

**2020 Higher Education Service Group
Conference**

Decisions

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Motions

1. Higher Education Service Group Executive Pay Motion 2020/21

Carried as Amended: 1.1

2019 marks ten years of the erosion in real terms, take home pay, the pay of the majority of Higher Education support staff. If pay had risen in line with the cost of living, then each pound that university support staff earn in 2019/20, would be worth twenty one pence more than it actually is. For example, if you currently earn £25,482 on pay point 21 then you would earn an extra £5,057 if your pay had kept up with inflation. Pay has fallen in real terms by over 15% in just ten years whilst university income has risen to £38.2 billion.

In the last financial year university investment in capital expenditure rose by 6.4% whilst wages rose by 2% for the majority of staff. The sector can afford a decent pay rise for all. University reserves are at an all time high of £49.22 billion having increased since 2009/10 by nearly 300%. It is clear from university accounts that investment in Higher Education staff has yet again been de-prioritised. UNISON is calling for this to change.

Over the past ten years university income has risen, nearly half of all Vice Chancellors now receive more than £300,000, and universities have erected new buildings. It is shocking that there are still only twenty foundation living wage accredited university employers. Many support staff, whom universities rely on, take home poverty wages. In-work poverty remains one of the most important challenges we face and UNISON is calling on HE employers to take up this challenge.

Having shown a commitment to invest in their estate, universities now need to invest in their greatest asset - their staff. UNISON members have had enough. They are not prepared to accept the low pay rises that have been handed out to them. The higher cost of living in London is acknowledged by a London weighting which qualifying employees receive in addition to their pay scale salary. This is typically worth around £3,000 to £4,000, varies by institution and usually rises by the same percentage as the headline pay increase, which has resulted in a fall in its real value over the last decade.

However, the current pay scales take no account of the cost of living for those members working and living outside of London in the South East of England, or in higher cost areas of the country, where living costs can be close to those of London.

In order to address this, it is necessary to start a process to determine those universities at which an outer-London or high cost weighting should be part of an additional demand for 2020.

The HE sector continues to have the highest public sector gender pay gap, which in many universities has got worse over the past year, not better. There is an acknowledged and persistent ethnic pay gap that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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With only 36% of universities employing staff on a 35 hour per week contract as standard, the majority of HE employees work more than 35 hours per week. There is a national pay spine, but employees' hourly rate varies from university to university depending on their contract. At the bottom end of the pay spine this means that whilst some employees on a 35 hour per week contract earn the Foundation Living Wage rate or above, others earn less than the foundation living wage rate.

Many universities are continuing to seek to outsource their support by transferring staff to private contractors or by creating subsidiary companies. UNISON believes that all university support staff should be employed on secure permanent contracts of employment and be direct employees of universities.

UNISON members are also not prepared to accept the imposition of pay offers. Genuine negotiations need both parties to work towards agreement and to do so in good faith without the threat of imposition hanging over them.

Conference calls on the Higher Education Service Group Executive to pursue joint union negotiations and to produce a joint claim that seeks to incorporate the following points:

- 1) Negotiate a consolidated pay award of retail price index (RPI) + 5%
- 2) Negotiate a minimum hourly rate of £10 an hour for all staff which includes those on a 37 hour week
- 3) Negotiate an RPI + 5% consolidated increase on London Weighting and all other allowances negotiated nationally. Work with branches to seek to negotiate a similar rise in all appropriate local allowances.
- 4) Negotiate an additional allowance at a list of universities outside of the London-weighting area, where there is evidence of a higher cost of living, either as a result of being within commuting distance of London or being a high-cost housing area or some other substantial reason.
- 5) Negotiate a national agreement with the HE employers to oversee the introduction of a maximum 35 hour working week in all universities.
- 6) Establish a Scottish sub-committee of the New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (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.
- 7) Negotiate on joint employer and union action to eliminate the gender and ethnic pay gap, work with regions, branches and sister trade unions to achieve these ends. Seek to work with employers, aiming for transparency and full sharing of data at both a national and local level.
- 8) Campaign for all universities to become accredited Living Wage employers reminding them of the moral and business case of why they should apply for Living Wage accreditation and demand that they do so.

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- 9) Negotiate for a national agreement to reduce precarious employment in Higher Education seeking, as far as possible, for staff to be employed on permanent contracts. Negotiate for a national agreement to bring outsourced workers in higher education to become direct employees of universities.
- 10) In the event that the joint pay claim is not met by the employers, seek to coordinate lawful industrial action in conjunction with fellow Higher Education trade unions, with a clear plan for escalating lawful industrial action to strengthen the campaign, in accordance with UNISON rules relating to industrial action.

