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**Valentine's message to the Chancellor: Love Our Colleges!**

This Valentine's Day we asked the Chancellor to [show some love for further education colleges](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/6809/1/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=7e93425f) by increasing funding and supporting fair pay. Help us make sure he gets the message by emailing him to ask for fair funding and pay, or [tweeting him](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7744/2/) using the hashtag #LoveOurColleges.

**Your union, your vote, your voice**

Please remember to use your vote in UCU ballots and elections taking place:

* [Higher education pay and equality ballot:](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/6148/3/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=af849575) closes 22 February 2019.
* [National officer and NEC elections:](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7609/4/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=da436678) closes 1 March 2019.
* Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and Redbridge College ballots now open. Close 1 March 2019

**In the news**

The Teaching Excellence Framework is not fit for purpose, failing students and deeply unpopular said a UCU-commissioned report out this week. UCU branded the Office for Students a paper tiger following a lightweight report on vice-chancellors' pay. An investigation comes to light at De Montfort University as the vice-chancellor finally resigns. UCU takes a Valentine's message to the Treasury. Ballots open in London and Coventry, while a strike in Edinburgh is suspended at the eleventh hour. [Read more here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7745/5/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=fd101eba)

**Tef not fit for purpose says report**

This week [UCU published a report](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7746/6/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=aa4c35b0) which found that the Teaching Excellence Framework (Tef) has no support among university staff, is failing students and is not fit for purpose. The report is based on a survey of nearly 6,000 university employees and was conducted for UCU by Professor Matt O'Leary, Dr Vanessa Cui and Dr Amanda French from Birmingham City University.

**USS latest position**

[Read this week's message from UCU on the latest position on USS.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7734/7/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=002bf17a) You can also [read an important update from the national dispute committee:](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7735/8/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=6d7edd1b) one year on from the USS strike.

**'Counting the costs of casualisation' survey: last chance to take part**

There's been a great response to our new survey 'counting the costs of casualisation' and submissions will close on Monday. If you're on an insecure contract, [make sure you fill it in now and pass it to colleagues who are precariously employed.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7447/9/)

**Strikes off at Queen Margaret University as agreement reached**

Planned strike action over jobs cuts at Queen Margaret University was called off this week after [university management and UCU reached an agreement](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7736/10/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=3349f5ad) ruling out redundancies and committing to joint work on other workplace issues.

**'Skin Deep' learning week at City and Islington College**

This week City and Islington College held [a themed learning week entitled 'Skin Deep: #weareallimmigrants'](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7742/11/) and students and staff have been performing, displaying, reciting, and singing about the positive role multiculturalism plays in society. Iranian ESOL student and film maker, Majid Adin, produced [this moving interpretation of Elton John's 'Rocket Man'](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7743/12/) to tell a new story of adventure, loneliness and hope.

**UCU LGBT+ research conference**

[This one-day research conference](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/68646/27493259/7427/13/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTUgRmVicnVhcnkgMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=93dcce36) takes place on 17 May in Manchester. Deadlines: call for papers 25 February, registration 1 May.

Best wishes

Justine Stephens
UCU head of campaigns