay for external examiners, action to close the gender pay gap by 2020, action to address precarious employment including casual and zero hour contracts, action to tackle excessive workloads, and the establishment a Scottish Sub-Committee of New JNCHES.

At the March meeting the unions highlighted the impact on staff of significantly higher inflation than in previous years and stressed the continuing real terms pay cut for staff. Reserves and surpluses within the sector showed that an increase was affordable. The unions also outlined the falling percentage spent on staff costs and the amount spent by universities on agency staffing. Finally, the unions emphasised the need to strategically address low pay.

The higher education employers represented by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) outlined their view that uncertainty facing the sector with legislative changes and the impact of the UK exiting the European Union. At the end of the first meeting the employers made an opening offer of 1.2%.

At the second meeting the unions made it clear that the opening offer was unacceptably low and that it needed to address other elements of the pay claim. By the end of the that meeting the offer was improved to 1.5% with an increase of 1.8% to the lowest pay point, reference to London weighting and an offer to work on gender pay gap elimination.

After further negotiations the employer's final pay offer made on 27 April 2017 for a pay increase of 1.7% with an increase of 2.43% for the lowest pay point tapered down to 1.72% on pay point 16. For those working a thirty five hour week the lowest pay point would equate to £8.45 per hour. In addition, the pay offer included an agreement to take forward joint work to progress specific matters of mutual interest. This work would flow from the successful conclusion of the joint work being done as a consequence of the 2016-17 settlement on casualisation and gender pay.

UNISON's HESGE met on the 4 April to consider the employer's full and final offer. The HESGE agreed that the offer was the best to be achieved by negotiation and that sustained and escalating industrial action would be required to try to secure an improved offer. Members were consulted on the offer. The consultation results showed 70.1% of UNISON members responding voted to accept the pay offer for 2017/18.

GMB, EIS and UCU's members also voted to accept the pay offer. Whilst Unite members voted to reject, they agreed to implement the offer. The employers were advised that the pay round for 2017/18 was concluded and payment was backdated to 1 August 2017.

Joint working was also part of the final offer from the employers. It was agreed to review the casual and zero hours contract work at a meeting of JNCHES scheduled for December 2017. No agreement was reached on establishing a Scottish JNCHES sub-committee. It was agreed to refer the issue of workload for consideration to the Higher Education Safety and Health forum.

2.2 Pay 2018/19

In early 2018 the trade union side of New JNCHES will meet to begin to consider the content of the 2018/19 claim. The first pay negotiating meeting of JNCHES is scheduled to take place in March.

The HESGE pay motion submitted to HE Conference 2018 which was drafted in July 2017 and circulated to branches seeks an uplift of £1500 or 7.5% whichever is greater.

A comprehensive Freedom of Information (FOI) request was submitted to all HEI's in November 2017. The results will inform pay negotiations and be made available to regions and branches, once collated.

3. JNCHES Working Groups

3.1 JNCHES Review

As part of the 2007 settlement and the establishment of New JNCHES, it was agreed to undertake regular reviews of JNCHES arrangements. The next joint review was due to take place in December 2017.

3.2 Strategic Conference

The annual JNCHES Strategic Conference took place in March 2017. The conference heard reports on the political landscape and pay trends across the economy and on developments in the higher education sector within the UK and in devolved nations. Trends and changes in HE finance were presented and a report back was given on the joint work undertaken in 2016-17.

3.3 Hourly Paid and Casual Hours Working Group

The 2016/17 and 2017/18 pay settlements included a commitment to conduct joint working on casualisation and the prevalence of zero hours contracts across the sector.

Meetings were held but little progress made. The trade unions registered its ongoing concerns about the creditability and value of UCEA's reporting on Variable Hours and Fixed Term teaching staff in the sector. UCEA then attempted to change the terms of reference of the report. The Trade Union side held the view that any report on Variable Hours contracts conducted on the revised remit would lack credibility and could be harmful for our members.

The Trade Union side will discuss the issue further at a meeting in December 2017.

3.4 Gender Pay Gap Working Group

As a result of the 2016/17 pay settlement a joint technical working group was established to revise the existing guidance on equal pay reviews to include gender pay gap reporting. In response to **2017 Motion 7** UNISON campaigned for university employers to end the gender pay gap by 2020. The guidance was updated in November 2017.

