



**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
UNISON HIGHER EDUCATION  
SERVICE GROUP  
2019**

## Introduction

Dear Members

A warm welcome to UNISON's Higher Education Service Group Conference 2020.

It has been a challenging year for the sector and our movement.

Following the implementation of the Trade Union Act, strong recruitment and strong organisation has become even more important for our future pay campaigns to be successful. Our industrial action ballot this year showed that, despite a significant majority of people voting to take action, we were prevented from doing so by the anti-union law that requires a minimum 50% turnout. At our annual seminar in November 2019, branches suggested ideas on how we might beat the threshold in the future. These will be considered by the Higher Education Service Group Executive (HESGE) when negotiating on pay in the coming years.

Despite the facility time challenges facing many activists in HE, branches and regions continue to work hard, supporting members and protecting terms and conditions of employment, whilst carrying out the will of conference. The HESGE will continue to work with branches and regions, and will develop a strong work programme to ensure that the decisions made at our conference are acted upon.

The 'Grovement' and May recruitment campaigns have been essential in building our membership and retaining UNISON's higher education members. We need to turn new members who may be joining on a "just in case" basis into activists, who see all of the benefits of being in a campaigning trade union.

As the Chair of the HESGE I can assure you that we have continued to push hard on issues affecting our members, such as getting employers to become accredited Living Wage employers. Pay restraint continues to be a major issue for HE staff, especially when compared to the soaring pay of many senior managers. The HESGE has also worked tirelessly to close the gender pay gap in the sector - women being paid less than men is an inequality that must be eradicated.

Higher education support staff should not be left behind. We are a significant and important group providing a first class service for students. Huge cuts to budgets have left us working harder for less, but our campaigns on behalf of our members will continue. UNISON maintains its position as the leading HE support staff union working in solidarity with our sister unions.

On behalf of the HESGE I want to say a special thank you for your unwavering support and commitment. We are stronger when we all work together in UNISON.



**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 2019 HE conference — with individual motions highlighted in bold.*

## HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE ANNUAL REPORT 2019

### Section A

#### UNISON Objective 1. Recruitment and organising

We aim to:

- Enhance our capability to recruit and retain members and meet the organising and representation challenges facing the union in the changing world of work.
- Ensure our union is relevant to all members who provide public services – including those who work in the community and private sectors.
- Identify and develop leadership from across the union, particularly among young members.
- Enhance our democracy by increasing and widening participation of our activists and members.

#### 1. Recruitment

**Table 1 Joiners by region 2019**

	YTD '17	YTD '18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	YTD '19
<b>Eastern</b>	197	245	20	25	37	15	12	30	25	34	30	32	<b>260</b>
<b>East Mids</b>	226	244	33	34	44	26	34	34	29	30	39	31	<b>334</b>
<b>Greater London</b>	749	862	80	78	115	98	120	83	97	105	94	120	<b>990</b>
<b>Northern</b>	181	195	12	22	19	34	42	13	23	14	32	43	<b>254</b>
<b>N.I.</b>	58	142	7	4	12	1	2	1	6	5	1	5	<b>44</b>
<b>North West</b>	445	429	28	59	61	65	43	48	57	41	49	40	<b>491</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	381	353	24	34	55	33	29	36	43	33	35	51	<b>373</b>
<b>South East</b>	404	440	55	51	71	50	48	54	35	23	40	48	<b>475</b>
<b>South West</b>	224	380	28	37	39	49	47	45	26	20	32	35	<b>358</b>
<b>Cymru/Wales</b>	264	179	29	40	23	15	16	20	16	13	22	31	<b>225</b>
<b>West Mids</b>	309	403	33	33	56	51	41	72	72	37	43	56	<b>494</b>
<b>Yorks &amp; Humber</b>	501	503	48	41	49	45	35	44	49	34	30	49	<b>424</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,939</b>	<b>4,375</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>4,722</b>

This table reflects the work of branch activists, members and regions in recruiting new members to the union. The Higher Education Service Group Executive<sup>1</sup> (HESGE) is provided with joiners and leavers statistics to inform their overall strategy and to reflect on the position of specific regions<sup>2</sup>. The HESGE considered recruitment trends across and within regions and over time. Discussions on recruitment and organisation also took place at a branch and regional level to devise regional strategies for growth and increasing density.

In 2019 there was a gain in UNISON's membership in higher education, with the majority of regions seeing a net increase in higher education (HE) members. Particular recruitment increases can be linked to the national industrial action ballots in September and October 2019, and the pay consultation in June 2019.

Regions and branches campaigned, organised and recruited around key local and national issues in university workplaces across the UK. In addition to national ballots there were local disputes in Yorkshire and Humberside, Scotland, Wales, the West Midlands and the North West, which showed that engaging members has a real impact. Branches were encouraged to ensure that recruitment and organising were a central part of their strategy during the pay consultations and industrial action ballot.

Supporting branches in recruiting, identifying and training activists and in branch organisation has been a continuing priority, which will continue in the HESGE work programme for 2020.

## **Section B**

### **UNISON Objective 2. Bargaining and equalities**

We aim to:

- Deliver increased funding for public services and secure real terms pay increases, improved terms and conditions, and high quality employment and pensions for UNISON members.
- Build confidence for industrial action when required, identify and support strategic industrial disputes at national and branch level and seek to co-ordinate action wherever possible.
- Promote equal pay and equality.
- Actively challenge all forms of discrimination including racism and sexism, discrimination against LGBT people, against disabled people, and discrimination based on age, religion or social class.
- Provide support to migrant workers.
- Promote UNISON's alternative economic strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> Full details of the HE SGE membership 2018-20 is found at the end of the report, Appendix One, p.29.

<sup>2</sup> The table on page 3 shows the joiners by region January to October 2019. The full leavers and joiners report is provided at the end of the Annual Report, Appendix Two, p.30.

## 2. Pay

### 2.1 Pay 2019/20

In 2019 UNISON worked with the four other HE unions to submit a joint pay claim that reflected UNISON's pay policy agreed at Higher Education conference January 2019 (**Motions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 11 and 17**).

Conference 2019 agreed that UNISON's approach to pay negotiations should seek to deliver fair pay for all staff and should catch up with pay lost over successive below inflation pay offers (**Motion 3**). HE conference voted for the unions' claim to focus on achieving more for the lowest paid, with a claim for at least £10 per hour (**Motion 6**).

In addition, UNISON's pay motion (**Motion 3**) called for: the introduction of a maximum 35 hour working week for all HE staff; the establishment of a Scottish Sub-Committee of New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) as set out under the New JNCHES Agreement; campaigns in the sector to eradicate the gender pay gap; work to highlight the ethnic pay gap and the impact of intersectionality on pay.

The HE unions worked together between January and March 2019 to review the previous year's pay negotiations and agree the approach to the coming pay round and a joint pay claim. Negotiations with the employer commenced in March with two further meetings in April. The unions also agreed an early pre-meeting with the employers in early March, following the submission of the heads of claim. The joint unions wanted to ensure that the employers could make an offer at the first meeting by setting out the key elements of the claim.

The full pay claim was lodged with the employers in March ahead of the first pay meeting. The heads of claim were:

- RPI plus 3% or a minimum increase of £3,349 (whichever is greater).
- £10 per hour to be the minimum rate of pay for directly employed staff and Foundation Living Wage the lowest wage to be paid on campus (i.e. by contractors). Restoration of the 3% differentials between spinal column points.
- To achieve a 35 hour working week for all staff working in universities.
- Action to close the gender pay gap, and to work on closing the ethnic pay gap, taking account of the ways in which intersectionality affects pay and grading.
- Agree a framework to eliminate precarious employment practices by universities. This includes the ending of zero hours contracts and moving hourly paid staff onto fractional contracts; outsourced staff to be brought in-house to direct university employment.
- Nationally-agreed payment to recognise excessive workloads. UCEA to recommend the adoption and implementation of the Stress Management Standards approach (or suitable equivalent system) incorporating collaborative working with recognised trade unions on agreed action plans.
- To establish the Scottish Sub-Committee of New JNCHES as set out under the New JNCHES Agreement. The main purpose of the sub-committee would be to deal with matters not currently being dealt with at the New JNCHES Committee.

