**Minutes of D.U.C.U. Branch Committee: 23rd September, 2014**

**Present:** Ian Ellis (President)

Janice Aitken (Secretary)

Mona Clark (Assistant Secretary)

John Drummond

Mari-Cruz Garcia

Marion Sporing

**Apologies:**  Nandini Battarachyra

Gair Dunlop

Carlo Morelli

Angela Roger

Sharon Sweeney

**224.1** The Minutes of the last meeting (26th August) were accepted as a true record.

**224.2** Matters arising:

**223.11 Referendum discussion.** Hosted by Abertay, this was interesting and successful. Around sixty were in the audience which included students from Abertay . Two

members from Dundee and two from Abertay spoke to the meeting, a YES and a NO

supporter from each University. It was noted with satisfaction that so many voters across

Scotland were actively involved in the discussion. Abertay reps felt that further collaborative

action would be a good policy.

**223.16 ‘Working at desk all day edict’ by certain line managers**. This to go to JNC if enforced. For academic and academic-related staff there is no formal contractual obligation to work on site, and any pressures to do so could reasonably be said to be against the Dignity at Work policy because it implies a lack of trust in and thus a lack of dignity for the individual concerned.

**224.3 DUCU Industrial action (ASOS).** A Branch meeting will take place on September 25th to discuss the state of play in the on-going ASOS over the threats of compulsory redundancies. Although that threat is still being discussed, it is still considered that the result of the DUCU threat so far has been a great moral victory and thus a great psychological boost to all those involved in the campaign. The meeting agreed that it now seemed appropriate to withdraw from the ASOS. President to contact UCU Scotland so check whether the action could be just formally ceased or whether it could be merely suspended, thus allowing a re-start if compulsory redundancies were threatened again.

**224. Financial costs of VS scheme.** As yet it had not been possible to establish the costs of the VS scheme to the University. This would be very useful information in order to assess whether there was a strong argument for stating that these costs would have been better used in investing in staff and other resources. It was agreed that this should be investigated, using the FoI Act if necessary

**224.5 TRAC.**  It was noted that management had now changed some of the content of the TRAC documents, and supposedly now anonymising all information obtained. These changes have not been discussed with DUCU and it is not absolutely clear whether the information required will actually be of great value to management. Several members of the DUCU Branch Committee stated that they had not (yet) completed a TRAC form, although DUCU has not sent out any specific advice on the issue to members.

**224.6 USS up-date.** The information on possible changes in the USS pension scheme strongly suggests that they will be detrimental to both existing and future members’ pensions. Fears of the scheme closing down completely because of deteriorating financial circumstances are very unlikely to be realized. However , it may be that staff choose to set up their pensions elsewhere because of fears about the viability of their USS pensions and this would obviously negatively affect USS’s income. This to be an item in the Branch meeting on 25th September.

**224.7 JNC items.** It was noted that the OSAR forms had been changed, and there is pressure on staff to complete them as soon as possible. DUCU has not been involved in such changes, which it is argued make the forms clearer and the information required more transparent. There are Dignity at Work issues in both the Dental School and the Business School, and it was agreed that the policy and procedures outlined in the present system require to be improved. DUCU to inform management that the secretary to the JNC should be an administrator rather than someone drawn from a College, as there could be the problem of being totally objective, or there being a conflict of interests in a JNC meeting if the secretary were drawn from a College where access to private or personal information or proceedings were being discussed.

**224.8 VS and letter to Court.** The proposed letter from DUCU had been delivered to Court and the Chair of Court met with DUCU President and Secretary to discuss the key points in the letter. It was considered that the responses from the Chair of Court and the meeting itself had been inconsequential, with no ground conceded by management. However it was agreed that the letter had been very successful at drawing Court’s attention to DUCU’s views on the VS scheme and any threat of compulsory redundancies.

**224.9 DUCU administrator.** President, Secretary and Mary Senior, UCU Scotland officer, had met with Liang and discussed his role in the union and where it might be extended. The role of administrator will now be financed by UCU, and a new contract will be issued to Liang, with Mary Senior being his line manager. Liang expressed his interest in increasing what he does for DUCU.

**224.10 Branch Committee co-option.** It was agreed that Marianne Reilly, CLS, be co-opted to the Branch Committee. Marianne had offered her services as she was keen to be more actively involved in DUCU affairs. Two other members had offered their services and they will be contacted.

**224.11 Dental School risk assessment.** Marion has carried out a risk assessment in the Dental School at the request of UNISON. This included a stress survey. A collective grievance is being prepared by staff in the School. HR appear to have been somewhat unhelpful on the problems therein.

**224.12 Casework up-date.** Marion Sporing reported that there are now 13 cases being supported by DUCU. The three members of the Branch Committee who have taken VS were all involved in casework, therefore it will be necessary for new caseworkers to be found. It may be that the three who have taken VS can stay on as caseworkers, despite no longer being on the Branch Committee. This to be investigated.

Mona Clark,

October 6th, 2014 .