

MCR meeting minutes 26th of November 2019

I. Motion on UCU strikes (Rose Lyddon)

Motion to support the UCU strikes introduced by Rose Lyddon (please find the full document in the attachment): MCR would resolve to contribute to the strike fund, which was set up to reimburse striking academics. This motion is a general motion, which a lot of MCRs have approved already. It also calls upon the MCR president to encourage students to join the picket lines.

Comment (Vassilios): We have been told we are allowed to give money, as long as it has no political notion/motivation. Many of us will become academics, and so defending the UCU is an important matter for most of the MCR.

Action point: Vassilios will send out an email educating MCR students about the strike.

Suggestion: The MCR could organise bringing food/coffee to picket lines to show support.

Comment (Vassilios): The third resolution (mandate president to do the same again if a new strike takes place in the future) is tricky because we do not know what the MCR at that point will agree.

Suggestion: The future MCR can always bring forward the motion again.

Vote on the first resolution: 7 in favour, 3 against → moved

Vote on the second resolution: 14 to none in favour → moved

Vote on the third resolution: 6 to none against → not passed

II. Newspaper issue?

Subscription to weekly newspaper – MCR chose the guardian by poll

Action Point: Person responsible (Nicole?) needs to be contacted and a reminder should be sent out.

III. AOB

- Alasdair: Decision probably for the next term, but would like to bring up issue now already. The JCR are keen on buying new bop equipment such as sound equipment. Previously, the MCR didn't support it but now bops are recurring – so there is reason to discuss it again. Right now the equipment is hired and it might become cheaper to buy it in the long term.

Question: Will the MCR get fair share of use? Answer: For example the lights are stored and can be used any time right now so hopefully this will be the same for any new equipment.

Comment: The MCR host much less events than the JCR – can we pay a smaller share?

Answer: The JCR will probably take any money we agree to because they are very keen on it anyway.

Comment: (Vassilios): In general, it would be good to have more things in common with JCR such as subscriptions etc. Topic will be brought back in the next MCR meetings.

Supporting industrial action by UCU

This Common Room notes:

1. The Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) has recently conducted ballots over industrial action over pay & equality, and pensions.
[1] UCU represents around 40,000 academic, academic-related, and professional staff in the UK, including researchers, postgraduate researchers, teaching staff, and permanent lecturers.
2. In Oxford, about 75% of those balloted have voted in favour of strike action. In order to strike, though, each branch must reach a 50% threshold of all members participating in the ballot. Oxford UCU achieved the threshold for the pay & equality dispute, but narrowly missed it for the pensions dispute.
3. In total, 60 institutions around the UK have passed the threshold and voted overwhelmingly for strike action in one or both of these disputes.
4. UCU has announced[2] strike action to take place over eight consecutive days between Monday 25 November and Wednesday 4 December. This strike action will be for both disputes at the same time. Oxford UCU will be striking over pay and equality.
5. Previous Council policy passed in Hilary 2018,[3] affirming Oxford SU's support for and solidarity with strike action taken over pensions, and setting out Oxford SU's default position on future UCU strikes. This includes issuing statements of support, contacting all graduate students to encourage membership of UCU, encouraging students to respect the strike and not cross the picket lines, producing materials to advertise the strike, and encouraging students to participate in solidarity action as requested by Oxford UCU.
6. Policy passed in Trinity 2017,[4] which states Oxford SU's commitment to fair working conditions for graduate students who work, which includes a commitment to working with UCU to best represent and support these students.
7. Many graduate students are members of both UCU and Oxford SU. UCU membership for students is free.
8. Alongside the planned strikes, Oxford UCU have begun concerted work on casualisation in the collegiate University. At a General Meeting on 5 November, the Oxford UCU membership unanimously voted for a motion brought by the recently created Anti-Casualisation Network to pursue a claim with the University and to fight for fairer conditions and an end to casualised contracts. This campaign will be to the benefit of graduate students who work, and who are some of the most exploited workers in the collegiate University.
9. UCU has supported students in the past, notably against the trebling of tuition fees, the scrapping of maintenance grants, the policing of

freedom of speech through PREVENT, the University's complicity in damaging and extractive industries such as coal tar and fossil fuels, and recently, on the campaign against the Schwarzman donation for the new Humanities centre.

This Common Room believes:

1. That people should be paid enough to live decently, and that properly remunerated staff with secure and stable jobs are better placed to provide the excellence that the University of Oxford claims to promote. Fair pay and conditions for staff are non-negotiable.
2. Solidarity between educators and students is particularly important in combating threats to the HE sector, especially the increasing marketisation of our education
3. It is essential that we stand in solidarity with UCU and the industrial action they have voted to undertake. When staff are mistreated, demoralised, and overstretched trying to make ends meet, education suffers and students suffer. Moreover, talented staff could be forced to consider leaving for jobs where they are treated better.
4. Crossing a picket line is the ultimate sign of disrespect to a strike and, by minimising the disruption caused, would limit the effectiveness of the strike.

This Common Room resolves:

1. To mandate the president to email students informing them of the strike; encouraging them not to attend non-compulsory university organised teaching and not to enter university (faculty/department) libraries; publicising the details of picket lines and encouraging them to attend picket lines
2. To donate £200 to the UCU strike fund.
3. To adopt resolves 1 as the default policy of this Common Room during future industrial action at Oxford University.

[1] https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10399/UCU-members-back-strikes-over-both-pensions-and-pay-and-conditions?utm_source=Lyris&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=&utm_term=&utm_content=&fbclid=IwAR1NNy43tDhk7RJdtFbufQfLGqd8iC_xSRKqqVULWKbqFtAsUhzdy78Svj4

[2] https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10408/UCU-announces-eight-days-of-strikes-starting-this-month-at-60-universities?fbclid=IwAR0DAb_AYqz1U3P8Mqn8ZDbfP8rwwa2f3qgBLhKGv43M6-VM3Uk1ICyZPtA

[3] <https://www.oxfordsu.org/pageassets/your-union/governing-documents/Policy-Book-TT19.pdf> (p.21)

[4] <https://www.oxfordsu.org/pageassets/your-union/governing-documents/Policy-Book-TT19.pdf> (p.11-12)