In line with **Motions 3 and 6** the pay claim highlighted senior leader and Vice Chancellor pay levels and increases. The claim incorporated strong and clear arguments on the need to address low pay and ensure that £10 per hour would be the minimum pay rate.

The HESGE decided to launch the pay campaign early so that branches could be ready for the pay consultation and any potential action. To this end, a pay leaflet was launched in February and re-circulated to all branches in early March ahead of pay talks. The leaflet asked branches and members to update their details on UNISON's membership system in readiness for any consultation.

At the first pay meeting the unions presented the claim and made a strong and clear case for staff to receive a decent pay rise. The employers' opening offer stated that there was a pay 'envelope' of 1.3% to cover all elements of the claim. No offer was made for other elements of the claim. The unions made it clear that the opening offer fell far short of what was expected or acceptable, and that the offer did not begin to address the pay-related elements of the claim.

At the second pay meeting, held in April, the employers responded to other elements of the claim and made an increased pay offer of 1.5% for all spinal column points (SCPs) over SCP 12 and 2.5% for SCPs 2 to 8. An offer regarding the gender and ethnic pay gap called on the unions and universities to encourage staff to provide their protected characteristics so they could be recorded. The employers did not make an offer on the other elements of the claim: 35 hour week; precarious employment and outsourcing; workloads and stress. The employers stated that these matters were outside national bargaining and that they did not have a remit to make a significant offer on them. No offer was made in relation to the Scottish JNCHES sub-committee.

Again the trade unions made it clear that this offer was insufficient and did not address the serious and widespread issues of pay inequality, workload and precarious employment in the sector. The unions made it clear that a significantly improved offer would need to be made at the final pay meeting.

At the final pay negotiation meeting on the 30 April 2019 the unions emphasised that the employers needed to make a meaningful offer. The employers made a final offer: to delete SCP 2; to increase pay by 3.65% on SCP 3, reducing the percentage down to 1.82% on SCP 16; and to increase pay by 1.8% on all other spinal column points, i.e. SCP 17 and above<sup>3</sup>.

On the pay gap element of the claim, the employers offered to commit to jointly seek examples of how employers are working to close their ethnicity pay gaps. The aim would be to produce a joint report sharing learning across the sector.

In relation to casualisation and precarious working the employers offered to produce a joint report based on a joint examination of the data in the HESA Staff Collection on 'zero hours' and 'hourly-paid' employees. The employer offered to encourage local discussions with a view to reducing the use of zero hours contracts, where this had

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<sup>3</sup> For full details of the final pay offer in relation to the pay spine see Appendix Three, p.31.

not already taken place. The employer also proposed that the parties make a joint statement on the value of maintaining a full, compulsory HESA staff record. No offer was made in respect of outsourced workers.

The employers offered to promote the Stress and Mental Wellbeing resources pack jointly with the trade unions for universities to consider. Additionally, they proposed that the sector-level health and safety forum (HESH) should take a role in refreshing and adding to the material in this pack. That would include seeking good practice case studies to share with sector employers.

In relation to the Scottish JNCHES sub-committee the employer offered that the New JNCHES autumn general meeting be used to take a report on sector-level developments in the devolved nations.

No offer was made on the thirty five hour week or in relation to outsourcing.

The unions made clear their huge disappointment at the final offer which fell far below the claim. HE branches were informed of the final offer and the offer documents were posted on the UNISON website.

UNISON's HESGE met on 7 May 2019 to consider the employers' final offer. The committee agreed to consult members with a recommendation that they reject the pay offer. This was in line with a decision taken at UNISON's 2019 HE Conference to recommend rejection of any offer that did not meet the claim. The committee agreed to run the pay consultation using an online consultation, enabling members to be consulted via email and text message. Branches were provided with leaflets, posters, PowerPoint presentations and a video. Additionally, an online interactive map on low pay and vice chancellor pay was updated and an online salary loss calculator provided (**Motion 17**).

The consultation ran from 22 May until 1 July 2019 and branches were encouraged to organise and recruit throughout. Any new members who joined by 17 June 2019 could vote in the consultation. The outcome of the consultation was considered by the HESGE on 4 July 2019. The turnout in the consultation was 40% and members voted by 67% to reject the pay offer and to move to an industrial action ballot. On the basis of this outcome the HESGE lodged a dispute with the employers and moved towards an industrial action ballot.

The JNCHES disputes procedure was triggered by UNISON and the other four HE unions. Two dispute meetings were held with the employers in July 2019. They did not result in any substantial improvement to the final offer.

The HESGE agreed to call for a strike ballot (HE conference policy allows for only one question to be on the ballot paper) and for this ballot to be coordinated with sister trade unions as far as possible. After a lengthy discussion on the type of ballot that should be called, the HESGE voted by 9 votes to 8 votes to request a national aggregated ballot. The SGE agreed to seek to coordinate campaigns with the other trade unions.

Branches were asked to cleanse membership records throughout July and August. Materials, overseen by the HESGE pay campaign group, were produced including a joint union leaflet on vote 'Yes' for strike action on pay.

The HESGE met on 28 August 2019 to review progress. 138 employers were listed in the ballot covering England, Scotland and Wales. The ballot started on 9 September and closed on 30 October 2019 - a ballot period of over seven weeks. Different legislation meant that a separate ballot was held for the three employers in Northern Ireland. This ran to a slightly different timetable with the ballot closing five days later, to ensure that action could be taken together. The plans of sister HE unions were noted and UNISON sought to work in close cooperation with them **(Motion 17)**: UCU's ballot opened and closed on exactly the same days; Unite's ballot opened a couple of weeks later than UNISON's; EIS' ballot opened a week later than UNISON; GMB ran three local ballots within one region on a different timescale.

It was noted that UCEA had written to HEIs recommending that they impose the offer. The HESGE expressed outrage at this attempt to undermine the ballot. UNISON produced a branch circular with a letter for branches to send to employers and another one for members, where imposition had occurred.

UNISON sent dispute notices to employers in August. No significant challenges to the ballot were received. UNISON Centre and regional staff liaised closely throughout the seven week ballot period. Considerable efforts were put into supporting branches by most regions. Regions were provided with a phone bank script, and many regions and branches ran phone banks to contact their members. A communications strategy was developed in July 2019 to ensure that members received regular reminders to vote from UNISON Centre in addition to branches.

### **Industrial ballot result – 30 October 2019**

Number of individuals who were entitled to vote in the ballot **25,523**

Number of votes cast in the ballot **7,359**

Votes cast in the ballot as a % of individuals who were entitled to vote **28.8%**

Question: Are you prepared to take part in strike action?

Number of spoilt or otherwise invalid voting papers returned 7

#### **Result of Voting**

**Yes 4,815 65.5%**

**No 2,537 34.5%**

The HESGE met on 5 November 2019 to consider the results. It was noted that the ballot had not reached the legal threshold necessary to take industrial action under the 2016 Trade Union Act. The industrial action ballot in Northern Ireland finished on 5 November and whilst there was a 100% yes vote the turnout was very low. The HESGE were informed that in around a third of HE employers UCU had passed the industrial action threshold and would be proceeding to take strike action. The HESGE issued a statement noting UNISON's increased vote in favour of taking strike action,

the iniquity of the Trade Union Act, and that UNISON would not settle the dispute on pay whilst a sister trade union was taking strike action.

At the HE branch seminar in November delegates discussed the outcome of the ballot, considered and shared lessons learned and made suggestions for future pay campaigns. UCU also addressed the seminar on their campaign.

The autumn meeting of New JNCHES was cancelled as the trade unions remain in dispute.

The HESGE is due to meet on 16 January 2020 to discuss next steps.

## **2.2 Pay 2020/21**

In early 2020 the trade union side of New JNCHES will meet to consider the content of the 2020/21 claim. The first pay negotiating meeting of JNCHES is scheduled to take place on 31 March 2020.