2. Responding to the Augar Report on Post 18 Education and Funding in England

Carried

Conference notes that although the report of the Review of Post 18 Education and Funding in England falls far short of UNISON's policies on the future of Higher Education (HE) it cannot be ignored. Even in a period of political uncertainty and ministerial changes in government, its analysis and recommendations are likely to continue to feature in policy debates and decisions over the coming years. The review, undertaken by a panel chaired by Dr Philip Augar, has given fresh impetus to the debate about how to:

- 1) achieve greater balance and co-ordination across the whole post-18 education system in England;
- 2) strengthen technical education and support for STEM subjects to boost economic productivity;
- 3) increase opportunity, by getting more disadvantaged young people into post-18 education and reversing the decline in lifelong learning.

As one would expect from a report commissioned by the Conservative government, worthwhile aims are undermined by a dogmatic adherence to austerity economics and the proposition that more can be delivered with less - and a coded snobbishness toward post 1992 universities. These find their expression in the report's recommendations to:

- a) freeze per student resource for three years from 2020/21 to 2022/23;
- b) find efficiency savings across the HE sector;
- c) adjust grants, with universities potentially receiving less resource for humanities and social sciences courses;
- d) bear down on what the report calls 'low value HE' and 'certain courses at certain institutions' by introducing caps and raising entry requirements.

As UNISON members in HE will know only too well, those who pay the cost of such measures, if they are enacted, are far more likely to be those in non

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teaching roles as well as the students themselves, who will experience a decline in the first class support that they receive from the wider university workforce.

Conference notes that the report has been published at a time of political and economic uncertainty. A General Election could happen at any time. It's in this context that UNISON as a leading Trade Union for HE, that also has members in the wider world of post-18 education, should now play a leading role in the debate about the future of the sector and its importance to the country while maintain its first class status in the future.

As the Augar report points out, universities are one of the great forces shaping the modern world and driving progress. They have a huge impact on the economy and, alongside local government and the NHS, make a considerable civic contribution, especially in economically vulnerable communities. As such it's vital that they also model employers, delivering decent pay and terms and conditions to all of their employees, taking full responsibility for the entire HE work community.

Conference therefore calls on the HESGE to develop a work programme to:

- 1) Campaign to ensure that universities are well funded from general taxation to provide excellent higher education in our world class universities.
- 2) Ensure that the union uses the debate around the Augar report and the future of post-18 education to advance the case for free tuition for all, with maintenance grants and measures to support participation for all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 3) Ensure that the perspectives and best practice of the distinctive models for HE that are seen in Scotland and Wales form part of the debate about the future of HE in England.
- 4) Build a campaign to ensure that members, and future members, are employed directly by universities so that all staff are part of fully integrated university teams. Where university staff are outsourced, to initiate a campaign to bring those workers back in-house and provide a best practice model of industrial relations for the private sector to follow. Work with regions to ensure branch and membership participation, focussing particularly on regions where outsourced workers are increasing in the sector.
- 5) Publicise the campaign on all HE social media platforms and encourage branch engagement. Work with Labour Link with a view to increasing support for the campaign the labour party.
- 6) Devise case study that demonstrates the benefits of outsourced workers coming back in house, and campaign for our universities to become the best possible employers.

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3. The Future of the Local Government Pension Scheme and Higher Education Employees in England

Carried

A Government consultation took place between May and July 2019 on changes to reform the Local Government Pension Scheme in England. The proposed changes would give higher education institutions, further education colleges and sixth form colleges the flexibility to not have to offer the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) to new staff. UNISON's HESGE led the campaign to oppose the reforms and submitted a response to the consultation, encourage branches to send in their comments which many did and organised an online lobby of MPs.

These proposed changes to the scheme could have an impact on the cash flow and on remaining employees in the scheme. This would affect the lives of many of our members and future members.

Conference opposes the plans because;

- a) this is an attack on the pension rights of working people delivering public services;
- b) Whilst initial figures suggest approximately 3% of LGPS membership is at risk it could grow to around 20% of the potential membership of the LGPS if later extended to all admitted and scheduled bodies;
- c) Changes would lead to serious cash flow issues for LGPS funds and impact on local services through increased costs;
- d) Changes would lead to a two tier workforce in pensions with new starters being offered inferior and less cost effective schemes;
- e) If not challenged, the changes could be discriminatory against support staff, particularly women and low paid workers, and will lead to many retiring into poverty with a cost to the individual and state in the form of additional benefit payments;
- f) This would undermine universities and colleges who decide to still provide access to the LGPS including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) Colleges in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland;
- g) By not seeking the advice and views of the LGPS Scheme Advisory Board before consulting on this, the governance structure for the LGPS agreed by the government was undermined;
- h) The proposed changes would potentially affect the future viability and security of the scheme;

UNISON is concerned that if this change proceeds that other groups of workers may, in time, also be excluded from accessing the LGPS or even forced out of the scheme altogether.

