

Why is University of Liverpool UCU in dispute? A UCU briefing document

THE UNIVERSITY SAYS: The University and the Joint Trades Unions have been discussing the potential to standardise the terms and conditions for non-academic and academic-related staff since Autumn 2012.

UCU SAYS: The campus unions have been in negotiations with the employer represented by the Director of Human Resources, but only in February did the employer present concrete proposals to implement inferior terms and conditions for our members on Academic-Related (PMSA) contracts.

THE UNIVERSITY SAYS: The University would like to standardise terms and conditions to ensure they are applied equitably across the institution, and to provide greater consistency and transparency about the circumstances in which staff become eligible for certain terms such as pay supplements or compensatory time off.

UCU SAYS: The University's proposed new contract and 'Management Guidance' on working hours undermine fair and equitable treatment. They require members to: work above their normal hours; increase the number of hours they work over evenings and weekends and work bank holidays and closure days without adequate compensation. The 'management guidance' is an attempt to introduce contractual changes through the back door. UCU objected to an unfair and informal TOIL procedure being written into the actual contract. We are therefore opposed to the same unfair procedure being part of any related 'management guidance'.

THE UNIVERSITY SAYS: The discussions have been productive and both sides have approached the exercise with the aim of seeking agreement.

UCU SAYS: During negotiations the employer spoke largely in general terms. Eventually they tabled a paper that did little more than set out the absolute legal minimum for staff terms and conditions. The management tone was antagonistic from the start, stating in the first meeting that they were prepared to fire and re-hire everyone (2,803 people) if they could not get their way.

THE UNIVERSITY SAYS: To enable discussions to progress further, the University is now issuing notice to begin formal consultation over changes to terms and conditions, under Section 188(4) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

UCU SAYS: On Wednesday 5 June 2013 the employer refused to negotiate any further on the Management Guidance. Two days later they issued the s188 notice to allow them to fire and rehire 2,800 people. UCU has called on the employer to withdraw this notice and re-enter meaningful negotiations. By refusing to continue with negotiations and moving to this legally required 'consultation' the employer is undermining good industrial relations and attempting to impose inferior terms and conditions upon staff if agreement is not reached within 45 days.

In their email to staff, the employer presents their outrageous and disreputable behaviour as reasonable and normal. We should be absolutely clear – firing and re-hiring staff in order to worsen their working conditions is unprecedented in higher education and it is completely unacceptable. This is an issue for university staff throughout the country and that's why UCU has identified this as a 'local dispute of national significance'.

This campaign is also about our university's reputation. Liverpool likes to market itself as a 'great centre of research, knowledge and innovation' with a 'pioneering reputation'. That reputation has been built by the staff, the very people now being attacked by the university management.

Help us to build the campaign to defend our colleagues and our university's reputation.

Help us to build our union: make sure all your colleagues have a copy of this leaflet and encourage them to join online here: join.ucu.org.uk