The HE SGE pay motion submitted to HE Conference 2020 seeks an increase of the retail price index (RPI) + 5% on all salary scale points, and to achieve a minimum hourly rate of £10 an hour for all staff.

## **3. JNCHES Working Groups**

### **3.1 Strategic Conference**

The annual JNCHES Strategic Conference took place in March 2019. The conference heard reports on: the economy and pay trends; the HE perspective of Brexit; the Augar review and its impact on HE; developments in the higher education sector across the UK.

### **3.2 Hourly Paid and Casual Hours Working Group**

Following the unions registering concerns about the credibility and value of UCEA's reporting on variable hours and fixed term staff in the sector, no further joint meetings took place.

### **3.3 Gender Pay Gap Working Group**

The unions registered concerns about the employers' lack of willingness to share data that they had collected, despite the fact they would have had full access to the data collected by the trade union side. The trade unions questioned the credibility and value of any joint work in this area due to fundamental differences.

The union side fully committed to tackling the gender pay gap and met in January 2019 to progress work. A survey was sent out to branches of all five unions and the group met again in June 2019. The responses remain under review as the project was put on hold during the industrial action ballot.

#### 4. Living Wage

UNISON continued to name and shame HEI's that refused to pay the Foundation Living Wage to HE workers across the UK (**2015 Motion 12**). Universities and colleges should be amongst the most progressive employers in the country, but often are not. The 2019/20 pay offer increased the lowest spinal column point to £9.02 per hour (SCP 2) from 1 August 2019, but only for those employees on a 35 hour working week. When SCP 2 is deleted in April 2020 the minimum hourly rate will rise to £9.20 per hour for 35 hour week staff.

The Foundation Living Wage rate was £9.00 per hour until November 2019, and then revised upwards to £9.30 across the UK and £10.75 in London. This means that the lowest paid HE staff are below the Living Wage Foundation rate.

Branches continued successful local Living Wage campaigns by working with local student and community groups. In 2019 the University of South Wales, Liverpool University, University of Bath were among universities that committed to applying for Living Wage Foundation accreditation.

#### 5. FE and 6th Form Colleges

The HESGE sends a delegate to the Further Education (FE) Committee.

In England UNISON and the UCU submitted a pay claim for 5% or £1,500 to FE employers in July 2019. The Association of Colleges had initially refused to accept a pay claim, after an outline of the claim was submitted at a national joint forum officers' meeting on 1 May. A firm response from the FE unions saw the AoC reverse its decision. The claim also called for the Living Wage Foundation rates to be the minimum wage in the sector, with all FE colleges in England to become accredited living wage employers.

The FE colleges' National Joint Forum met on 11 November 2019 to receive a pay recommendation from the employers. Despite announcements from the Department for Education that an extra £400 million would be injected into the sector in August 2020, the pay offer was only "1% or £250 (whichever is the greater)" with an explanation that any college that could afford more should do so and that some colleges would not be able to award even that. This will be consulted on with a recommendation to reject. As part of the consultation, UNISON's FE Committee has asked that a working group be set up to discuss how to pursue industrial action other than strike action.

In Cymru/Wales the employers offered a pay award of 2.75% to virtually all staff (new teachers will get more). This award will be funded by the devolved government. The joint trade unions believe this is a good offer that will be accepted by members in the upcoming consultation.

In Scotland a job evaluation process covering all FE colleges, is being finalised with pay negotiations to resume in January 2020. In 2019 a national Scottish FE branch was launched bringing all FE college members into one UNISON branch.

## 6. Pensions

### 6.1 Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

The last LGPS scheme valuations showed a marked reduction in the cost of the benefits due to lower wage growth and longevity improvements trailing off since 2010. Improvements due to come in from April 2019 for LGPS England and Wales would have seen contributions reduced for the lowest paid and the removal of the tier 3 ill health retirement provision. However, the government halted all improvements when they lost the age discrimination cases brought by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and Judges (McCloud and Sargeant). The cases could mean a significant increase in cost to the employers if all members are given the same protection.

University contributions continued to increase due to the perceived risk of them getting into financial difficulties. UNISON continued to oppose attempts by universities to set up arms length companies to avoid offering the LGPS to directly employed staff. A reduction in the rate used to set employer contributions significantly increased employers' contributions to the Teachers Pension Scheme, increasing cost pressures.

UNISON worked with LGPS reps and Board members, advising that fund actuaries should make realistic assumptions as cautious assumptions have a significant impact on scheme costs.

UNISON strongly opposed a government consultation in May 2019 to allow Post 92 HE institutions, Sixth Form Colleges and FE Colleges in England to offer different pension arrangements for new staff instead of the LGPS. Such schemes would be cheaper for the employer and offer considerably worse benefits for members. UNISON ran a campaign targeting MPs and submitted a detailed response to the consultation. Hundreds of members and branches took part in the campaign (**2019 Motions 9, 10, composite B**). Our opposition to the proposal has contributed to the shelving of the proposals for the time being, but the threat remains.

### 6.2 Local Schemes

UNISON continued to support branches across the country where local pension schemes were under further attack. For example at Bangor University the trade union side saw off proposed detrimental changes.

### 6.3 Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) 2018

In January 2018, the university employers moved to end all defined benefits in the USS and make the scheme a defined contribution scheme.

UCU had a series of strikes in the spring 2018 over these proposals and UNISON had commenced balloting members in the scheme for strike action. Following the industrial action, and threats of further action, the proposal to close the defined

benefit scheme was withdrawn. Instead, in April it was agreed to establish a Joint Expert Panel (JEP) to review the valuation of the scheme.

In March 2019 the HESGE made a submission to the JEP on the governance of the USS. The submission highlighted the way in which we felt the interests of support staff had not been properly represented in the governance of the scheme. We called for representation of the support staff members of the scheme on both the board and joint negotiating committee.

During 2018 the JEP concluded that it would be possible to continue with the benefit structure if employer and employee contributions were increased from 26% of pay to 29.1%. Following an employer consultation and further meetings it was expected that the USS would propose significant increases to employee contributions. UNISON fed into discussions highlighting the potential impact on lower paid members.

The HE SGE decided at its meeting on 4 July 2019 to run a consultation on USS once final proposals to increase contributions were known. The SGE also agreed that UNISON should write to USS, UCU and UUK about protecting the lowest paid scheme members. USS did not make a final decision on contribution increases, at their meeting in July. The HESGE therefore carried out a consultation of members on the general principle of any increases. UNISON branches affected were asked to consult with their USS members as to whether they would accept increases in contributions or if they would be prepared to take strike action to oppose increases.

65% of members who took part in the consultation voted to reject any increases and to be balloted for strike action. The HESGE proceeded to ballot UNISON USS members in relevant employers where at least five UNISON members were in USS - a total of 43 universities - from 9 September until 30 October 2019.

The results saw six universities meet the legal requirement and achieve a turnout of more than 50% of members. In November, the HESGE decided that nine branches where the turnout was between 40% and 50% should be asked if they wished to be re-balloted. UNISON will be re-balloting and coordinating any strike action with UCU in the New Year.

UNISON continues to make representations to USS, UUK and UCU that support staff members, via UNISON, should be represented in the USS decision making structure and that the contribution structure should be revised to make it more affordable for lower paid members.

## **7. Devolved Nations and Regions**

### **7.1 Northern Ireland**

The University of Ulster once again announced their intention to tender the contract covering support services and catering in 2019. NOONANS, who previously had the contract for cleaning, portering and security, successfully secured the contract for another three years. However, due to the lack of interested providers, the tender for catering services was not awarded and remains with the current provider. The Ulster University Students Union catering provision was also due to go out to tender, but

there has been a commitment to UNISON that staff will remain in-house and investment has been made to encourage students to use the facilities.

UNISON's HE membership in Northern Ireland has shifted more to the private sector, however, we remain committed to campaigning for services to return back in-house. As part of the recent negotiations, we were successful in bringing receptionists across four campuses back onto university terms and conditions.