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Should the government seek to implement these proposed changes, conference calls on the Service Group Executive (SGE) to:

- i) Build a campaign with along with UNISON's Service Group Liaison Committee and it's LGPS forum, and in consultation and coordination with the other service groups and sectors where employers offer the LGPS to oppose any such changes to LGPS provision. In addition, the campaign should work closely with other education and public service unions to oppose such changes.
- ii) Lobby MPs and Lords to oppose this and vote against any statutory changes to the scheduled status of HEIs and other educational institutions.
- iii) Work with branches and regions to oppose plans by any HE employer to stop offering the LGPS to new staff. Support branches in their campaigns and lobby local and national employers to oppose any such plans.
- iv) Work with other affected service groups and the Service Group Liaison Committee to consider requesting that the National Executive Committee supports the development of an industrial action strategy, up to and including balloting members for industrial action, within UNISON rules and the law.

4. Supporting peri and post menopausal workers in the workplace

Carried

The UK's higher education support staff workforce comprises 63% women and over 40% of university support staff are aged 46 and over. The menopause is experienced by women primarily between the ages of 45 to 55, although some may experience it earlier, and it can continue for many years.

Symptoms associated with the menopause include hot flushes, palpitations, night sweats and sleep disturbance, fatigue, poor concentration, irritability, mood disturbance, skin irritation and dryness. The menopause can lead to changes in an individual's health and may also lead to emotional changes. These symptoms can affect how women do their work and their relationships with colleagues. Both those who identify as women as well as those who may not identify as women can experience the menopause. Trans men, trans women, non-binary people and those who are intersex may also experience menopausal symptoms.

Everyone's experience of the menopause is individual and may differ greatly, but inevitably symptoms will be exacerbated by negative or discriminatory attitudes in the workplace.

Employers have been slow to recognise that workers of menopausal age may need special consideration. For too long it has simply been seen as a private matter and has not been proactively discussed or addressed at work and support for menopausal workers has not been put in place.

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As a result many managers will have no awareness of the issues involved. This means many feel that they have to hide their symptoms and will be less likely to ask for the adjustments that may help them in the workplace.

This must change. The menopause is an occupational health issue, and one that is now recognised as a workplace issue.

There have been a number of recent legal cases which have reinforced and set the precedent that the menopause is covered by the Equality Act 2010 in a number of protected characteristic categories such as gender, age and disability.

Conference acknowledges and welcomes that UNISON has produced a number of good resources relating to supporting peri and post menopausal members.

Given the workforce profile of higher education, conference call on the service group executive to:

- 1) work with UNISON's Women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. (LGBT)+ self organised groups to develop a model menopause policy for branches to use with their employers that recognises the specific demographic of the higher education workforce;
- 2) run a workshop at the 2020 Higher Education (HE) Branch seminar on menopause and the workplace.

5. Positively promoting Mental Wellbeing in the workplace

Carried

Conference has in recent years passed a number of motions relating to helping to tackle the issues around mental health conditions such as encouraging employers to sign up to "Time to change " or become "Mindful employers".

This has helped to shape the service group's policy on supporting individuals with existing mental health conditions as well as seeking to prevent work related problems that may lead to the development of a mental health condition.

However, despite this, due to the fear of the stigma around discussing mental health issues with colleagues and managers, evidence shows that employees are fearful about raising issues or concerns in relation to their mental wellbeing in the same way as their physical health. It is also common that staff are reluctant to cite mental health as a reason of absence.

Conference is aware of the rising popularity for employers to have mental health first aiders, in the same way as there are first aiders who attend to physical incidents of injury or incapacitation. However, as there is not the same regulated approach to mental health first aiders as there is for physical first aiders, there are concerns around their introduction and the protection of those volunteering for this role. Employers need to ensure adequate support in the

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workplace for those experiencing mental ill health and for those volunteering as first aiders. These individuals are performing a reactive role, often when an individual is in crisis.

Tackling the causes of, and supporting individuals with, mental ill health in the workplace has no single answer but is usually far more effective when a combination of different support and approaches are provided.

