

A UNIVERSITY THAT RESPECTS ITS STAFF AND STUDENTS?

The management at the University of Brighton has decided to attack its own workforce, and to reduce the quality of the education it offers to students in the process. All staff and students need to be aware of these developments, and how they will affect our futures, the standing of the University, and the quality of degrees that are being secured by students.

From Hastings closure to pay cuts

Having taken the decision to close the Hastings campus, and to leave higher education to the town's further education college, the University is now intent on worsening the pay and working conditions of all of its staff. From her first day here, just over a year ago, the Vice Chancellor has insisted that the wage bill is too high, despite the fact that university pay has not kept up with inflation. Staff pay is now worth 15% less than it was in 2009. Staff accepted another pay cut for this year. But the management has identified staff as the problem, and want more cuts.

70% pay cut

First they demoted part-time lecturers at Moulsecoomb to the status of 'demonstrator', cutting their pay by 70%. These staff are expected to continue delivering the courses as they always did, but are now on a lower grade and no longer get paid for the preparation and assessment that they do outside the classroom or lab. When some refused to continue for the new rate of pay, undergraduates were asked to fill in for them.

This means that up to half of the contact time to which students are entitled is being delivered by staff being paid a fraction of the lecturer rate. Not only is this an attack on lecturers already on insecure contracts, but it cannot fail to reduce the quality of the education being offered. If implemented across the University, it would mean the wholesale replacement of experienced lecturing staff by people paid only to babysit students in labs and workshops.

Abolition of promotion

Second, the management has scrapped promotion to the Principal Lecturer grade. Lecturers no longer have the right to apply to move up the nationally agreed pay scale in recognition of their experience, level of responsibility, and their contribution to the academic life of the University. Capping lecturers' pay in this way deters them from taking on crucial leadership roles, and makes Brighton a much less attractive place for academics to come and work.

Breach of agreements

With both of these actions the University has broken negotiated agreements it has with the lecturers' trade union, UCU. The management is also threatening to make staff at Grand Parade redundant despite failing to implement a workload agreement signed with the union only two years ago.

Consequently, UCU has declared a formal dispute with the University in an attempt to resolve the situation. We are acting to defend the pay and jobs of lecturers but also to defend the quality of the education we offer to students, and to prevent the University being reduced to the status of a bargain basement provider of low quality degrees.

Unfortunately, the Vice Chancellor has refused to comply with the University's own policy for resolving disputes. We believe this unwillingness to recognise the concerns of staff indicates that the management has further plans to shrink the University, and to reduce quality.

These attacks on staff conditions and educational standards are matter for all of us at the University of Brighton. We are asking for your support.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO DEFEND EDUCATION AT BRIGHTON

1. YOU CAN oppose the employment of non-lecturers to do teaching. Whether a staff member or a student, you can defend the quality of provision at Brighton by signing the petition at www.thepetitionsite.com/730/733/033/defend-educational-standards-stop-the-downgrading-of-lecturers-at-the-university-of-brighton/?cid=headerClickC2
2. YOU CAN support the stance of Senior Lecturers who are refusing to take on Principal Lecturer duties by refusing those duties yourself, if you are a member of staff.
3. YOU CAN, if you are a student, ask questions on your degree about the pay and conditions of the staff teaching you, and raise issues about quality, about what kind of contracts are being used to cover teaching, and about whether advertised 'contact time' on your degree is only genuine time with staff who are on teaching contracts. Raise all of these issues also with the Students' Union at Brighton, and with your course reps.

Is there a financial crisis?

The vice chancellor presents a picture of a university in a dire financial situation. Her recent message to all staff played up the negative elements of the Financial Report 2015-16. What she didn't mention was:

- income from home student fees **increased** by £9.8m (8.6%), and from international student fees by £2.4m (14.8%);
- the shortfall of income is against *targets*, not an actual fall – overall, income has **increased** by 3.4%;
- the under-recruitment of students was also against *target*, whereas in actual numbers student recruitment has **increased** (in any case, the majority of the shortfall against target is accounted for by under-recruitment at Hastings);
- the increase of 21% in expenditure since 2010-11 represents a **zero increase** in real terms;
- if spending on staff costs has increased more than inflation in that time, it is not because our pay has exceeded inflation – our wages have **fallen** 15% in real terms since 2009;
- the VC points to decreasing surpluses but this simply means that the University's income is exceeding its expenditure by a little less than it exceeded expenditure before – i.e. **there is no deficit**;
- the University's reserves remain strong, up by nearly £6 million on last year to a total of **almost £200 million**.

This is not a picture of an institution in financial crisis.

If Brighton spends a slightly higher proportion of its income on staff costs it is because it does not hide some costs by contracting out some of its functions, and because it has a better staff/student ratio than many other institutions. These are both good things which are only a problem for a university that aims to go down-market.