The new Belfast Campus for the Ulster University was delayed by another three years to 2022 amid disputes and legal action against building firms. Employees affected by the move have remained in their current location.

St Mary's University College's renewed its religious affirmative action plan, which has been reviewed and revised following an Article 55 review. The College has a significant under-representation of staff, applicants and appointees from the protestant community and so the university is required to implement an affirmative action plan to address that. Progress will continue to be slow because turnover is very low (4%). The plan would reaffirm a commitment to promote St Mary's as an equal opportunities employer. UNISON welcomed the decision to employ catering services staff in St Mary's College on a permanent basis instead of the ongoing casual contracts.

## **7.2 Scotland**

A series of poor funding settlements from the Scottish government, employer nervousness around Brexit, competitive dynamics in UK higher education and an enduring lack of management respect for the value of professional and support services staff, means support staff in HE continue to be unfairly squeezed.

While there is variation between institutions, most branches continue to fight a rearguard battle to protect jobs, workloads and grading through the endless churn of restructures and service reviews. This has been a battle not just over substance but over process. Too many HE employers want to bypass local negotiators by protected conversations and various forms of 'managing out'. This is a recurring item for discussion at the Scottish HE service group, where branches compare notes on effective tactics and share best (and worst) practice from around the country.

While the UK-wide ballot on pay fell short of the mandatory 50% turnout threshold, Scotland continued to be a strong performer. The regional committee has had a healthy discussion on what needs to be done to get over the line next time.

On a brighter note, campus operations members at Queen Margaret University successfully fought off an attempt to outsource security, facilities and grounds members. After a long campaign, members notified the employer of strike dates after securing a 100% yes vote on a 75% turnout in their industrial action ballot. While the group of members involved is small, this dispute shows again that the anti-Trade Union Act can be beaten.

At the conclusion of the UK pay round, branches will begin work on the long-trailed campaign for a Scottish Standard on local terms and conditions (**Motion 7**).

Branches have worked together to compile a charter based on best practice, which will seek to combine long-term, branch-based campaigning with high-level lobbying to improve local conditions, for example on annual leave or unsocial hours pay, to at least as good as those won by UNISON Scottish FE colleagues. This will be taken up as our priority campaign. A good deal of preparatory work and strategic planning has been carried out on **Motion 7** in 2019. We will seek to progress high level Fair Work agreements and institutional Fair Work action plans in tandem with fellow HE unions working first through the Universities Scotland forum.

### 7.3 Cymru/Wales

Over the past year there have been redundancies at Bangor University, Cardiff University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). Bangor University planned £5 million in cuts, resulting in the loss of approximately sixty jobs, down from the planned 170 jobs in 2018. The university said that the cuts were necessary because of debts for borrowing more than £133 million for “land, property and equipment”. A 747% increase in interest and finance costs means that the university “needs to generate around £10m of excess cash per year to service this debt”.

Cardiff University planned to cut 380 posts over five years to address a £20 million deficit. It offered all 7,000 staff voluntary severance, but did not rule out compulsory redundancy. The University is aiming for a £24m surplus in two years time. In the event, nowhere near the numbers needed took voluntary severance although professional services staff took a big hit. Whilst it has gone very quiet, there is still a lot of uncertainty amongst staff.

The University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) lost more than one hundred jobs to save £6.5 million a year. The university accepted 94 applications for voluntary redundancy, and made a further 16 staff compulsorily redundant.

The University of South Wales became the fourth University in Wales to become an accredited Living Wage Foundation employer. The other three are Aberystwyth University, UWSTD and Cardiff University. Universities such as Swansea University do pay the Living Wage, as required by the Welsh Government’s ‘Code of Practice – Ethical Employment in Supply Chains’, but refuse to become accredited.

Four senior staff were suspended from Swansea University in 2018, including the Vice-Chancellor and the Dean of the School of Management. These related to plans for a £200m wellness village at Llanelli. The Welsh Government suspended the deal and following an internal investigation the university dismissed both employees for gross misconduct.

UNISON achieved a victory when Bangor University abandoned plans to cut the pensions entitlements of support workers by 12%. The local Bangor pension scheme for all support and ancillary staff is run by eight trustees, four appointed by the employer and four nominated by the members. Bangor’s higher paid staff are members of USS. UNISON celebrated a tremendous victory, by tapping into a strong sense of injustice amongst support staff who responded in droves to the University consultation that the proposed changes were unjust and unfair.

The University of South Wales started taking steps to remove the LGPS via the use of a wholly owned subsidiary, which would employ all future staff and would not offer the LGPS, to get around the legal requirement as a scheduled body to offer the LGPS to staff. This would be replaced by a far inferior defined contribution scheme. UNISON is concerned that this could cause a domino effect with the other post-92 Universities in Wales. UNISON will be challenging the employer on this.

Governance has been a key issue for UNISON HE in Wales over the past year (**Motion 5**). The executive boards of universities in Wales are set for a democratic overhaul following a decision by Welsh Labour conference in April. Delegates passed a UNISON-sponsored motion calling on the Welsh Government to ensure governing bodies are more diverse. This includes elected Chairs and mandatory student and staff representatives. UNISON argued that greater democracy would prevent universities treating support staff as second-class employees.

The motion called upon Welsh Labour to implement the democratisation of Universities and Colleges in Wales and reform governance arrangements by:

- banning beneficiaries from sitting on remuneration committees
- chairs of Boards/Courts to be directly elected by the staff and student bodies
- trade union and student union governors representation to be mandatory
- ensuring more diverse governing bodies in universities which reflect the wider community

## 7.4 South East

The South East Higher Education Committee met three times in 2019 and continued its work encouraging branches to prioritise recruitment and retention throughout the year. The sector led the region, with an overall year-on-year growth in membership in the HE sector of almost 5% compared to 2018.

Branches engaged proactively with the union's two 'Go For Growth' periods in March and November and organised a variety of events and initiatives to promote UNISON membership. As a result, almost all the region's HE branches have exceeded their annual recruitment targets. The University of Sussex and University of Surrey branches have been particularly impressive growing their overall memberships by over 17% in 2019.

The majority of campaigning work in 2019 focused on the industrial action ballots over pay and changes to the USS pension scheme. Branches pulled out all the stops and worked hard to reach the 50% turnout required in these industrial action ballots, with considerable support from staff across the region. A detailed communications and campaigning plan was put together by the regional HE committee to deliver the maximum turnout possible. Key elements included the most well organised branches undertaking their own phone-banking activity. Targeted phone-banking took place with regional support to increase participation in areas of low turnout. A large number of events, stalls, walk rounds, desk-drops and open meetings to build support for the campaigns took place at campuses across the region. A series of emails were sent to HE members in the region reminding them to vote. Organisers further supported branch activity around the region including meeting staff at the start and end of the

day at many universities, undertaking floor walks, delivering presentations, and supporting member meetings throughout the ballot period.

Because of the extremely high cost of living in Oxford, the Oxford University branch developed strong links with the Oxford Living Wage campaign and saw some success in encouraging all university colleges to become accredited as paying the Oxford Living Wage.

## **7.5 North West**

For the twelve university branches in the North West region, this year, as with previous years, has been extremely busy and challenging due to continued attacks on members' terms and conditions, redundancies, continual restructures, increasing workloads and stress.

The majority of this year has been spent on campaigning around pay, with branches actively engaged in the consultation and the industrial action ballots, with local newsletters, social media, telephone work, and organising members' meetings. This has had a positive impact on recruitment figures for HE in the North West region and is something that the Regional HE Committee will continue to prioritise next year, in addition to working on increasing the number of activists through targeted steward recruitment campaigns.

On a positive point, the University of Manchester became an accredited Foundation Living Wage employer and the University of Liverpool recently announced their intention to seek accreditation.

The committee met regularly throughout the year, including extra meetings to discuss pay and organise campaigning events.