In addition, it was agreed that a number of launch events would take place around the UK to highlight the new guidance. These events are scheduled to take place in January 2018. Details of the launch events have been circulated to branches.

4. Living Wage

UNISON continued its campaign for universities to become Living Wage Foundation accredited employers and named and shamed HEI's that refused to pay the Living Wage as a minimum to workers on campuses across the UK (**2015 Motion 12**). Universities and colleges should be amongst the most progressive employers in the country, but are often not. The 2017/18 pay award increased the salaries of those on the lowest spinal column point to £8.45p per hour from 1 August 2017, but only where employees have a 35 hour working week.

The Foundation Living Wage rate was revised in November 2017 to £8.75 per hour and the London Living Wage amended to £10.20 per hour. This meant that all HE staff on the lowest salary point became paid below the Foundation Living Wage. The Living Wage Foundation delivered a keynote speech and facilitated a workshop covering Living Wage Accreditation campaigns and highlighted the work of the Living Wage Foundation at the HE Branch Seminar.

Branches continued successful local Living Wage campaigns by working with local student and community groups.

In 2017 UNISON sent Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all universities and colleges. These sought information about minimum and maximum pay, the numbers of staff paid below the Foundation Living Wage, an equality analysis of the cuts to staffing and the wider reward packages offered to senior management. This was a follow-up to the FOI surveys conducted in March 2013, October 2014, November 2015 and November 2016. The findings were used to support branches and regions in campaigns around the UK and to inform pay negotiations.

5. FE and 6th Form Colleges

The Higher Education Service Group sends a delegate to the Further Education (FE) Committee. UNISON members working in FE in England were consulted on the 2017/18 pay offer via an electronic ballot. The majority of members voted to reject the offer, however turnout was varied and low overall. The FE committee met and considered the results, the turnout of the ballot, the Trade Union Act, and engagement in previous action. The national committee decided not to proceed to recommend a national ballot for industrial action. Instead the committee agreed that with members having voted to reject the offer, but with responses being varied, the committee decided to proceed by seeking to pursue disputes on pay on a local college basis in collaboration with sister unions.

In Cymru/Wales UNISON held a consultative ballot in October 2017 on the pay offer of 1%, and recommended rejection. There was, unfortunately a disappointing response rate, however, the overwhelming majority rejected the offer. UNISON is now liaising with the other FE trade unions and is considering the timescales to take this campaign forward including a potential ballot for strike action.

In Scotland FE members received a consolidated pay rise of £425 and an increase of five days annual leave from 1 April 2017. The FE unions are currently consulting on the elements of the FE pay claim for 2018 and will be lodging the claim in January 2018.

6. Pensions

6.1 Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

The valuation date for LGPS England and Wales Funds and LGPS Northern Ireland was 1 April 2016 and results published in April 2017. The overall deficit and the funding levels of most funds have improved. Despite being a statutory scheme many fund actuaries were still basing future growth on gilts which is inflating employer contributions.

The main cost pressure on the scheme level is the lower than expected take up of the option for members to reduce contributions and get lower benefits (the 50:50 option.) Evidence shows many are unaware of this option and UNISON is working to make sure members at least know the option exists.

The funds in England and Wales are being made to pool most of their funds into 6 pooled funds. UNISON has now succeeded in getting representation on 2 of the pools (Northern and Brunel)

Contributions for HE employers are increasing to cover the perceived risk that these employers getting into financial difficulties in the future. There has been an increasing number of attempts by universities to set up arms length companies to avoid legal obligations to offer the LGPS to directly employed staff. UNISON worked with LGPS reps and board members, advising of the need for fund actuaries to make realistic assumptions instead of unnecessarily cautious assumptions that have such a significant impact on scheme costs. UNISON also campaigned strongly to throw light on the hidden fees paid to fund managers.

LGPS funds in England and Wales are being made to pool most of their funds into six pooled funds. UNISON succeeded in getting representation on two of the pools (Northern and Brunel)

Ill Health retirement provision is still under review in the LGPS England and Wales. UNISON continues to push strongly for the lowest award (Tier 3 pension) to be removed and to be replaced with an ongoing pension for life. Currently a Tier 3 ill-health pension cannot be paid for longer than 3 years at which point it either ceases entirely or less commonly is upgraded to a Tier 2 ill-health pension.