Often contractual terms and conditions reward longer length of service and this can include occupational sick pay or ill health policies. Employees may be concerned about accessing these provisions, especially those staff on probation or in an insecure contractual position.

Mental ill health does not discriminate in relation to contract types or length of service and therefore neither should our employers.

In order to break the stigma around mental ill health, it is important to promote a positive attitude towards open discussion and a positive attitude to mental wellbeing. One successful approach to this outside the UK has been the introduction of mental health days.

Mental health days are a specific allocation of days, separate to any sickness absence or annual leave allocation, where an individual can take a day off to look after their psychological wellbeing.

Employers then ensure that the individual is supported to discuss how their work environment could be altered or adapted as well as sign posting them to other services and sources of support.

Conference calls upon the Higher Education Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Seek to work with other Campus Trades Unions, Universities UK, University and Colleges Employers Association (via the Higher Education Safety and Health Forum) and other organisations as may be appropriate, to explore the development of best practice and guidance relating to the recruitment and use of Mental Health First Aiders in the Workplace.
- 2) Develop a model “Mental Wellbeing Days” policy for branches to use in local negotiations with their employer.

6. Negotiating Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Workers in Higher Education

Carried

Conference notes that although Higher Education institutions often pride themselves on the services they offer to disabled students, when it comes to their disabled staff it can sometimes be a different story.

Many of our disabled members in Higher Education find that they struggle to access reasonable adjustments. In some cases the employer agrees to adjustments but then drag their feet about implementing them. Our members

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can wait months or even years to get the adjustments they need to allow them to do their jobs.

In some cases the employer uses the sickness absence procedure against disabled staff when a period of disability leave is more appropriate. Disabled staff can find themselves faced with capability proceedings and the potential loss of their job when workplace modifications could have averted this.

Conference notes that some Higher Education branches have been successful in negotiating reasonable adjustment and disability leave policies with their employer. Others have agreed mental health policies. These branches are congratulated for their commitment to our disabled members.

Conference notes that UNISON has a wealth of bargaining guides and advice for branches and stewards that can be used in Higher Education branches to support our disabled members. UNISON resources include:

- A) Reasonable Adjustments Bargaining Guide, which includes a model policy and “passport”
- B) Disability Leave Bargaining Guide which also includes a model policy
- C) “Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustment, a comprehensive guide to which includes a directory of impairments and examples of reasonable adjustments
- D) Bargaining for Mental Health Policies Guide
- E) “Quick Guides” to Reasonable Adjustments and to Access to Work.

All of the above are on the Disabled Members page of the UNISON website.

Conference therefore calls on the Higher Education Service Group Executive to work with the national Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Circulate UNISON’s resources, including the new reasonable adjustment bargaining guide, model policy and passport to Higher Education branches and encourage them to seek to negotiate such policies with their employers.
- 2) Seek and publicise examples of best practice where Higher Education branches have agreed such policies.
- 3) Seek to include these issues in national bargaining where appropriate.

7. Addressing Low Pay with Progressive Pay Claims

Carried

Conference Notes:

Many UNISON members in the higher education sector continue to suffer the effects of poverty wages. Whilst some progress has been made campaigning

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for universities to become Living Wage Employers, or at least agreeing to pay the equivalent, some are refusing to consider this very basic and reasonable demand.

Many senior managers point to equivalent jobs in the private sector to justify university wages, as if our members are onto a good thing, being slightly better off than many fast-food workers or bar staff on minimum wage. It is unacceptable that our members are struggling to afford the basics.

This union still has a policy to campaign for £10/hour for all workers and whilst this has been a feature of recent pay claims, it is yet to be realised, as is the 35 hour working week, across the whole sector.

Successive pay awards over the past decade have led to a deterioration in pay levels for all university workers. At the bottom end of the national pay scale, over time, the lowest spinal points have needed to be abolished to keep up with the minimum wage.

Progressive pay claims featuring lump sums for the lowest paid over the last five years have created an effect where the lowest spinal points have risen more in percentage terms than the medium and higher spinal points, but the effect is minimal. Our members at the lowest spinal points are still struggling.

Being able to say that we have won £10/hour for all our members would be a significant victory, drawing more members into our ranks to whom we can demonstrate the reasons for being organised.

A genuinely progressive pay claim should aim to emphasise the £10/hour minimum, which would in effect mean the abolition of spinal points 3 to 7. This could then be complemented with a lump sum payment from spinal point 8 which would be replaced with a percentage increase further up the spinal points.

Universities would then need to negotiate locally to readjust their own pay grades, as their lowest would need to be recalibrated.