Looking forward to 2020/21, the HE Regional Committee will review the way in which it organises, linking with North West Further Education Committee to identify, highlight and campaign around issues that affect all members working in both sectors. The HE Committee has recognised that there are many common areas of interest including pay, equalities, funding, fees, and competition between institutions. In addition, the impact of marketisation of post-18 education is resulting in a significant number of HE courses being delivered in FE colleges. This has resulted in greater competition whilst further blurring the boundaries of post-18 education delivery. The committee hopes to deliver a special seminar in the North West region to discuss these issues and how we can organise, recruit and campaign using our collective strength.

## **7.6 West Midlands**

It has been a difficult year for the West Midlands region to provide support to all HE branches due to circumstances beyond our control. On a positive note, the region has appointed a new Regional Organiser who will solely be responsible for providing much needed support to HE branches who have found themselves under increasing

pressure at a local level. Even with these difficulties, we have functioned and the regional Higher Education Committee met throughout 2019.

At the University of Birmingham low paid support staff took six months of industrial action to secure an improved pay award for 2019/20, resulting in a 4.85% increase backdated to 1 August 2019 for the lowest paid. In Staffordshire University discussions continue to seek improvements to the university's support staff pension scheme. At Coventry University members worked under protest to improve and defend conditions of service when they were transferred to a wholly owned subsidiary company set up by the University.

The HE work programme for 2019 was very much the same as in other regions with a focus on the pay consultation and industrial action ballot. Despite the challenges, all the HE branches in the region continue to recruit new members into the union at a steady rate. For example, Coventry University had a particularly successful year recruiting at an average rate of over 10% per month, leading them to win the regional recruitment award.

In 2020 the region is looking forward to putting into action a much needed massive branch development programme in conjunction with our HE branches.

## **7.7 Yorkshire and Humberside**

2019 was an intense year for the eleven HE branches with ongoing programmes of reorganisation, restructures and redundancies. This is largely due to a genuine squeeze on funding but also ideological agendas including Brexit, the decline in student numbers, and competitive marketisation in the chase for more and more students.

Hull University announced savings of £25m for 2019 / 20 largely through staffing costs with a real risk to 1 in 4 jobs. The university is genuinely struggling to find its niche and remain competitive - although the strategy appears to be to save money rather than work out what the university should look like going forward. There have been, as yet no compulsory redundancies, but plenty of colleagues have gone through voluntary measures. The local branch representatives entered into discussions to pause the implementation of the pay offer with express commitments this would not lead to removing themselves from national pay bargaining.

The region rolled out a program of education and engagement with staff and students on campus in the months leading up to the General Election around voter registration and supporting the party that will best stand up for public services and roll back the marketisation of the sector **(2019 Motion 12)**.

In addition to the national efforts to get out the vote on pay and USS, each branch along with regional colleagues, phoned emailed and texted every member to vote in the industrial action ballot. It was close in some branches but disappointing that we didn't achieve the threshold. We stood in solidarity with UCU colleagues in November and December when they took action.

At the start of the year we rolled out branch workshops on the green agenda and what trade unions can do in response to the climate emergency. This involves going beyond paper cup recycling to do full root and branch reviews of university policies, practices and investments to identify areas where the universities can do more towards carbon neutrality. We are lobbying employers to provide paid time with facilities for environmental officers similar in role to Health and Safety Officers.

Throughout the year we delivered continued education on the implications of Brexit in HE. We were pleased to invite colleagues to the HE Seminar held in York and considered it to be a very engaging seminar.

Our membership remained largely static despite seeing a loss of posts and people through the reorganisations. Our activist base has grown through proactive targeting branch development plans and the Organising Frameworks.

## **7.8 East Midlands**

In the East Midlands region's universities, 2019 was another year of increased casework, negotiations, restructures, workloads and stress for members and branches alike.

As in other regions, the most significant events of the year were the pay and USS pensions ballots, with seven universities across the region balloted on the pay offer, and three on proposed changes to the USS pension scheme. Despite a great deal of hard work by branches and a majority vote in favour of industrial action no action took place as the turnout was not enough to get over the threshold imposed by the Trade Union Act. Members in the region nevertheless continued to show support to UCU colleagues taking industrial action.

At De Montfort University the branch continued to deal with the fallout after the Office for Students investigated "regulatory matters" following the sudden resignation of its Vice Chancellor near the beginning of the year. The branch oversaw a major restructure and a review of employment policies. At Leicester University the branch signed a new recognition agreement, securing an increase in facility time for the branch secretary to engage in regional and national union activities. It was also active in several negotiations including a potential asbestos hazard in plant rooms in which porters were being instructed to work. In the New Year negotiations will continue at Leicester Services Partnership where the branch continues to seek recognition.

At Loughborough University, the branch was active in negotiations on payments to security staff, proposed annualised hours for cleaning staff, and the introduction of the living wage. At Lincoln University, the branch saw an increase in annual leave and maternity provision for members despite efforts to restrict facility time. At Northampton University the branch challenged the university's decision not to implement any pay award and awaits an outcome in the New Year.

Branch organisation across the region remains strong with overall membership steady during the year and four branches increasing in size. There was also good

news concerning activists, with the number of stewards, health and safety reps and ULR increasing in all but one branch.

## **7.9 Northern Region**

The Northern region had their best year for recruitment in HE higher education in the past five years, recruiting 231 members before the end of November 2019. We also continued to grow our activist base despite challenging times.

The pay campaign was a great opportunity to engage our members and branches worked hard to encourage their participation. There were useful discussion on how to build and improve turnout for future campaigns and ballots. Attendance at regional HESG meetings are growing and an ERA re-accreditation course exclusively for HE reps was due in December 2019.

Durham University had a number of major restructures, which had a significant impact on staff numbers and unfortunately left the branch with a lack of activists due to voluntary severance. The branch and region are working hard to look for new activists to support members in the future. Despite these difficulties the branch recruited forty new members and maintained membership levels.

Newcastle University branch succeeded in its long running campaign for the Foundation Living Wage. This was implemented in August and following pressure from UNISON, the university gained accreditation in November. UNISON had successful negotiations in restructures including increasing staffing numbers in the Business School. The branch worked well with sister unions on a number of issues including improvements to policies and procedures. The branch recruited 56 members as at the end of November 2019 and had a number of new activists come through including a new young member's officer.

Northumbria University recruited over 60 new members as well as new activists in 2019. Members strongly rejected management proposals to reduce protection in forthcoming restructures and member engagement has been excellent. We continue to support our members to retain their jobs and fight compulsory redundancies but expect significant proposals in 2020.

Teesside University experienced a massive administrative restructure which had an impact on staffing and membership, but allowed the branch to spend a lot of time engaging with members and through the year we have recruited over 40 members.

Sunderland University supported members with a number of issues affecting facilities and catering staff around contracts and working hours. The branch has massively improved communications with these members and their management. They continue to develop communications with their website and blog as well as a lot of face to face work to maintain our relationships with members. Stress and workload continue to be key issues across the university, with hot-desking a growing issue which we are developing a campaign around. We recruited over 30 members and are focusing on encouraging members to become more involved as some key activists have left the employer.

## **7.10 Eastern**

The Eastern Region Higher Education Service Group met on a regular basis throughout the year with a focus on increasing participation from HE members that sit within local government branches. There was a plan to hold training for these reps and members to encourage their involvement within the regional committee but due to the pay dispute this had to be shelved until 2020. The Eastern Region SGE reaffirmed their commitment to being a campaigning group and helping each other to make effective change across the region. They also committed to help other committee members attain the facility time which they need to do their union duties, with reps making good progress in this endeavour.

The pay and pensions disputes were a large part of the activity of all branches in the region, with much work done to get members voting, including blitzes, stalls, walk-arounds and phone banking. The result was disappointing and we began to discuss regionally how best we move forward from this for future pay campaigns.

There have been many campaigns in the region, including security guards at University of East Anglia who managed to block a reduction in terms and conditions. At Hertfordshire University an increase in car park fees saw a petition overwhelmingly supported to overturn the change and which the campaign at Hertfordshire is now ratcheting up. There was also much activity in the outsourced members with staff at Tenon and Derwent losing their pay increases going forward. Members are now deciding how to campaign against their employer.