6.2 Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)

At the time of writing this report the HE Employers had proposed to end all defined benefit from autumn 2018. This would mean the only benefit that could be earned in the future would be a defined contribution benefit, where the member bears all the risk and the employer pays insufficient contributions to provide a decent income in retirement.

The employers represented by the Universities UK claimed that the proposals were in response to a rise in the size of the deficit. However, in nearly all other cases where schemes come under attack, it is caused by the rise in the cost of the liabilities rather than fund performance or improvements in life expectancy. The reason is the reduction in the assumption on the growth of the fund in the future. The assumption is now much lower hence the increase in the deficit. In fact an independent actuary has shown if the assumptions were based on the actual asset base of the schemes fund the scheme would be in surplus.

The HESGE will support members in the coming fight to save the USS. We continue to campaign for full representation rights of support staff on the USS board and its negotiating committee.

6.3 Local Schemes

UNISON continued to support members in a number of branches across the country where support staff schemes have come under further attack.

The SAUL scheme covering London universities has good news. The funding position is strong and there are no imminent proposals to change benefits.

More local schemes are under attack. Hull University closed its existing pension scheme at the end of April and the campaign to improve the replacement defined contribution scheme continues. At the time of writing another University scheme is under threat of closure. The pensions unit supported members in a number of branches across the country where support staff schemes have come under further attacks during these increasingly challenging times.

7. Devolved Nations and Regions

7.1 Northern Ireland

UNISON branches at the University of Ulster urged employers to remove the age bar on application of the UK legal minimum wage. The major contractors resisted. UNISON NI has also called the additional inclusion of the real Living Wage in contracts up for renewal.

A new Belfast campus for Ulster University is nearing completion which would result in major relocation of the workforce. To support our members with this a Regional Organiser was allocated to take a lead on negotiations with the contractors and the University. A fighting fund organiser has also been allocated on a part time basis to support recruitment initiatives.

At St Mary's College of Higher Education staff retained their employment following robust negotiation by organising staff and lay activists. Employees remain on casual contracts and UNISON intends to take this issue up early in 2018. New stewards are coming forward and their training needs will be a priority.

A delegation attended the Higher Education seminar and UNISON NI was very pleased to welcome colleagues to Northern Ireland.

7.2 Scotland

Financial cuts have played a big role in 2017, with more redundancies across universities in Scotland. In most cases settlement agreements were reached, but the number of professional and support staff has decreased across Scotland. Some universities have been exploring greater use of privatisation, but some threats have been stopped. We are concerned about the creeping use of contractors/agency workers across the sector.

The Scottish Code of Good Governance for University Courts was published. <http://www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk/2017-code/> in 2017. Next year should see the first trade union seats on University Courts in Scotland. The guide has a new section on equality and the Code has a stronger angle on accountability and ensuring trade union involvement.

Training has been delivered on the HERA job evaluation scheme, the DOCAS agreements and governance. Thompsons provided a briefing on legal rights around redundancies and restructures.

The Scottish Funding Council has not been disbanded, but there has been changes made in the structures and accountability.

Regular dialogue took place with Universities Scotland, and we have tried to establish a forum where we deal with Scotland wide issues. The Universities have not been keen for this, but discussions continue.

Discussions took place to encourage all Universities to ensure that any Living Wage update is backdated following the increase announced in November.

7.3 Cymru / Wales

UNISON Cymru/Wales Higher Education Committee met regularly through 2017, including a two day seminar to develop the 2018 work plan.

The Welsh Government committed to implementation of the Diamond Review recommendations including moving from the current system of student fee subsidy to providing means tested maintenance with a minimum payment for all students.

Along with many other public service employers, universities continuously review, restructure, re-align, reorganise and generally disrupt our members' workplaces. Thanks to all branch officers and workplace representatives who have worked hard to protect and promote members' interests in the face of continual change, while also exceeding their recruitment targets for the year.

7.4 South East

Universities in the South East Region have faced significant challenges. Brighton University made redundancies claiming staffing costs are too high. The branch continued to recruit, and saw a rise in individuals requiring assistance. The branch secured a 2.5% pay award for Students' Union staff and identified a situation where term-time-only Students' Union staff had been systematically denied their proportionate entitlement to annual leave and Bank Holidays. This is being pursued by the branch.