Conference calls on the Higher Education Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Emphasise the need for £10/hour as a significant part of the joint pay claim.
- 2) Work with branches to continue to campaign against low pay.

8. Abandoning the absolute necessity to conduct indicative ballots.

Carried

Conference, clearly it is in none of our interests that we conduct a ballot we potentially lose by a long margin if we do not have the pulse of the membership before we move to an industrial action ballot. That will only serve the interests of those who want us to lose the ballot weakening our overall industrial strength. So it is understandable that we are cautious and gauge the membership through indicative ballots before we decide to move to a full ballot of members.

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The default position seems to be a three week (at least) consultation ballot, the results of which are scrutinised before a decision taken to move to a full ballot. The timing of a full ballot means we wait at least 12 weeks, 3 months from the decision of the service group Executive before the 'real' ballot papers land on our member's doorsteps. By this time the members often question us to say that they thought they were already balloted and some months before which creates confusion at best and immense frustration with us at worse. In the meantime our sister unions seem quite willing and able to move to a full ballot without consultative ballots. Furthermore, consultative ballots play into the hands of the employers who whilst they do not need to be notified of any result inevitably do get to know the result and this can undermine local bargaining on other issues.

Conference, there is no legal requirement to conduct an indicative ballot before proceeding to a full industrial action ballot and whilst it might be in the union's balloting guidelines we feel these need to be reviewed.

We believe we can be more responsive to our members in a timely manner by abandoning the default to always move to a consultative ballot. One way for example could be for the Service Group Representatives to gauge the pulse of the members through regional consultation exercises through the Regional Service Groups and Branch Secretaries.

We call on the Service Group Executive (SGE) to consider alternative methods to gather the mood of the membership rather than indicative consultation ballots in future pay consultations.

9. Industrial action ballot tactics for the 2020-21 pay campaign and beyond

Carried

Conference Notes:

The primary role of UNISON, or any Trade Union, is to use the collective power of its members to deliver lasting and significant improvements to pay, pension rights and working conditions.

The results of each annual round of pay negotiations, is a good indicator of the extent to which this Service Group is reaching the aspirations of members and activists in relation to pay, when measured against inflation.

In a period of funding constraints and, allowing for complications of the university funding regime, it is extremely unlikely that the employers will be willing to offer settlements close to our recognised measure of inflation.

We need the ability to deliver the threat of lawful industrial action when the employers' final offer falls short of the joint unions' claim. This, in turn, is dependent on a successful pay ballot reaching the 50% turnout threshold.

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This raises the question of the best tactics to use when considering the strategy of each pay round, the most obvious issue being whether to ballot on an aggregate or a disaggregate basis.

Conference Further Notes:

An aggregate ballot requires the service group to reach a combined turnout in excess of 50% nationally, including all members in all institutions balloted. Low turnouts across some groups of members are potentially offset by pockets of higher turnout, but 50% across the whole number balloted must be achieved to take the action.

A disaggregated ballot treats each ballot held at each institution as a separate dispute, meaning that individual branches can take legal strike action provided a 50% turnout is reached at that particular university.

For a Service Group with good organisation, structures and membership engagement, an aggregate ballot makes sense, since the threat of strong, escalating, national action is likely to achieve movement on the part of the employers.

In the scenario where a national 50% turnout is unlikely to be achieved, a disaggregated ballot is the best tactic, since it theoretically allows the most active and organised branches to use their strength to achieve movement on the part of the employers.

It would be illogical to not consider all possible solutions so that we are able to do what we should be doing – using our strength in numbers to deliver material results for our members.

The available evidence since the Trade Union Act became law suggests that it is not impossible for us achieve a 50% turnout for national action, but extremely difficult, even with sufficient resources available and a high level of organisation.

Whilst recognising and celebrating, the heroic efforts of members and activists to build the size and confidence of our branches, we have to be realistic about our current limitations and aim to play to our strengths.

For the pay campaign of 2020-21 and immediately beyond, a strategy involving a disaggregated ballot makes the most practical sense if we are to achieve our aims.

Conference calls on the Higher Education Service Group Executive to:

Take concrete action so that in the event of the 2020-21 pay campaign moving to a formal industrial action ballot, this will be organised on a disaggregated basis. This will be done with the aim of achieving a 50% turnout and a vote in favour of action at every institution, i.e. a disaggregated ballot, with national action as the main aim.

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10. Understanding the impact of job reductions across the HE Sector.

