**Last chance to vote: FE pay**

The further education England pay ballot closes on Wednesday 19 December so last chance to safely post your vote is Monday. If you're at one of the [colleges being balloted for strike action on pay](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/6101/1/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=1fd7c41c) please remember to vote and help us beat the anti-union law threshold by reminding your colleagues too.

**Universities threatening jobs losses**

The [Guardian](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7312/2/) reported on Wednesday that universities are warning of redundancies in the new year. The paper said that more than half a dozen universities have told staff there could be job cuts in 2019. Cardiff, Reading, Bangor, Gloucester, Birkbeck and Queen Margaret in Edinburgh are all listed by the Guardian. Universities are in the midst of reporting their financial results for 2017-18 and are monitoring student applications coming in for next year.

UCU head of policy and campaigns Matt Waddup said: 'Knee-jerk cuts to staff will harm universities' ability to deliver high-quality teaching and research and provide the support students need. Staff are already overstretched and asking those who remain to do even more is not a sustainable strategy.

'Students repeatedly say they want greater investment in their staff as a top priority, yet the proportion of expenditure spent on staff has fallen. Cutting staff will send out entirely the wrong signal to potential students. Axing educators is obscene at any time, let alone during the current uncertainty when we need our universities firing on all cylinders.'

**Strike ballot at Edinburgh's Queen Margaret University in row over job losses**

UCU members at Queen Margaret University are already being [balloted for strike action](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7313/3/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=204ec649) in the row over job losses. The ballot opened on Wednesday and will close on 16 January. The dispute centres on cuts that would put more than 40 jobs at risk. UCU said that alternatives to the current plans including resource sharing, management savings and extending the period of restructuring have not been sufficiently explored.

UCU Scotland official [Mary Senior said](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7314/4/): 'Nobody wants to take industrial action and we believe the best way to deal with these issues is round the negotiating table. However, by threatening these cuts and refusing to rule out compulsory redundancies the university has left us with no choice other than to ballot for strike action.'

**Vice-chancellors' pay and pay-offs back in the firing line**

As universities' financial statements are released, so are the details of their vice-chancellors pay deals and pay-offs. The [Independent](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7315/5/) picked up on the fact that, despite protests from staff and students, the University of Southampton has not cut the pay of its controversial vice-chancellor Chris Snowden. Snowden has since retired and any pay-off he receives won't be revealed until next year's accounts.

The University of Exeter however detailed the money its outgoing vice-chancellor will receive. Steve Smith will pocket an "extraordinary" £400,000 in bonuses after he leaves his post for doing absolutely nothing. Matt Waddup told [Times Higher Education](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7316/6/) that vice-chancellors being paid hundreds of thousands of pounds as a bonus for doing nothing, demonstrated the need for urgent reform. He said the latest examples of pay scandals suggested universities had learned nothing from the scandals that have been so damaging for the sector in recent years, or simply don't care.

Elsewhere the [Financial Times](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7317/7/) reported that Imperial head Alice Gast was one of the best-paid vice-chancellors in the country on a deal of £433,000. However, a few hours later the [Telegraph](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7318/8/) trumped that by revealing that David Eastwood at the University of Birmingham took home £444,000 in 2017-18.

**Pay ballots should focus college leaders' minds on doing more for staff**

Responding in the [Guardian](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7236/9/) to Polly Toynbee's coruscating analysis of the government's [failure to fund further education](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7236/10/), Matt Waddup said colleges are remarkable transformative places, but their staff have been let down time and time again by the government.

He said that while Polly correctly set out the government's failings, too often cuts have been used by some colleges as an alibi for inaction, not only on the desperate state of staff pay, but also issues such as escalating workloads and the overuse of casual contracts.

He said it was no surprise that staff have had enough and that [the current unrest](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7319/11/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=aed40614) should focus ministers and college leaders on doing more for the brilliant staff who transform millions of lives every year.

**UCU squeezes employer on casualisation**

While national employers' representatives sit on their hands, UCU's 'stamp out casualisation' campaign has been taking the fight to local employers in both higher and further education and we've been making some impressive progress this year. Read a roundup from [the higher education sector here,](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7265/12/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=42081fd7)and from [the further education sector here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7266/13/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=4694a420)

**USS update**

Members will be aware that UCU and Universities UK (UUK) have stated their support for the recommendations made by the joint expert panel as the basis for negotiations and that USS has decided to undertake a fresh '2018' valuation.

This week the Pensions Regulator (tPR) called upon USS to reach a formal agreement with UUK on how to manage any possible downside from the employers' new commitment to undertake more risk. Discussions at joint negotiating committee (JNC) level are ongoing and a more detailed report of the current state of play will be circulated to USS members on Monday.

The national disputes committee (NDC) which is charged with providing a steer to the negotiators, [has published a statement for members which can be viewed here](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7323/14/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=fdd2a136).

**T level funding consultation**

The government are consulting on their proposed funding for the delivery of new T level qualifications. UCU will be responding to the consultation and [would welcome member input into the response.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7320/15/)[Read the questions here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7328/16/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=1b2e37e7)

**Concordat report shows massive support for tougher action on fixed-term contracts**

This week saw the publication of [UCU's survey of research active staff attitudes toward the revised Concordat](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7321/17/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=42e042e8) and showed massive majorities for tougher action on fixed-term contracts and support for researcher independence.

**UCU Scotland disappointed at draft budget**

UCU Scotland [has responded to the release of the draft Scottish government budget](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7332/18/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=85ae5244) by stating the funding settlement failed to match 'politicians' warm words'.

**Resources for World AIDS Day**

UCU has released [updated information about HIV and AIDS.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7322/19/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogc2VuZCB0aGUgZW1wbG95ZXJzIGEgbWVzc2FnZSB0aGlzIENocmlzdG1hcw%3d%3d&x=4f20c2b6) The resource provides information and advice to UCU reps about HIV and how conditions in the workplace can best support people living with HIV.

**People's Assembly demonstration, 12 January: general election now!**

The People's Assembly campaign group has called [a demonstration in central London](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/64320/151504/7324/20/) calling for a general election.