The region recruited and organised very successfully leading to the Eastern Region being the fastest growing region overall in the country. This is down to the relentless work of branches and the region to commit to growing branches and the union.

Next year Eastern region HE will look at running focussed campaigns for outsourced staff that are cross-employer and possibly cross-institutional, but linked through issues. This is a new way of organising and campaigning taken from the wins in some London region branches. The Eastern Regional HE SG believes that it is important that we look for innovative ways to recruit, organise and ultimately win for our members.

## **7.11 Greater London**

The Greater London Regional HE Committee met three times in 2019. The Regional HE Training Day took place in July and included a discussion on lessons learnt from the consultative ballot and the resources/tools branches needed to maximise turnout in the industrial action ballot. In addition to the pay calculator and other national resources, the region produced gold chocolate coins, selfie boards and scripts for phone banking and speaking to members regarding voting and taking industrial action. A workshop on sharing best practice and experiences on in-sourcing campaigns also proved popular.

During the consultative and industrial action ballots the focus was on maximising awareness of the ballot, the issues and the need for members to vote and make their views known. In the USS ballot unfortunately only one branch met the 50% threshold.

Higher education recruitment in Greater London saw a net gain of around 200 members over the year, with most branches gaining in membership. This demonstrates the ongoing work and commitment of branches and activists to recruit and build our union. For Grovember all branches organised recruitment events and initiative, many were around ongoing in-sourcing campaigns.

HE branches across London continued successful campaigns to bring outsourced services back in-house. On 1 May, cleaning staff employed by ISS at Goldsmiths came back in-house and discussions are taking place around security staff as that contract is ending. Cleaners employed by Servest and security staff by CIS at Kings College came back in house in August. At Birkbeck College cleaners will be brought back in-house by early 2020, The transfer terms are being negotiated for security staff and it is hoped to reach a similar agreement for catering staff.

A successful campaign at University College London entitled 'Bring them In' resulted in UCL agreeing that around 900 security, cleaning and catering staff, who work for Sodexo or Axis, will receive the same or equivalent pay and benefits as directly employed staff. This followed two successful protests at the university where, in October, Dave Prentis, General Secretary, spoke to support the campaign. As the first step, UCL will offer the staff the same holiday as UCL staff from 1 December 2019. Parity on other conditions including pay scales, overtime, sick pay, maternity and parental payments, and carers' pay and pensions, will be achieved soon, subject to negotiations. The university committed to make all changes by August 2021.

Other in-sourcing campaigns are ongoing at Higher Education Greenwich, City University and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). The initial employer responses were not very positive, so the reps are organising to escalate the campaign. The Kings' College London (KCL) branch, followed their successful campaign to bring over 400 members of staff in house, by submitting a claim for contractual parity to Bouygues and claim to KCL to bring the last outsourced workers in-house.

A parity claim was submitted at the University of the Arts (UAL) to Bouygues. After unproductive meetings with them, UNISON and GMB registered a dispute. UNISON and GMB carried out an indicative ballot showing that the vast majority of members of both unions feel very strongly about the campaign and a series of protests have been organised.

The University of Westminster branch launched a similar campaign with the outsourced workers working for PTCS and CIS. We have seen an increase in recruitment of new members and representatives and campaign meetings are taking place

The London South Bank University (LSBU) branch will start a campaign to bring back services in the New Year. This will raise issues outsourced workers face at LSBU such as CIS restructuring reception services, cutting 8,000 hours from the contract. At LSBU, we have been reviewing the "Conditions of Service for Support Staff" as it does not reflect current practice, and permits LSBU to introduce inferior conditions. HR is resisting improvements, but we are in discussion with them. A successful in-

house campaign would help rationalise the conditions and categories of support staff and limit the university's scope to bring outsourced workers back in on worse contracts. LSBU has announced £8 million pounds worth of 'savings' over the next several years and we are due to meet to discuss this.

At Senate House, London weighting and annual leave parity claims have been submitted. The branch has successfully fought to support a large group of members who were transferred to Health Education England protecting six days of leave and securing pay bargaining post-transfer. The branch has worked in very difficult circumstances to protect cleaning and security staff and to hold the employer to account as the services are slowly being brought back in-house, with a public commitment by the University of London. The branch is currently putting extra effort into succession planning, recruitment and development of new reps and officers.

Kings College London branch's campaign on London weighting continues, with a claim submitted for an increase from £3,500 to £5,000. A response from the college is expected early in the New Year. Senate House has re-opened the London weighting campaign together with the local UCU branch.

Restructures and redundancies continued across the region including at Brunel University, University of Westminster, London South Bank University, University of Greenwich and University of East London. At SOAS the branch successfully organised to oppose compulsory redundancies.

KUSCO, a subsidiary of Kingston University, started a consultation over reducing their sickness absence entitlement. Members met with management and rejected the proposal. Consultation is still continuing.

## **7.12 South West**

The higher education committee in the South West continued to build on progress made last year. Major challenges have been around pay, redundancies, and reorganisations. The majority of activists' time is spent ensuring that the process is fair and that members' jobs and terms and conditions are protected.

The year kicked off on a very positive note with the University of Bath becoming an accredited Living Wage Foundation employer.

The regional committee has focused much of their work this year on trying to achieve the ballot results required for action in relation to pay. Many committee members, activists and branches participated in telephone banks to "get the vote out" and although we did not achieve our objective, members were very pleased to hear from us. Therefore the committee decided to look at the general use of phone banks to communicate with our members and find out what is important to them. This will enable us to reach members that do not participate in the democracy of the union.

The committee has been gathering information on various aspects of terms and conditions, namely annual leave entitlement, pay and grading and how jobs are graded.

The committee has set up training on the HERA scheme to take place in early 2020 when all committee members and other activists and members will participate in this training.

The region had new members attending the national higher education seminar in November 2019. The attendees were enthused by the speakers and their achievements. It gave the members some food for thought and a discussion will take place at our HE planning day on taking these ideas forward. At the planning day delegates will also agree the priorities for the coming year.

## **8. Equalities**

In response to **Motion 15** a circular outlining how branches could engage with university employers to ensure that a positive approach is taken to gender neutrality of language, dress codes, and facilities was circulated in December. This circular also requested that examples of good policies and practice be sent to UNISON centre for sharing so that branches can work towards enhancing a gender neutral approach in HE.

The joint union side gender pay working group met twice in 2019 and agreed a survey for HE branches in of all five HE unions (**2019 Motion 3**). UNISON's National Women's Officer addressed UNISON's Higher Education Seminar in November, exploring the ways in which gender pay impacts on staff and outlining steps that can be taken to address this inequality. Work will continue on tackling the gender pay gap. The unions included the issue of the impact of intersectionality on the pay of black staff in HE and argued strongly for this in pay negotiation meetings.

The UNISON year of young members was promoted at a fringe meeting at the HE conference in January where the chair of the National Young Member's Forum addressed delegates on this topic. UNISON's National Young Members' Officer addressed the HE Seminar in November and presented delegates with lots of information on how to involve young members in their branches.

At UNISON's Higher Education Conference in 2019 a keynote speaker was from the Equality and Human Rights Committee. She announced the national inquiry into Racial Harassment in Higher Education (**2019 Motion 16**). UNISON sent out a circular to branches promoting this inquiry and the EHRC staff survey on racial harassment. The EHRC findings were published in a report in October, which was promoted at the HE Seminar in November 2019. A branch circular was sent out to HE branches in December asking them to engage with their employer to take steps to tackle racial harassment and to improve reporting so that employers will take complaints seriously.

UNISON is represented on the Universities UK Racial Harassment Advisory group that was established in October 2019 and is due to publish guidance for the sector in 2020.

## 9. Higher Education Policy

*The decision to run a national industrial action ballot on pay alongside and the decision to run industrial action ballots on the USS pension scheme in 43 universities in September and October 2019 has meant that resources have been focused on these campaigns. This meant that less work could be achieved in other areas. Where work has not been completed in 2019, or where projects are on-going, work will be incorporated into the HESGE's workplan for 2020.*

UNISON worked with Labour Link during 2019 to ensure that UNISON's voice is heard at all parliamentary levels. UNISON continued to lobby the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly.