Carried

We all know the well rehearsed arguments: in the face of declining student numbers, political uncertainty, Brexit and the unknown future of tuition income, universities say it is inevitable that jobs must be lost. And through 2019 we saw one after the other HE institute introduce voluntary severance schemes, reorganisations and redundancies, reductions in hours and changes to contracts. By and large in Yorkshire and Humberside we have managed to avoid compulsory redundancies but that is only because people volunteer to go on slightly more beneficial packages than if they waited until pushed. We understand their decisions to do so. Our branches however are left to pick up the remaining workload, often on less favourable downgraded roles and with no clear overarching picture of the impact of the job losses across the institute and the viability of the organisations' finances and ultimately their job security.

When involved in local negotiations to support the universities through these 'challenging times' we often hear the arguments that we need to sustain these losses to remain competitive to the neighbouring institute across the road or in the local city, or that our student to staff ratio is too high compared to our competitors.

It would be hugely helpful to inform local negotiations if we had to hand clear information about the extent of the job losses, institute by institute with some narrative to link the job losses to the financial position of each institute and with reference to the sector. It would also be helpful to have to hand an understanding of where the cuts have fallen, by grade, by gender, by race and disability as well as by full time or part time ratios. We appreciate regions have delivered materials and sessions on Understanding University Finances and this assists us greatly in picking apart our local institutes' finances. What would be really helpful is if we could be provided with a concise comparison across the sector with reference to other Higher Education (HE) institutes finances as well so that we can bring these to bear in local negotiations. So for example we could compare Universities of a similar size or income generation and look at how they have managed through these times and what their staffing ratios look like now.

To this end we ask that the Higher Education Service Group Executive (HESGE):

- 1) conduct a Freedom of Information exercise across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland asking for details of job reductions for both professional services and academic / academic related staff by grade, by gender, by race, by disability, FT/PT over the proceeding 3 financial years.
- 2) To conduct an analysis of the finances of each HE institutions over those corresponding 3 years showing income, expenditure, reserves, staff to student ratios, overall staffing costs and any other relevant financial information that the SGE might think useful to inform our local negotiations.

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11. Raising the profile of Black activists in Higher Education

Carried as Amended: 11.1

Raising the profile of Black activists and increasing the number of Black members involved in Higher Education establishments at branch, regional and national levels within the union is critical in meeting UNISON's recruitment and organising objectives.

Conference notes that UNISON has developed a Leadership School where activists can take steps to develop their leadership skills and take up positions of increased responsibility and notes further that members who have attended this school have gone on to become branch secretaries and employed staff.

However Conference is concerned that high levels of redundancies, consequent high staff turnover and lack of facility time in universities has had a significant impact on Black activists in particular, leading to a slow pace of change and take up in leadership positions in our trade union.

Black members play a valuable role in ensuring the union and branches identify and take up equality issues and actively challenge discrimination in the workplace. This is key in meeting the union's current challenges as no workplace where discrimination exists can be truly organised.

Conference notes the report from the inquiry into racial harassment launched by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in October 2019. UNISON promoted the staff survey that was part of the EHRC inquiry to ensure that support staff experiences in universities formed part of this research. With the publication of this report, there can be no excuses for universities who fail to acknowledge the extent of the problem on campus. UNISON calls on universities to work to ensure that there is an effective response to this report and that universities are a safe place for Black staff and students to work and study. UNISON notes that whilst it is the responsibility of all to work to eliminate racial harassment, that UNISON Black activists have an important role in this work and should be included in work to address this issue in universities.

Conference believes that achieving race equality is not an add on. It must be a key part of our agenda going forward.

Conference therefore calls on the Higher Education Service Group Executive to work with the NBMC to:

- a) Remind higher education branches and members of the support, training and guidance available to Black members to become activists.
- b) Explore how we can promote achieving fair representation of Black members in membership to higher education branches in line with UNISON rules and the UNISON Code of Good Branch Practice.

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- c) Identify higher education members who might wish to be more active in the workplace and work to ensure that Black members are fully represented in both branch structures and staff side negotiating bodies.
- d) Inform all activists in Higher Education of the EHRC report and its recommendations, and work with branches to ensure that Black members and activists are involved in discussions with employers on how to address and eliminate racial harassment in their Higher Education Institutions.

12. Protection and membership for casualised workers

Fell

13. Combatting the far right on campus Motion 2020

Carried

Conference Notes:

- 1) The far-right are attempting to take their message of racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism onto university and college campuses.
- 2) The far-right group 'Generation Identity' have appeared on over 20 campuses, holding stunts and meetings.
- 3) Turning Point UK, a group with links to the alt-right in the US, have attempted to set up student societies at universities including UAL.

