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This week: HE pay and equality, FE fights back, USS, Augar review, University of Portsmouth, Justice 4 Grenfell and Together Against Trump.  
  
**Fight for a better deal for higher education staff**  
  
At last week’s annual UCU Congress, delegates voted for an industrial action ballot in the autumn on the issues of precarious employment, pay inequality, workload and salary erosion in higher education. This follows the employers’ refusal to engage properly with the union’s national claim beyond offering a below inflation pay increase of 1.8%.   
  
The next step is that UCU’s higher education committee (HEC) will meet on 28 June to agree the substance of and timetable for the national campaign. [You can read the pay claim presented to the employers here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/7985/1/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMzEgTWF5IDIwMTk%3d&x=f40ff8f8)   
  
UCU branches will continue to campaign locally to exert pressure on employers to tackle the issues of casualisation, workload and inequality. We will provide a full report to members following the HEC meeting.  
  
**FE fights back: Tower Hamlets and West Thames Colleges strike next week**  
  
The FE fightback continues next week with Tower Hamlets and West Thames colleges taking strike action for a decent pay deal. [Please check out our wall of support and add your own messages here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/7135/2/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMzEgTWF5IDIwMTk%3d&x=714d02b3) Our annual Congress last week celebrated the successes of the campaign and agreed to invite more college branches to join the fightback and hold ballots with a further wave of action planned for the autumn.   
  
Meanwhile [members at Nottingham College are being balloted for industrial action](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8430/3/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMzEgTWF5IDIwMTk%3d&x=bc3b9228) over the imposition of contracts that would cut staff pay, holiday, sick leave and workload protection. [Staff held protests last Tuesday across several campuses, calling for fair contracts.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8431/4/)   
  
**USS pensions update on Congress decisions**  
  
UCU Congress has voted to call an industrial action ballot of USS branch members starting in September 2019 if the employers refuse to pay all the additional pension contributions currently proposed by USS. The union’s policy is for 'no detriment' which means that UCU members’ contributions should not rise and benefits should not fall as a result of the latest valuation.  
  
USS has proposed three contribution options to the joint negotiating committee (JNC) in order to protect current benefits and avoid the larger increases due to come on stream in October 2019 and April 2020. But none of the options meet our 'no detriment' policy - all would mean increased contributions for members. UCU believes that if all of the proposals proposed by the joint expert panel (JEP) were fully implemented there would be no need for any contribution increases to preserve benefits. [You can read more about the options here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8426/5/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMzEgTWF5IDIwMTk%3d&x=3c7c4277)   
  
[UCU Congress also expressed unanimous support for UCU-appointed director Professor Jane Hutton](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8427/6/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMzEgTWF5IDIwMTk%3d&x=960d323d) who has recused herself from the trustee board after criticising the valuation methodology used by USS and the failure of USS to adequately address the issues she raised. Congress also reaffirmed our call for the resignation of Bill Galvin, CEO of USS and [agreed to call for an academic boycott of Trinity College, Cambridge](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8428/7/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMzEgTWF5IDIwMTk%3d&x=88f3cac1) who have proposed withdrawing from the USS scheme and setting up a private pension. HEC will discuss this when it meets on 28 June.   
  
[You can read all the HE motions, including those on the HE annual claim and USS here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8429/8/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMzEgTWF5IDIwMTk%3d&x=fd3bdb99)   
  
**Augar review**  
  
The [review of post-18 education and funding (the Augar review)](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8437/9/) was published on 30 May. UCU's response was that while any recognition of the need for increased investment in further education (FE) was welcome the idea that this should come from reducing HE funding was wrongheaded. The review represented "a wasted opportunity to develop radical changes that would make a real difference for students and institutions". Our general secretary elect [Jo Grady blogged on Augar here,](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8435/10/) describing the review as providing "an even stronger reorientation of education around what businesses want, rather than the interests and capabilities of students." Matt Waddup, UCU national head of policy and campaigns, set out [four problems with the review's recommendations in the Guardian here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8434/11/) A more detailed briefing for branches and members on the implications of the review and what UCU will be lobbying for will be published shortly.  
  
**University of Portsmouth protest over redundancies**  
  
Portsmouth UCU will be staging a protest outside the university’s executive board meeting on Monday 3 June, as management discusses whether to go ahead with up to 65 planned job cuts in the faculty of science. Our members are demanding a voluntary redundancy scheme for staff and that the university rules out compulsory redundancies.  
  
**Justice 4 Grenfell: Saturday 15 June**   
  
The second anniversary of the tragedy at Grenfell Tower will be commemorated with [a solidarity march on Saturday 15 June,](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8441/12/) 12 midday, Portland Place, London, W1A 1AA.   
  
**Together Against Trump – demonstrate Tuesday 4 June**  
  
Donald Trump is coming to Britain for a state visit and campaigners will [demonstrating in London on Tuesday 4 June](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/76378/27493259/8436/13/) assembling in Trafalgar Square at 11am.