UNISON continued to campaign for fair and equal access to HE. Social media was used to promote UNISON's policy of a fully funded education system with no tuition fees for students wanting to access higher education.

## 10. Marketisation of Higher Education

In line with **Motion 12** UNISON continued to campaign against privatisation, fragmentation and competition between institutions and supported the existing national pay bargaining machinery. In July it was widely reported that one private HEI in the UK had gone into administration leaving 3,500 students uncertain about where and how to complete their studies. UNISON strongly expressed its belief that HE is best delivered by public sector bodies and that a market based approach to HE should be ended. UNISON worked with Labour Link to lobby for the 2019 Labour Party manifesto to contain a clear commitment to the abolition of tuition fees in England.

## 11. University Sponsorship of Academies in England

In line with **Motion 8**, UNISON undertook research on university sponsorship of academy schools in England. This shows that to date only a very small number of universities have become lead sponsors for individual academies, free schools or multi-academy trusts (MATs). The Department for Education (DfE) produces a list of academy schools detailing their sponsors.

University Technical Colleges (UTCs) are 14-19 year old educational institutions and a type of free school with a focus on technical education. They are sponsored by at least one university and require the support of local or national employers. As of October 2019 there were 48 UTCs. UNISON is planning to send a circular to HE branches in early 2020 asking them to help support members in UTCs where they may be facing issues by using their influence with the university sponsor.

## 12. Higher education role analysis (HERA)

Work took place in 2019 to train activists in HERA. This will continue into 2020 with a branch survey on job evaluation and a planned roll out of HERA training (**2018 Motion 10**).

### **13. Supporting members with Mental Health Problems**

In line with **2019 Motion 3**, the issue of workload was incorporated into the union pay claim and pushed hard for employers to properly manage excessive workloads which can lead to stress and related mental health problems.

In line with **Motion 13** UNISON continued to work with the national Higher Education Safety and Health Forum (HESH) on the “Stress and mental wellbeing resources for Higher Education Institutions”. Work has also taken place on the development of the Step Change programme run by Universities UK (UUK). UNISON has been pushing for “Step Change” to focus on staff as well as students and this is now planned as part of the Step Change relaunch in early 2020.

The SGE prioritised supporting members with mental health problems by running two workshops at the 2019 HE seminar which were very well received.

### **14. The university belongs to us all**

In line with **2019 Motion 5** work has progressed in both Cymru/Wales and in Scotland to secure trade union and staff representation on university governing bodies (see report from Cymru/Wales 7.3 above). In 2020 UNISON will seek to disseminate advice on best practice to HE branches across the UK on this matter.

### **15. The 35 Hour Week**

In line with **2019 Motions 1, 2 (composite A)** the pay claim for 2019/20 contained a call for a maximum 35 hour contracted working week in UK universities. Whilst UNISON pressed for this through the pay negotiation meetings the employers made no offer on this element of the claim. UNISON ran two workshops at the HE seminar in November on how to set up a union campaign focusing on winning a 35 hour week for delegates who work where the standard contract is in excess of this.

### **16. Outsourced Workers**

Local and national campaigns to address the problems faced by outsourced workers formed a core part of UNISON’s work in HE over the past year (**2019 Motion 11**). As noted in many of the regional reports above, there were campaigns to stop members being transferred to outsourced contractors and wholly owned subsidiaries. In addition, in Greater London there were a significant number of successes in gaining parity in pay and terms and conditions for outsourced workers. There were also a number of universities that brought their outsourced workers back in-house or committed to do so within a limited time frame.

UNISON ran two workshops on outsourced workers and in-sourcing campaigns at the HE seminar. The joint unions sought a commitment on outsourced workers as part of the national pay bargaining process, but the employers did not make an offer on this.

## Section C

### 3. Campaigning and influencing

We aim to:

- Develop our campaigns in support of quality public services and in defence of the NHS, education, local government, social care, police, probation and all public services.
- Build our political influence, forging alliances with other unions and appropriate campaigning and community groups to challenge the austerity programme, including attacks on the welfare state.
- Campaign for the election of UK governments and councils that value public services and working people, rejecting the arguments of the Tory government and far right parties.
- Promote the new political fund arrangements.
- Promote the union's international work.
- Promote 2019 as UNISON and TUC Year of the Young Worker.

### 17. Higher Education Funding

Across the United Kingdom tuition fee income is the single largest source of funding for higher education institutions as a whole. The most recent figures show that fees contributed £18,875 million (2017/18, HESA) to HE income in the UK. There is, however, significant variation across the UK with funding body grants making up far greater proportions of HE income in Scotland and Northern Ireland due, in large part, to the different tuition fee regimes. In England, the freezing of tuition fees at £9,250 has meant a significant real terms cut to HE tuition fee funding. In Cymru/Wales there was a combined sector operating deficit of over £16 million reported in March 2019 (financial year 2017/18) and across the UK more than a quarter of universities posted deficits.

In March 2019 the Office for Students (OfS) set out its position on the public funding of universities in England for the period August 2019 – July 2020. The OfS provided a recurrent grant for 2019-20 of £1,309 million, an increase of £19 million compared with the previous year. The OfS stated that within the total there would be a high-cost subject funding increase of £32 million (4.7%) of £713 million. The OfS stated that this is sufficient to maintain the budget in real terms and to provide funding for students added by the government's health education reforms.

In addition, the OfS provided £40 million in 2019-20 to support national facilities and initiatives, a reduction of £11 million compared with the previous year. Additionally, £100 million was provided for capital funding.

The OfS told providers that the funding in 2019-20 would support a large increase in student numbers that count towards OfS grants arising from the government's health

education reforms and from the extension of funding to providers not previously eligible for OfS funds.

The Welsh government announced in June 2019 that it was allocating £148.9 million to HE providers in Wales for the 2019/20 academic year. This included £76.2 million for recurring research funding, with the remainder given to universities and other providers to support teaching part-time undergraduate courses, fulltime undergraduate expensive subjects, degree apprenticeships and capital developments. This was an increase of over £10 million on the previous year.

Additional funding for HE was received from the Welsh Government at the end of March 2019, when the overall allocation for 2018/19 increased from an anticipated £138.2 million to £160.5 million.

In May 2019 the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) announced a total budget of £1,025.3 million; this included a technical adjustment of £0.4 million giving SFC actual funding of £1,024.9 million - the same as for the financial year 2018-19. There was an £11.8 million increase in the overall Capital budget to £93.0 million. This represents a cash decrease of £5.8 million (0.6%) compared with the academic year 2018-19. The SFC's total teaching budget increased by £3.0 million to £664.0 million. This change was primarily due to the budget for the Disabled Students Premium moving from non-core funding to teaching funding.

The Scottish Government committed to "providing more than 80 additional counselors in Further and Higher Education over the next four years." Additional, ring-fenced funds were transferred to the SFC from the Scottish Government for this purpose. Additionally, the SFC provided a further year's funding for the provision of free sanitary products in universities.

During 2019 the Northern Ireland assembly did not meet. Separate detailed funding for HE is not made public by the NI government.

## **18. National Union of Students**

UNISON worked closely with the NUS in 2019 on a range of issues including Living Wage Foundation and in-sourcing campaigns.

## **Section D**

UNISON Objective 4. Building an efficient and effective union

We aim to:

- Ensure that the union's structures including organisational, lay member, ICT infrastructure, digital 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

## **19. Higher Education Conference, January 2019**

Key campaign messages arising from Conference 2019 included: achieving a 35 hour week, addressing marketisation in HE, and ensuring a staff voice in university governance. Motions on equalities highlighted the need to address wide ranging issues that affect members. This included exploring ways to support members with mental health conditions, pushing for a gender neutral approach to the workplace and challenging racial discrimination in the workplace. Conference expressed the need to ensure that decent pay is at the top of the bargaining agenda.

