

Vote "yes" in the UCU ballot

The UCU, at a Special Higher Education Sector Conference, has now set out the terms of the continuing dispute centred on pensions and the Four Fights (casualization, workload, equal pay and conditions for women and BAME workers and the broader issue of pay).

Our small but growing Union, the Solidarity Federation Education Union, supports this ballot and argues that workers should vote in favour of strike action to defend our pensions and conditions. With inflation rising, furlough ending, and historic injustices over pay, pensions and conditions continuing to prevail, the only option left to us is downing tools and walking out. To have any chance of success, this action must be both local and national and must build on the gains, small though they were, of the last period of strike action.

The ballot for action will open on the 18th of October and run for just over 2 weeks. In order to be valid under the Tory trade union legislation (which was not rescinded by Labour!), 50% of members must vote, and of these 50% must back action. While workers will be balloted on different forms of action, it has been shown that "action short of a strike" is divisive and ineffective. Only sharp targeted actions will win the day and guarantee a decent future for those working in HE now and for those entering the sector in the future.

While SFEU supports this ballot, our position is that our collective strength in HE is best served by a unitary union, that is, a union which all education workers can join. Such an approach, tried and tested in the past and in other countries, reduces divisions in the workforce, unites workers across pay differentials (which we seek to abolish) and sets the stage for solidarity across the current artificial union divides.

The ballot will close after just over two weeks and the result will be out by mid-November. With the validity of the ballot operative for six months, decisions will need to be taken about the action we feel capable of undertaking. In the case of UCU members, SFEU is in favour of a marking boycott, working to rule, and withholding marks. Some of these tactics have been successful in the recent Liverpool University dispute.



SFEU is a small but growing new union in education. We organise on the ground across education sectors to maximize our strength and solidarity. We seek to *transform* the education system rather than simply make changes around the edges. We favour direct action, mutual aid for our members and a form of trades unionism that is completely independent of political parties.

Contact: SFEU Organizing Committee at LeedsSolFed@gmail.com and see for more details <http://www.solfed.org.uk/solfed-education-union>