Ruskin College announced course closures in 2017. The College experienced financial problems and this led to redundancies and the cutting of Trade Union courses. The issue of Vice Chancellor pay was raised across the region and attracted local and national media attention.

Southampton Solent University experienced restructuring and redundancies during 2017. Approximately 200 staff left since July 2017, and there has been a recruitment freeze. Further restructuring is expected and unions have been told that an additional £5.1m is needed on top of the £10m already saved.

7.5 North West

Universities across the North West had challenges this year, with members facing threats of redundancy following restructures. Manchester Metropolitan University decided to close the Crewe campus. UNISON worked hard with the employer to ensure that there were no compulsory redundancies in the first phase. There are ongoing restructures and the Branch continues to support members throughout – opposing any compulsory redundancies.

University of Manchester conducted redundancy consultations after restructuring several schools and support functions in 2017. The majority of the 170 redundancies proposed were academic staff. UNISON members assimilated into the new structures or volunteered to take an enhanced severance offer.

Bolton University and UCLAN continued with plans to merge with local Colleges. Lancaster University recently released proposals for the creation of a new private higher education institution in Manchester – the University Academy 92, which will be based in Stretford and will focus on the provision of Business, Media, and Sports qualifications.

7.6 West Midlands

The West Midlands Higher Education Service Group (WMHESG) concentrated its work programme on the national pay negotiations. The final offer was reluctantly accepted by members in this region. The issue of zero hours contracts and the gender pay gap were discussed with institutions by UNISON branches.

Constant restructuring is occurred at each university in the region.

There has been increased branch representation at the WMHESG meetings in 2017. WMHESG submitted a bid to the Regional Finance Secretary for additional resources for project work and to enable the committee to send delegates to Higher Education Seminar and Conference.

4 out of the 6 University branches in the region are forecasted to grow in size by the end of 2017.

7.7 Yorkshire and Humberside

The regional higher education service group met regularly to discuss the union's objectives across the region's nine higher education branches in 2017. The region organised collaboratively on a regional approach to common issues such as Vice Chancellor and senior manager pay, health and safety, (particularly stress), Living Wage Accreditation campaigns and the impact on EU workers in Higher Education as the UK withdraws from the EU.

The Service Group devised generic "campaigns in a box" that branches can pick up and use locally. These were used to run a campaign calling on Universities to support their EU workers through providing immigration advice and funding or providing loans for citizenship and residential applications. The region had success in five of the 9 institutes supporting our proposals on the campaign.

Branches benefitted by pooling resources. The approach was supported by local activists who have limited facility time to devise campaigns.

HE membership has marginally increased in the region despite redundancies and retirements.

7.8 East Midlands

Nottingham Trent University experienced a number of restructures and policy reviews, including monitoring of the facilities agreement. Loss in staff numbers came from temporary and/or fixed term contracts. Leicester University saw a number of restructures in order to make £10m savings. Loughborough University made changes in the Estates and Facilities Department that affected staff numbers.

De Montfort University had a number of restructuring exercises with employees placed in alternative positions across the University. Nottingham University engaged in pay negotiations with all recognised trade unions. An issue regarding transfer of staff from Compass to Aramark around terms and conditions has been pursued.

7.9 Northern Region

2017 saw significant challenges in the region's Universities. Sunderland University saw a 20% reduction in support staff to meet a financial shortfall following a complete restructure of support staff provision across the institution. Staff reductions were achieved largely through voluntary redundancy.

Durham University concluded the first round of staffing reductions from Professional Services Staff (PSS) to reduce staffing costs by £15 million. Savings of £5.6 million were achieved in through Voluntary Severance. Further consultation commenced on redundancies scheduled to take place in the spring of 2018 after changes to the PSS functions across the HEI were announced.

All Universities in the region faced increasing challenges to terms and conditions of service. Branches challenged the number of redundancies and changes to terms and conditions. Branches used local issues to recruit new members and also new stewards to meet the organising challenge we continue to face.

7.10 Eastern

During 2017 the University of Bedfordshire successfully blocked changes to support staff pension provision. Facility time provision and activist recruitment were challenges faced by all 9 universities in the region.

