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**UCU general secretary Sally Hunt resigns for health reasons**

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt has resigned for health reasons. The union's national executive committee met today and agreed the arrangements for the general secretary election. The timetable will enable the election to be completed before Congress 2019. Further details will be circulated next week.

Sally has been UCU general secretary since the union's formation in 2007. She has been elected to the post three times by UCU members, most recently in June 2017. Before the formation of UCU, Sally had been general secretary of one of its constituent unions, the Association of University Teachers (AUT). Prior to that she had been an AUT regional official and a senior union official in the finance sector.

UCU president Vicky Knight told [FE Week](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7851/1/) that the union 'owed a huge debt of gratitude to Sally'. In a message to UCU members and staff, [Sally Hunt said](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7852/2/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMDEgTWFyY2ggMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=77dba367): 'UCU is and will continue to be a great union; a reflection of its truly wonderful membership who contribute so much to the culture, politics and economy of this country. It is no surprise then that the union itself is vibrant, energetic and stimulating. I am grateful for the trust given to me as their general secretary and wish every UCU member and staff member well. It has been a real honour. Thank you.'

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady told [Tes](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7853/3/%22%20%5Co%20%22Opens%20in%20a%20new%20window%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) that: 'Sally was a fantastic president of the TUC in our 150th year and continues to be a great champion of education and lifelong learning. A strong woman in a tough job, Sally has been a source of inspiration and support to me and many others right across the trade union movement.'

**UCU warns of 'damaging consequences' of funding cut for Scottish universities**

Yesterday UCU warned ministers that a £1bn funding deal for Scotland's universities could have 'damaging consequences' for the sector. With funding levels not having risen in line with inflation, UCU warned that the higher education sector was facing further real terms cuts.

Speaking to [STV](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7854/4/) following the [announcement of the funding allocations](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7855/5/) for universities for 2019/20, UCU Scotland official Mary Senior said: 'These cuts will have damaging consequences for students and staff in universities, at an already uncertain time.  If we want a world-leading university system that is also accessible to students from hard to reach backgrounds, it needs to be properly funded - not hit by further real-terms cuts at a time when other costs are increasing.'

**Anti-racism day of action**

Wednesday was UCU's annual day of action against racism. The campaign to tackle the issues of workplace racism and its impact on careers, mental health and relationships with peers/students has grown from strength to strength. This year's theme was [#Blackstaffmatter](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7856/6/)

Tweets from the day and a host of resources are available on the [UCU website](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/3160/7/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMDEgTWFyY2ggMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=350e364e), including the union's [film Witness](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7857/8/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMDEgTWFyY2ggMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=ec704680) which chronicles the lived experiences of UCU black members in post-16 education.

**Jobs threat as Coventry University plans to close research centres**

UCU this week condemned plans to close two research centres at Coventry University, which put 53 staff at risk of redundancy. The union is calling for an urgent meeting with the university about the plans to close the centres less than two years after they opened.

The Centre for Innovative Research Across the Life Course (CIRAL) and the Centre for Advances in Behavioural Science (CABS) only opened in 2017 and carry out research into autism, still births, the sexual exploitation of children, young people with disabilities, and the health of asylum seekers and refugees.

Speaking to the [Coventry Telegraph](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7858/9/), UCU regional official Anne O'Sullivan said: 'Closing these centres just two years after opening them is a destructive step that puts over 50 jobs at risk. We are seeking an urgent meeting with the university to discuss the rationale behind these plans, what the impact will be for staff, students and the research.'

**Anger at job loss plans for Stockport College and Trafford College**

UCU has [reacted angrily](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7859/10/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMDEgTWFyY2ggMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=352428d2) to news of plans to axe 50 staff at Stockport College and Trafford College. Staff at all three sites in Altrincham, Stretford, and Stockport face redundancy, with 26 teaching jobs at risk, despite [the region's construction boom](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7860/11/).

The news comes less than a year after the merger of Stockport and Trafford colleges, which was supposed to bring stability. At the time [the college said](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7861/12/) the move would 'create a single, larger and more sustainable college better able to meet the current and future needs of students, employers and the local community.'

UCU regional official Martyn Moss said: 'There is no rationale for axing jobs in areas like English, maths, construction or plumbing and the move appears to be directly at odds with what the students, businesses and the local community actually need.'

**University of Surrey refuses to rule out compulsory redundancies**

Staff at the University of Surrey were told on Monday to prepare for a shortfall between income and expenditure of at least £15m per year for the next few years. The message from their vice-chancellor Max Lu said the university had implemented tighter controls on all staff recruitment and would shortly be announcing details of a voluntary severance package. [The Independent](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7862/13/) reported that Lu, one of the best-paid vice-chancellors in the country, spent £1,600 of university money relocating his pet dog.

Refusing to rule out compulsory redundancies, a university spokesman told [Surrey Live](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7863/14/) the university would reduce staff 'through a recruitment freeze and an enhanced voluntary severance scheme. While we can never rule out the possibility of compulsory redundancies, we will seek to avoid these wherever possible.'

UCU members at the university are holding an emergency meeting on Monday to discuss the situation and how to respond. A UCU spokesperson said that it was vital the university avoided any knee-jerk cuts and worked with the union to explore all options.

**'Brexit gridlock' blamed for latest funding review delay**

This week's latest from the consistently delayed Augur review is that it is set to be delayed. The [BBC says the review is unlikely](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7864/15/) to feature this academic year and says a Brexit gridlock is to blame. It says the latest thinking from the panel is to axe fees to £7,500 a year after leaks suggested they may come down to £6,000. It is unclear how that shortfall would be made up with the Treasury, Number 10 and the Department for Education holding different views.

The report also suggests that, as the review is so heavily linked to Theresa May, a change in prime minister could see it being quietly left to gather dust in Whitehall.

**UCU takes its campaign on academic freedom to the international level**

Following [a major report on academic freedom,](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/4171/16/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMDEgTWFyY2ggMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=cfa592ee) UCU has recently [submitted an allegation](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7865/17/) to the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts regarding the UK's government's non-compliance with the [1997 UNESCO recommendation on the status of higher education teaching personnel.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7866/18/) The [UCU submission](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7867/19/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMDEgTWFyY2ggMjAxOQ%3d%3d&x=1628016e) - supported by [Education International](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/69387/27493259/7868/20/) - focuses on inadequate protections for academic freedom (both in law and in practice) and we will keep members informed of developments with the allegations process.