

University of Birmingham EGM

Friday, 31 October 16:00 to 17:00

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Chair's Business
 - Withdrawal of motion about BUAR and EGM on Thursday, 13 November to hear motion on BUAR
 - University response to Trade Unions' email regarding Anti-Racism
3. Motion: Black Member's Meeting
4. Motion: Solidarity for Leicester
5. Motion: No Punitive Deductions for Unite

Defending Academic Freedom, Equality, and Decolonising the Curriculum (1/2)

Black Member's Conference Notes:

- At the University of Birmingham, “Decolonizing the Curriculum” and Anti-Racism are under threat due to University managers promoting a vision of “institutional neutrality”
- The notion of ‘neutrality’ in science and research is hugely contested but this contestation is severely underacknowledged by the university.
- That academic disciplines have arisen out of demands made by students and staff who were a part of the social justice movements and greater democratisation of higher education starting in the 1960s;
- Some of those disciplines include women’s history, gender and sexuality studies, race and ethnic studies which share an aim of giving voice to vulnerable and marginal groups, and to critically understanding the power relations between those groups and the wider society;
- The city of Birmingham is one of the UK’s two super-diverse cities (at least 51% non-white population in the 2021 census)
- That one criteria of membership for the UUK (which the UoB is a member of) is adherence to the Nolan seven principles of public life, and these are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Defending Academic Freedom, Equality, and Decolonising the Curriculum (2/2)

Black Members Conference Believes:

- That University leaders have a public duty to contribute in positive ways to public and civic life, which includes eliminating racism;
- That the University has a responsibility to ensure that students, staff and members of the community can study, work, and live in dignity and free of discrimination and harassment;
- That knowledge is power and decolonising the curriculum needs to be revived as a campaign, especially in the context of the spread of the far right.

Black Members Conference Resolves to:

- To start and support a public campaign to call for the employer members of UCEA and the VC members of UUK to:
- Reject “institutional neutrality” as going against the principles of academic freedom
- Commit to academic freedom and decolonising the curriculum and thereby contribute to the goal of social justice in wider society
- Commit to equality, justice and anti-racism

Vote

- Yes
- No
- Abstain

Motion: Solidarity with UCU branches taking local industrial actions (1/2)

This branch notes that preceding the opening of a UK-wide university strike ballot, a number of UCU branches have been taking industrial action, or have announced industrial action at the start of the academic year 2025-26 over ongoing pay disputes and job cuts across multiple academic disciplines and operational units at their respective institutions. As of 24 October 2025 they include the following:

- University of Edinburgh: Action-short-of-a-strike (ASOS) since 20 June 2025, and strike for 5 days from 8 September to 14 September;
- The University of Leicester: strike for 3 weeks from 29 September, and ASOS from 20 October onwards;
- The University of Nottingham: strike for 4 weeks from 22 September to 3 October and from 13 October to 24 October, plus indefinite ASOS;
- Imperial College London: strike for 10 days on 7–8 October, 27–28 October, 13–14 November and 25–28 November

Solidarity with UCU branches taking local industrial actions (2/2)

This branch believes that:

- UCU members in these branches do not take industrial action lightly, and they are under huge managerial pressure and financial loss to protest against universities' actions which are harmful to job security (of their own but also their colleagues), workload and academic freedom;
- More UCU members will face similar levels of risk, as more branches (such as the Universities of Dundee, Sheffield and the Highlands and Islands) have secured a mandate for industrial actions and will initiate local strikes;
- It is important for this branch to uphold traditions of solidarity as part of the labour movement, even if currently there are no cross-institutional redundancies at the University of Birmingham.

Therefore this branch resolves to:

- Publicise the UCU Fighting Fund and the industrial action of these branches to our membership, and to support the strikes in any way possible;
- Encourage members take secondary action as described by ACAS (such as refusing to cross a picket line, or refusing to handle goods or services from the employer involved in the dispute) and attend the picket line if possible;
- Send a message of support to these UCU branches to be shared on its webpage and social media.

Vote

- Yes: 100%
- No
- Abstain

Motion: No punitive deductions for our branch administrator

BUCU notes that:

- Following the approved motion asking UCU to seek to resolve their dispute with BUCU, and noting that:
- UCU is threatening to make punitive deductions to salary that mirror practices we have spent considerable effort organizing against, and
- UCU is embarking on a new industrial ballot at the moment.

BUCU resolves:

- BUCU pledges to donate funds to cover any punitive pay deductions that UCU tries to implement that would affect our branch organiser (Russ) as a result of him taking action short of strike and strike action. This is to ensure that Russ does not experience financial hardship as a result of taking lawful industrial action. We note that this is revenue neutral. We would not be spending additional funds to implement this motion. Money for Russ is already allocated. We would just be ensuring that he is paid and those funds are not used for some other purpose. This motion was recommended to the GMM by a committee vote of 8 in favour, 4 absentions.

Suggestions for amendments

Amendment: include “to the Unite LE 127 – Unite UCU strike fund” after “donate funds” in first line after Resolves.

Yes:

No:

Amendment: strike out “that he is paid and” after “We would just be ensuring” in the sixth line after Resolves.

Yes:

No:

There is a question of how the motion without the amendments could be implemented. Other employees of the UCU who are members of Unite and taking ASOS and industrial action would not be protected by this motion.

If the above amendments are not accepted, then the chair suggests remitting the motion back to committee to check whether this is a breach of the financial management rules of the UCU and the branch. Otherwise, both the President and the Treasurer may be liable for mismanagement of the Branch funds.

Vote

- Yes: Majority vote
- No
- Abstain