Welcome to this week's UCU branch officers' update with information and events listings for key activists. If there are officers in your branch who should be receiving this but are not on our current distribution list, [please email me](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/44493/7557873/4954/1/).

In this week’s update:
1. USS strike action
2. March Against Racism, Saturday 17 March
3. Political fund review ballot 2018
4. Review of our day of action against workplace racism

**1. USS strike action**

Yesterday the higher education committee (HEC) heard from the negotiators - their unanimous message was to keep the action going as talks are at a critical stage. Acas resumes today. USS branches involved in the dispute should:

- Organise for a successful start to week four - we need to really show our strength. As usual we will write to members at Sunday teatime but please send your own messages today too.
- Ensure a well-attended branch briefing next Tuesday - one delegate per branch. This will be your opportunity to hear about the negotiations and shape the next phase of action (if it is required).
- Work together to build successful phase two strike action. Phase two is basically (a) one week strikes straight after Easter where sufficient teaching continues; and (b) fourteen day strikes during the assessment period.

Over the next week we will be seeking information from you on whether the level of teaching in your institution justifies you joining (a) and optimal start dates and strike patterns for (b).

**2. March Against Racism, Saturday 17 March**

Branches and regions are encouraged to support the annual march against racism on Saturday 17 March.  Marches will be taking place across the country in London, Cardiff and Glasgow as well as in cities across Europe. Contact [Stand Up to Racism](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/44493/7557873/5744/2/) for further details. UCU supports this event.

**3. Political fund review ballot 2018: ballot information**

Please [see here for information](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/44493/7557873/5745/3/?c73c8e04=YnJhbmNocm91bmR1cA%3d%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbA%3d%3d&560a3889=VUNVIGJyYW5jaCBvZmZpY2VycycgdXBkYXRlOiAwOSBNYXJjaCAyMDE4&x=540c2cc6) on when to expect political fund ballot material and what to do if ballot material doesn’t arrive. Ballot closes 12 April 2018.

**4. UCU day of action against workplace racism - review**

Did you organise a teach-in or organise an event with speakers and other campus unions? We are keen to hear from as many branches and regions as possible on how you observed the day of action against workplace racism on Wednesday 28 February. Your responses will assist the black members' standing equality committee in planning, preparing and organising future events. Please send your evaluations to Chris Nicholas.

All the best,

Justine Stephens
UCU head of campaigns