The University of Hertfordshire recruited new stewards and branch officers and reconnected with Herts Student Union employed staff. A regular branch newsletter was well received by members.

2017 was a difficult year for the University of East Anglia, but communication with members improved following the election of a new Communications Officer. Other branch officer positions were also been filled. There was significant support for a branch run campaign against management proposals to increase car parking charges on campus.

7.11 Greater London

Greater London Regional Higher Education Committee met three times in 2017. The annual Higher Education Training Day held in July was welcomed a considerable number of first time delegates and new reps. Workshops and speakers a range of topics were well received.

Recruitment and organising initiatives focused on local issues-based campaigns. Five branches were supported by three FFLOs. The projects have seen an increased number of activists as well as successful local campaigns and increased recruitment.

UNISON Bouyges reps at SOAS built upon a previous commitment by the University to bring all cleaners in house by September 2019 with a further commitment to bring all outsourced workers employed in catering, cleaning, portering and security in house by September 2018. UNISON Noonan reps at LSE signed a tri-partite agreement between LSE, Noonan and UNISON to negotiate improved terms conditions for outsourced cleaners and secured an immediate uplift in sick pay and annual leave as well as a commitment to bring all cleaners in house by spring 2018.

Members of the King's College branch (KCL) employed by the cleaning contractor, Servest, were in dispute over understaffing at the start of 2017 and took 2 days of industrial action. This resulted in an increase in staffing levels and an end to intolerable levels of extra work with no additional remuneration. UNISON KCL launched a campaign to bring the outsourced cleaning contract back in house and immediate improvements to member's terms and conditions. Middlesex University branch campaigned against the use of zero hours contracts by the catering contractor Chartwells and submitted a claim for increased sick pay for cleaners employed by ISS. Members in Kingston University branch employed by KUSCO, (the arms length corporation set up by the University to employ all cleaners, maintenance and security), entered into a dispute in 2017. The dispute centred on the University's demands for KUSCO to make savings of £700,000. Members were successful in preventing any planned compulsory redundancies. The employer is now engaging meaningfully with UNISON with the first noticeable improvement in relations being agreement on a consolidated cost of living pay award of 2.5%.

UNISON and UCU continued to campaign on London Weighting in a number of pre-92 universities during 2017. Other branch based negotiations covered a range of issues. Senate House branch submitted a claim to uplift annual leave for grades 1-6 to achieve parity with higher grade staff. Members voted to accept an offer of an additional two days and the branch clearly stated that they will seek to continue discussions to achieve parity. Middlesex University branch and City University submitted similar annual leave claims. City University branch campaigned for parity for all professional services staff with academics, resulting in an increase of 4 to 5 days.

Restructures and redundancies continued across the region, notably at the University of Westminster and University of East London (UEL). UEL and Westminster raised issues relating to increased workloads and stress following reductions in staff levels.

7.12 South West

2017 saw some HE branches that had previously struggled to fill branch officer positions make great improvements. Branches achieved a significant improvement in member participation. This has been highly evident at the University of Bath. Joint union activities raised awareness of the disparity of pay between the vast majority of university staff and senior managers, particularly the Vice Chancellor, the most highly paid in the country.

2017 was a fairly good year for recruitment, but the rate of recruitment is almost matched by the number of leavers. Recruitment and organising in HE branches continues to be a high priority for the region. This included campaigning on supporting EU workers as well as around pay and local issues.

Branches continued to promote negotiating zero tolerance to domestic violence policies and procedures with HE employers.

8. Equalities

Work commenced alongside the Membership Participation Unit to build a campaign to raise awareness of the changes to Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) and the impact on disabled students. Work on the campaign will continue in 2018 **(2015 Motion 4 and 7)**.

UNISON updated the guidance 'Disability Leave and Disability Related issues'. The guidance includes a section on reasonable adjustments and was circulated to branches in August 2017 **(2016 Motion 17 and 2017 Motion 4)**.

UNISON's LGBT Committee produced guidance for UNISON members working overseas that was updated and circulated to branches in April 2017. **(2016 Motion 10)** In response to **2017 Motion 10** a branch circular was issued that promoted UNISON's transgender guidance and UNISON's guide for activists supporting transgender members in the workplace.