Conference Believes:

- A) The far right are gaining confidence from a rise in racism globally, from Donald Trump in the White House, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Salvini in Italy to Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson here.
- B) It is crucial that campus unions work with students to make our campuses free from racism and fascism.

Conference calls on the Higher Education Service Group Executive:

To work with other campus and student unions and anti-racist groups like Stand Up To Racism and Show Racism the Red Card to oppose the threat of Nazi, racist and fascist ideas on campus, and by organising a 'Nazis Off Our Campuses' campaign and by building solidarity against the far-right within and across our membership to stand up against these divisive ideologies.

- i) To support and publicise the national tour and campaign by UCU and Stand Up To Racism at colleges and universities to highlight the growth of the far right.

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- ii) To develop anti-racist materials for staff and students that exposes the threat the far right represents.
- iii) To encourage HE branches to take up the opportunity of participating in the training course provided by UNISON's Learning and Organising Services on how to tackle the threat of the far right.
- iv) To nationally support UNISON regions and branches in organising educational study trips about the Holocaust and disseminate this work.
- v) To strongly encourage HE branches to bargain and negotiate for race equality for Black members, who in HE are disproportionately likely to be working in insecure and exploitative work, and to use UNISON's materials and resources for branches to support this work.
- vi) To welcome the support UNISON has continued to give to the Stand Up to Racism UN Anti-Racism day demos, now co-ordinated globally, and to organise in HE to support and encourage participation in the demonstrations in London, Cardiff and Glasgow in March 2020.

14. Defend all Pensions

Carried

Conference notes the ongoing attack on our defined benefit (DB) pension schemes and believes that as pensions are deferred pay then any cut to our pension schemes is a direct attack on terms and conditions.

Conference notes those branches that have campaigned or are still campaigning to stop any erosion to their pensions which after all is deferred pay.

It is noted that a lot of debate around pensions lately in Higher Education is centred around the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS) and Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension schemes but a lot of older universities have their own self-administered trust schemes. Some of them are now closed to new entrants and some are no longer defined benefit.

We need to act to protect all of our members in Higher Education.

Conference believes that access to a decent defined benefit (DB) pension scheme is of the highest priority for our union and that Universities that are removing or amending said schemes are not acting in the best interests of staff or the long term interests of said universities.

Conference therefore calls upon the Service Group Executive to :

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Develop a union wide campaign that also takes into account the devolved nations different governance arrangements that seeks to stop any removal of DB pension schemes in favour of poorer Defined Contributions (DC) schemes.

- 1) Survey all Universities to understand what pension schemes are in place, in particular reference to the self-administered trusts.
- 2) Develop an organising strategy and guidance that can be sent to branches to help argue and organise against any changes.
- 3) Work with UNISON Pensions unit to develop factsheets to help our members understand how our pensions work and why it is essential we retain access to decent pension schemes. This should include the need for member involvement with any campaign and can't be driven by a branch committee alone.
- 4) Work with UNISON Labour Link to campaign for manifesto commitment from the Labour Party to support Defined Benefit pension schemes in Higher Education.

15. Climate change and higher education

Carried

UNISON HE conference notes:

- 1) The Earth's temperature has already risen by 1.1 degree above pre-industrial levels and that the amount of sheet ice lost annually from the Antarctic has increased six-fold between 1979-2017. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report last autumn warned that we only have 12 years to keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. Carbon emissions need to be cut by 45% by 2030, and reach zero carbon by 2050 in order to avoid a dangerous tipping point.
- 2) The tremendous impact of the school students strikes and, in particular, the global day of action on 20 September 2019, in shifting government complacency over climate change forcing them to amend the 2008 Climate Change act.
- 3) UNISON has been leading the way in pension fund fossil fuel disinvestment and campaigning for public ownership of energy companies.
- 4) The movement to tackle climate change and protect our planet is being led by young people and workers from around the world.

UNISON HE conference believes:

- i) Climate change is a trade union issue.

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- ii) That the future of our planet is at risk if we don't organise now to force governments to cut emissions in line with the IPCC report.
- iii) There should be just transition for workers.
- iv) That universities are often at the front line of researching the detrimental impact of climate change and should be well placed to lead by example in terms of ensuring that climate justice is at the heart of their work.
- v) That we must keep the pressure up. The school students have led the way, now the trade union movement as a whole must continue to act to ensure that they don't fight alone.