## **20. Higher Education Branch Seminar, November 2019**

The HESGE organised the 2019 branch seminar in York. There were more than 120 delegates from across the UK. The seminar opened with a presentation on the key aspects of the pay dispute from the HESGE pay campaign team. Delegates discussed the outcome of the industrial action ballot in regional groups and in a plenary session. The session enabled delegates to consider lessons learned and how the new legal ballot threshold could be reached in future disputes. On the second day the UCU head of higher education updated delegates on their campaign and industrial action plans.

The seminar received presentations on tackling the gender pay gap, organising and recruiting young members and HE pensions. There were keynote speakers from Nick Hillman of HEPI, and updates from the devolved nations. Speakers updated delegates on local disputes in HE and other sectors including: Birmingham University; Birmingham care workers; Wrightington Wigan and Leigh NHS wholly owned subsidiary. Practical workshops supported by HESGE members covered a range of topics including: mental health; outsourcing/in-sourcing; 35 hour week; menopause; green and sustainable universities; dealing with redundancies; assertiveness.

## Appendix One

### The Higher Education Service Group Executive, 2018 – 20

<b>Region</b>	<b>HESGE Representative</b>
Eastern	Margaret Meredith-Warley, Cathy Yearsley
East Midlands	Bill Hassan, vacancy (women's seat)
Greater London	Susan Parkin, Josie Mangan
Northern	Lorraine Brown, Denise Ward
Northern Ireland	Vacancy (general seat), vacancy (women's seat)
North West	Andrew Beech, Linda Holden
Scotland	Margaret McParland, Davena Rankin
South East	Ivan Bonsell, Sarah Pickett
South West	Mike Hines, vacancy (women's seat)
Cymru / Wales	Dan Beard, Katie Hall
West Midlands	Amelia Rout, vacancy (general seat)
Yorkshire & Humberside	Mark Adcock, vacancy (women's seat)
NEC	Kath Owen, Sandy Nicholl

Each region has one female seat and one general seat on the HE SGE.

The eight largest regions also have a third seat which is reserved for a low paid woman member. Those eight regions are Greater London, Northern, North West, Scotland, South East, Cymru/Wales, West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside. All low paid women's seats are currently vacant.

In addition to the directly elected members of the SGE, there are two National Executive Council (NEC) members who are elected representatives of the service group.

## Appendix Two

### Higher Education Recruitment Report 2019, showing year to date joiners, leavers, net gain/loss

Region		2017 YTD	2018 YTD	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	YTD
Eastern	Joiners*	229	258	20	25	37	15	12	30	25	34	30	32	31	291
	Leavers	-202	-216	-13	-14	-14	-16	-20	-13	-64	-31	-8	-21	-27	-241
	Change	27	42	7	11	23	-1	-8	17	-39	3	22	11	4	50
East Mids	Joiners*	246	293	32	34	44	26	33	34	29	30	39	31	50	382
	Leavers	-227	-334	-22	-16	-28	-50	-46	-18	-68	-31	-37	-20	-28	-364
	Change	19	-41	10	18	16	-24	-13	16	-39	-1	2	11	22	18
London	Joiners*	828	994	80	78	115	98	120	82	97	105	94	126	110	1,105
	Leavers	-895	-927	-76	-107	-118	-70	-56	-103	-89	-93	-64	-	-58	-937
	Change	-67	67	4	-29	-3	28	64	-21	8	12	30	103	52	168
Northern	Joiners*	196	225	12	22	19	34	42	13	23	14	32	47	23	281
	Leavers	-322	-213	-14	-11	-4	-13	-33	-5	-61	-22	-5	-10	-26	-204
	Change	-126	12	-2	11	15	21	9	8	-38	-8	27	37	-3	77
NI	Joiners*	59	159	7	4	12	1	2	1	6	5	1	5	3	47
	Leavers	-28	-48	-7	-17	-3	-2	-1	-19	-2	-5	-3	-8	-13	-80
	Change	31	111	0	-13	9	-1	1	-18	4	0	-2	-3	-10	-33
North West	Joiners*	502	503	28	59	61	65	43	48	57	41	49	42	73	566
	Leavers	-491	-560	-26	-38	-28	-71	-80	-32	-83	-67	-47	-44	-84	-600
	Change	11	-57	2	21	33	-6	-37	16	-26	-26	2	-2	-11	-34
Scotland	Joiners*	404	420	24	34	55	33	29	36	43	33	35	52	34	408
	Leavers	-341	-354	-22	-41	-25	-36	-27	-16	-	-27	-36	-47	-42	-442
	Change	63	66	2	-7	30	-3	2	20	-80	6	-1	5	-8	-34
South East	Joiners*	460	471	55	51	71	50	48	54	35	23	40	49	58	534
	Leavers	-514	-513	-35	-32	-40	-24	-38	-38	-65	-105	-46	-39	-47	-509
	Change	-54	-42	20	19	31	26	10	16	-30	-82	-6	10	11	25
South West	Joiners*	268	487	28	37	39	49	47	45	26	20	32	36	52	411
	Leavers	-216	-284	-24	-18	-16	-17	-28	-20	-90	-48	-13	-41	-33	-348
	Change	52	203	4	19	23	32	19	25	-64	-28	19	-5	19	63
Cymru/Wales	Joiners*	289	203	29	40	23	15	16	20	16	13	22	31	31	256
	Leavers	-291	-248	-18	-8	-10	-12	-13	-20	-36	-38	-13	-20	-10	-198
	Change	-2	-45	11	32	13	3	3	0	-20	-25	9	11	21	58
West Mids	Joiners*	349	455	33	33	56	51	41	72	72	37	43	57	48	543
	Leavers	-395	-369	-29	-18	-22	-62	-47	-27	-65	-15	-38	-42	-34	-399
	Change	-46	86	4	15	34	-11	-6	45	7	22	5	15	14	144
Yorks & Humber	Joiners*	555	557	48	41	49	45	35	44	49	34	30	49	57	481
	Leavers	-455	-481	-51	-53	-35	-54	-72	-47	-64	-77	-27	-30	-48	-558
	Change	100	76	-3	-12	14	-9	-37	-3	-15	-43	3	19	9	-77
All Regions	Joiners*	4,385	5,025	396	458	581	482	468	479	478	389	447	557	570	5,305
	Leavers	-4,377	-4,547	-337	-373	-343	-	-461	-358	-	-559	-337	-	-450	-
	Change	8	478	59	85	238	55	7	121	810	-170	110	132	120	4,880

## Appendix Three

### Pay offer from 1 August 2019

Spine point	Salary from 1 August 2018 (£)	Salary from 1 August 2019 (£)	% increase from 1 August 2019
2*	15,842	16,420	3.65%
3	16,146	16,736	3.65%
4	16,460	17,046	3.56%
5	16,766	17,361	3.55%
6	17,079	17,682	3.53%
7	17,408	18,009	3.45%
8	17,751	18,342	3.33%
9	18,189	18,709	2.86%
10	18,688	19,133	2.38%
11	19,202	19,612	2.14%
12	19,730	20,130	2.03%
13	20,275	20,675	1.97%
14	20,836	21,236	1.92%
15	21,414	21,814	1.87%
16	22,017	22,417	1.82%
17	22,659	23,067	1.80%
18	23,334	23,754	1.80%
19	24,029	24,461	1.80%
20	24,771		
21	25,482		
22	26,243		
23	27,025		
24	27,830		
25	28,660		
26	29,515		
27	30,395		
28	31,302		
29	32,236		
30	33,199		
31	34,189		
32	35,211		
33	36,261		
34	37,345		
35	38,460		
36	39,609		
37	40,792		
38	42,036		
39	43,267		
40	44,559		
41	45,892		
42	47,263		
43	48,677		
44	50,132		
45	51,630		
46	53,174		
47	54,765		
48	56,403		
49	58,089		
50	59,828		
51	61,618		

1.8% increase on all salary points 17 and above

\*Spine point 2 to be deleted by 1 April 2020