A circular on equality rights in relation to collective bargaining was issued to branches in August 2017. This highlighted best practice in entrenching collective bargaining in workplaces that fall within the higher education service group. Branches were encouraged to support and promote self-organisation and young member's organisation. A workshop at UNISON's branch seminar in November 2017 facilitated by Professor Candy Rowe from Newcastle university explored "The Business Case for Equality" **(2016 Motion 13)**.

Over 1200 HE members took part in UNISON's 2017 Equality Survey. The results were considered by the HESGE in September 2017. UNISON's higher education social media actively promoted information from self organised groups and young members.

In response to **2016 Motion 14** UNISON's Bargaining Support Group issued guidance on age discrimination and the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act where they apply. This was circulated to branches in March 2017. A branch circular dealing with mental health issues affecting older workers was produced and circulated to branches in December 2017.

In response to **2017 Motion 5** a letter was sent to Universities UK and UCEA in March 2017 seeking assurances that both organisations will support the right to remain for EU citizens in the UK following the UK exit from the EU. UNISON issued a guide for branches on this topic that was circulated to branches.

9. Higher Education Policy

UNISON produced responses to government consultations. UNISON lobbied members of the House of Lords and produced parliamentary briefings. UNISON's commitment to an end of tuition fees and the reintroduction of student grants was contained in UNISON's submission to the consultation on the Higher Education and Research Act. UNISON worked with Labour Link during 2017 to ensure that UNISON's voice is heard at all parliamentary levels. UNISON briefed all Labour MP's in relation to the Higher Education and Research Bill. UNISON was mentioned by Gordon Marsden MP and thanked for its work during the passage of the Bill through Parliament.

UNISON submitted a response to the Diamond review's call for evidence on Higher education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales in October 2017 (**2017 Motion 1**). UNISON continued to lobby the Scottish parliament and contributed to the Code of Conduct for Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance.

UNISON continued to campaign for fair and equal access to higher education. UNISON's policy of a fully funded education system with no tuition fees for students wanting to access higher education was promoted via social media. UNISON promoted the People's Assembly demonstration held in Manchester in October 2017 and the TUC Lobby of Parliament held the same month. UNISON's HE branch seminar looked at the future for higher education policy and Dr Andrew McGettigan delivered a keynote speech on "What next for HE?"

10. UNISON HE Members and Reps Require Improved Mental Health Support

2017 Motion 2 highlighted the problems of mental health facing members working in higher education. Mental health as a bargaining issue is a key priority for UNISON and is being considered across all service groups to provide a union wide approach. The topic was covered at UNISON's higher education branch seminar in Belfast in November 2017, with a keynote speech from Tracey Ayton Harding, UNISON's Head of health and safety. Workshops on the topic enabled further discussion at the event. UNISON's Guarding against Stress toolkit was circulated to branches in December 2017.

11. Workplace Bullying

In line with **2017 Motion 3** examples of good practice from higher education branches on policies and procedures to tackle workplace bullying were collated. A circular will be produced in 2018.

12. Against Xenophobic divisions in our universities and communities.

In March 2017 UNISON wrote to UUK and UCEA seeking assurances and support from the sector in relation EU workers in the UK. Following this the higher education trade unions and UCEA issued a joint statement on the issue EU workers in higher education. Further work will take place in 2018 alongside UNISON's International Policy Unit **2017 Motion 5**.

13. Student Unions and student workers

The HESGE considered improving engagement with staff employed by student unions in line with **2016 Motion 9**. A survey was circulated to student union employed staff and branches. The results of the survey were collated and will inform guidance for branches. The UNISON rule book clearly defines the remit for eligibility of membership for those members in education and identified which student workers can join the union. (C Membership 2.3.3 and 2.5)

In line with **2016 Motion 17** a meeting is being organised the NUS to identify further joint working with the NUS in 2018.

14. Fair Annual Leave

The HESGE requested information via the annual Freedom of Information request in line with **2015 Motion 15** to establish annual leave entitlements across the sector. The information received was circulated to regions and some branches. Examples of branches that have been successful in negotiating changes to annual leave have been identified via an information exchange and this will be compiled in guidance for branches to negotiate improvements with their employers.