Conference calls on the Higher Education Service Group Executive (HESGE) to:

- A) Work nationally with the National Union of Students (NUS), other Higher Education (HE) trade unions, people and planet, Green Jobs Alliance, Campaign Against Climate Change, and other relevant organisations to produce negotiating guidance on the steps that universities can take to tackle global warming and the climate emergency,

Conference calls on the HESGE to work with Higher Education branches to:

- B) work with the Student Unions, other campus unions, student societies - such as people and planet - to promote awareness of the climate emergency and action that can be taken to address it. Work with these bodies on all of the points below;

- C) call on their university employers to declare a climate emergency and to work with their campus trade unions and student unions to agree and implement a green university plan;

- D) work with their university/ies to establish Climate Action Groups which will work with Students' Unions, Trade Unions and all relevant departments within the institutions. This should produce a clear and comprehensive strategy that commits the institution to taking a holistic approach on climate change;

- E) call on UK Universities to meet net zero carbon emissions as institutions by 2025 through a just transition. This should be achieved by carrying out a climate risk analysis and producing a comprehensive action plan and should incorporate specific actions such as bans on single-use plastic on campus, reducing air travel for work, ensuring green investments and that any new building projects and refurbishments deliver the energy efficiency;

- F) call for UK universities to incorporate climate justice integrally into inclusion in curricula and pedagogy across departments and courses;

- G) call on UK universities to divest from financial investments in institutions, corporations and government bodies that profit from climate and ecological crisis and specifically divest from investments in fossil fuels.

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16. Promoting Transgender Equality in Higher Education Institutions

Carried

Conference will recall carrying the motion 'Trans inclusion in higher education workplaces' in 2017 welcoming trans members active participation in UNISON and accepting trans equality must be addressed in all workplaces. This motion also endorsed the recommendations of the Parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into Transgender Equality, which called for higher education institutions (HEIs) to take proactive steps to promote trans equality, including gender identity awareness training, for all university staff.

UNISON welcomed this call because we have strong evidence that workplace discrimination remains all too common. Research published by the Equality Challenge Unit in 2009 revealed that 23% of trans staff in Higher Education reported that they had been denied a promotion due to their trans status. A 2018 Stonewall report details gender identity-based verbal and even physical abuse in British universities and two thirds of trans members had experienced or witnessed discrimination in UNISON's 2016 equality survey.

Conference commends higher education institutions that have provided gender identity awareness training for their staff and those that have taken proactive steps to promote trans equality by, for example, having a Transgender Champions scheme for their non-trans staff. The Stonewall Diversity Champions programme offers one such model which addresses the marginalisation some trans and gender diverse people are vulnerable to, which can lead to heightened risks of self-harm and depression, particularly in circumstances where identity denial robs them of a safe environment. Inclusive policies which recognise trans people, their gender identities, names, and pronouns, have a measurably positive impact upon their wellbeing.

Conference applauds the prompt support of 3600 staff working in higher education who registered their names to a letter backing "policies and practices which are inclusive and supportive of our trans colleagues and students". This was a response, within just 2 days, to a critical letter, signed by 34 UK academics, to the Sunday Times on 16 June 2019 claiming Stonewall's Diversity Champions training created an "intimidating atmosphere...in tension with academic freedom". The rebuttal letter, organised by the University of Sheffield's Dr Caroline Dodds Pennock, states that respect for gender identities is a duty of care that cannot "be considered antithetical to academic freedom." Conference believes that academic freedom is not a licence to deny someone's human dignity, just as free speech is not a defence for discrimination.

Conference notes there are still many workplace policies and procedures to be reviewed for unnecessary gendering and urges all branches and equality reps

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to ensure their institution's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion units are tasked with making them as gender neutral as possible. It is likely that students' unions have already developed their own good practice on trans inclusion and are asking for student policies and procedures to be reviewed also.

Should any Higher education workplace reps not feel confident addressing transphobia or supporting trans members, Conference recommends UNISON's bargaining factsheet on trans workers equality and the separate guidance for reps supporting trans members, both of which are regularly updated.

Conference calls on the Higher Education Service Group executive to:

- 1) Promote UNISON's trans workers' rights guidance, urging branches, allied with students' unions where possible, to insist that workplace policies and procedures are gender neutral where unnecessary gendering has been used;
- 2) Remind branches to use the UNISON guide for reps and the activist resources available in UNISON's regional LGBT+ groups and national trans network, to increase awareness and confidence addressing trans equality and gender identity issues;
- 3) Support and promote the call from the Parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into Transgender Equality (2016) for all higher education institutions to provide staff with gender identity training, proactive steps to promote trans equality and a trans champions scheme;
- 4) Liaise with UNISON's National LGBT+ Committee to publicise and endorse the University of Sheffield's support letter for LGBTQIA+ people (7369 responses on 26 September 2019).