13. Member-led democracy

In accordance with **2017 Motion 13** the SGE continued to co-ordinate with sister trade unions UCU, Unite, GMB and EIS during pay negotiations. A full branch consultation took place once a full and final offer was received from the employers. The SGE took the decision to accept the offer based on the branch consultation responses. The full numerical breakdown of votes on significant issues such as pay is recorded in the SGE minutes. The SGE minutes are circulated to branches.

14. University wholly owned subsidiary companies

2016 Motion 12 called for the SGE to raise awareness about the implications of arms length companies in the sector. A survey has been drafted that will be issued to branches in 2018. Further research to identify the extent of arms length companies in the sector will be carried out in 2018. A fringe meeting "Private contractors in higher education" was held at higher education conference in March 2017.

15. The future HE Service Group within the union.

In line with **2017 Motion 16** NEC reps have been mandated to put forward the SGE policy position at all meetings where this issue is discussed. A member of the FE Committee attends the HE SGE as an observer and the HE SGE send an observer to the FE Committee.

16. HE Pay Ballot for strike action Sept 2016

Full details of the progression and decisions reached during pay negotiations 2016/17 were provided in the annual report 2016/17 that was accepted by Conference in March 2017. The SGE responded to issues raised by conference by implementing a number of actions in order

to ensure better communication of decisions to branches and members. A full breakdown of branch consultation results was issued to branches in July 2017. In addition, the minutes of the SGE are circulated to branches. The SGE considered the implications for future ballots and is exploring the option of conducting an online member ballot to consult on the outcome of the 2018/19 pay negotiations.

2017 Motion 17 also called for an independent review to take place. The SGE referred the issue to the Director of the Executive Office. An outcome of the review is pending.

17. Timing of HE Conference

2017 Motion 18 called for HE Conference to be moved to January from 2018.

Section C

UNISON Objective 3: Develop our public service campaigns in support of quality public services, in defence of the NHS, Education, Local Government, Social Care, Police and all public services, building our political influence, forging alliances with unions, appropriate campaigning and community groups to challenge the austerity programme, including challenging the attacks on the welfare state. To campaign for the election of governments in Westminster, and the devolved nations, and councils which value public services and working people, rejecting the arguments of the Tory government and all far right parties.

20. Funding/Redundancies/Cuts

20.1 Funding

In February 2017 the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) set out its position on the public funding of universities in England 2017-18. This signaled the proposed changes that were enacted following the passing of the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) in May 2017, prior to the general election. HERA established the Office for Students (OfS) as the new funding and regulatory body for England. Funding responsibilities will transfer to the OfS from April 2018.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) had a total of £3,168 million to distribute for the 2017-18 financial year, slightly lower than the previous year. BIS restated that it expected that income the sector earns from fees would increase as a direct result of the removal of student number controls in to around £9bn in 2017-18.

The BIS grant letter re-emphasised the government aims of funding an additional 1,500 additional medical school places from September 2018. There was reference to the first phase of the Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund and continuing support from HEFCE to HEI's moving towards becoming apprenticeship providers.

The government Spending Review settlement included ring-fenced funding for Science and Research and related training through to 2019-20. Jo Johnson's also referred to the impact of exiting the European Union and acknowledged the 'crucial contribution' overseas students and staff make to UK universities. The Autumn Statement delivered in November 2017 announced the governments 'Industrial Strategy' but it was not clear how this will affect the higher education sector.

The funding letter made reference to restraint in senior pay and stated its 'concern' about the 'substantial upwards drift' of salaries of some senior management and urged for 'greater restraint.' Events in November and December 2017 saw a number of senior managers at Bath, Bath Spa, Southampton and Birmingham universities have their pay and perks highlighted in the media as it appeared to be at odds with this stated requirement.

2017 saw the Welsh government respond to the Diamond and Hazelcorn reviews. In June 2017 the Welsh Government announced that it would allocate £99.3 million of public funding to universities for 2017-18 academic year. This was a reduction of around £27 million from 2016-17. In its funding letter the Welsh Government confirmed it intends to implement the recommendations from the Diamond review in 2018-19. It also confirmed that the Higher Education Funding for Cymru Wales (HEFCW) can expect future financial settlements to increase for the lifetime of the current Assembly Government.

The Scottish Funding Council announced a total of £1,012 million in funding for Scottish universities was announced for 2017-18 covering 19 universities. This figure remained broadly unchanged from 2016-17. The Scottish Funding Council noted that the Scottish Government's plans to almost double the entitlement to free childcare by 2020 will require a substantial increase in the childcare workforce specifically more 'manager' level staff for this sector. Funding for an additional 270 part-time / work based BS Childhood Practice students across 7 universities was announced. The Scottish Funding Council announcement reaffirmed that from AY 2017-18, full-time Taught Postgraduate (TPG) students will have access to loans of up to £10,000, for tuition fees of up to £5,500 and £4,500 living costs.

At the time of writing the Chancellor's Autumn Statement announced an increase in funding for Northern Ireland, but how this will affect the block grant funding for universities was unclear.

20.2 Cuts and Redundancies

UNISON branches around the UK have been involved in many local campaigns against local cuts and redundancies. A detail of UNISON's other numerous local campaigns are outlined in the regional reports.

21. National Union of Students

UNISON worked closely with the NUS in 2017 on a range of issues. These include Living Wage campaigns on campus and the consultation on the Higher Education and Research Bill. UNISON and NUS continued to work together on issues affecting young people (**2016 Motion 9 and 17**).

Section D

UNISON Objective 4: Ensure that the union's structures including organisational, lay member, ICT infrastructure and internal management systems and the distribution of our

resources are accessible, efficient and effective to meet the changing needs of all sections of the union and its members

22. Branch Seminar

The HESGE organised the branch seminar in 2017 in Belfast. The seminar opened with a panel future of higher education. A number of speakers including Donna Rowe-Merriman, UNISON head of higher education, Dan Beard (SGE) and Kath Owen (NEC) outlined key policy areas facing the sector. Practical workshops supported by HESGE members covering a range of topics took place including: supporting members with mental health issues, pensions, building the business case for equality and effective political campaigning. A keynote speech from Amy Hulme Policy Director of the Living Wage Foundation outlined the need for more accredited employers in the sector.

23. Higher Education Conference 2017

There were a number of key equality messages arising from Conference 2017 highlighting the need to address wide ranging equality issues that affected our members. This included exploring ways of supporting members with mental health conditions and championing the work place rights of transgender workers. Conference expressed the need to ensure that decent pay is at the top of the bargaining agenda and the need to better communicate with branches and members was clear.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE 2016 – 18

Region	HESGE Representative
Eastern	Margaret Meredith, Cathy Yearsley
East Midlands	Anne Kilker
Greater London	Susan Parkin
Northern	Lorraine Brown, Denise Ward
Northern Ireland	Vacant
North West	Andrew Beech, Linda Holden
Scotland	Margaret McParland, Davena Rankin
South East	Adrian Dolby, Sarah Pickett
South West	Mike Hines
Cymru / Wales	Dan Beard, Charlie Bull
West Midlands	Matthew Raine, Amelia Rout
Yorkshire & Humberside	Vacant
NEC	Kath Owen, Sandy Nicholl

Single Pay Spine for HE Academic Support Staff 2017 / 18

Spine Point	£'s from 1/8/16	£'s from 1/8/17 (deleted 1/4/17)
1	14767	
2	15052	15417
3	15356	15721
4	15670	16035
5	15976	16341
6	16289	16654
7	16618	16983
8	16961	17326
9	17399	17764
10	17898	18263
11	18412	18777
12	18940	19305
13	19485	19850
14	20046	20411
15	20624	20989
16	21220	21581
17	21843	22214
18	22494	22876
19	23164	23557
20	23879	24285
21	24565	24983
22	25289	25728
23	26052	26495
24	26829	27285
25	27629	28098
26	28452	28936
27	29301	29799
28	30175	30688
29	31076	31604
30	32004	32548
31	32958	33518
32	33943	34520
33	34956	35550
34	36001	36613
35	37075	37706
36	38183	38833
37	39324	39992
38	40523	41212
39	41709	42418
40	42995	43685
41	44240	44992
42	45562	46336
43	46924	47722
44	48327	49149

45	49722	50618
46	51260	52132
47	52793	53961
48	54372	55297
49	55998	56950
50	57674	58655
51	59400	60410

Spinal column point 1 deleted with effect from 1.4.17