

London & Eastern Education Region NEWSLETTER

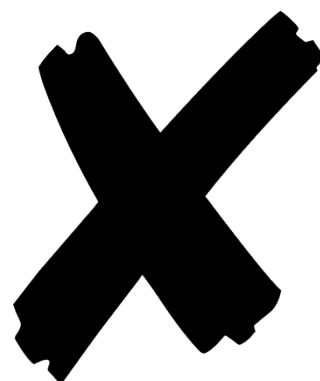
June 2021



Advice and help during Covid -19 crisis

'X' marks your spot? Your vote matters: National Pay Ballot

Some new members of Unite may not know that most higher education institutions negotiate pay nationally every year. This has meant that alongside making huge efforts to protect you and your job during the Covid crisis, Unite negotiators have also been actively pushing against last year's pay freeze, and for an improvement to the miserly increase proposed by the sector employers earlier this year for the coming year (2021-2022). As always, you will need to think about what is on the table, because it is *probable* that very soon it will be your turn, as an individual, to tell Unite what you think of the updated offer which is likely to be via **a consultative e-ballot**.



It is vital that you make sure **now** that Unite knows **your current home address & email address**. If you are not sure if Unite has up-to-date contact details simply give your local branch reps this information as soon as you finish reading this newsletter so they can confirm this with Unite. You can also go online and adjust your Unite profile: <https://myunite.unitetheunion.org/login>

Remember, the employers are really keen that you ignore every opportunity to have your say about your pay and conditions. Don't let them get away with this view.

Yes, your vote counts. Every vote counts. But not voting has an effect too – and in no way that can be counted as positive.

It's not only a question of whether you accept or reject an offer. It's not only a question of whether you are prepared to back up rejection with, potentially, a ballot for industrial action and being prepared to strike if needs be – although that's essential. It's that you, as a member, are taking part in a direct and simple process that gives **you a voice over national pay**. Of course, your local representatives may be aware of the *general feeling* of branch members, but they should not have to second-guess this when members, like you, have the opportunity to vote in a national **consultative** ballot. **So, don't wait, please confirm your home and email address to your reps now and vote as soon as your consultative ballot arrives.**

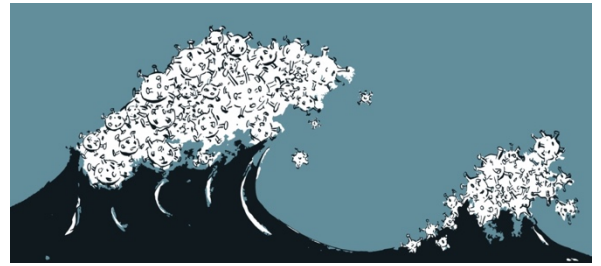
Unite General Secretary Election

As most of you will know Len McCluskey, Unite's current General Secretary, is stepping down and the process of finding a new GS is well underway. Nominations for a new General Secretary (GS) of Unite have been received and the deadline for submission has been reached.

The next stage is for you to have your say on who you would like to lead Unite from the listed candidates. You should expect to receive your voting papers for those in GS race from 5 July, and you must return your vote by Monday 23 August 2021. The result will be declared on Thursday 26 August 2021. As always, if you don't receive your papers it is likely that your address has not been updated. As per the consultative ballot on pay, please contact your Unite branch rep, with your current address.

[GS election info - read on](#)

Anti-Covid inaction?



With almost Hitchcockian suspense, many of us were wondering whether the “data not dates” mantra would be adhered to by the government in any meaningful way when the Delta (India) variant came along. But instead of acting promptly on the potential threat to plans, as on so many occasions in the past year, the government decided to underplay scientific assessments and allowed travel to and from most affected countries to carry on. The rumours suggested the PM prioritised his forthcoming visit to India, and a potential trade agreement, over containment and protection of the home population. The result of such familiar foot-dragging was predictable: the variant soon landed here and got stuck in to doing what Covid does given a wide-open window of opportunity. So, bizarrely, in the full knowledge that so many have yet to receive a first, let alone second jab, the government undermined their own, loudly trumpeted, release of lockdown date, of 21 June.

At the time of writing, the current stage of lockdown has been extended until at least Monday 19 July, with many schools breaking up for the summer holidays on the following Friday – meaning that infection rates are likely to rise. Of course, the hope is that the ramping up of vaccinations to include younger and younger age groups will bring forward protection for them and the broader community, although the individuals recently jabbed will have to wait for immunity to build up in the coming weeks and months, with a second jab needed to provide optimum individual protection and, therefore, protection for everyone else. How the new release lockdown date reflects this is not at all clear.

To add information about how your workplace has responded to the pandemic here's the Unite Register:

<https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19-advice/the-unite-covid-19-register/>

Unite opposes cuts to HE arts courses

A letter has been sent by Unite to the PM strongly opposing proposed cuts to the funding of creative and performing arts courses and demanding they be reconsidered. The proposals mean, effectively, a huge 50% cut to these courses, with yet more cuts threatened during this government's term in office. We all know how little support the government has given to the arts over the pandemic – especially to the thousands of free-lancers that work in them - but these education cuts jeopardise the entire *future* of a sector that brings in around £111 billion a year to the economy.

This short-sightedness is being couched in terms of future allocation of moneys instead going to those “subjects vital to the economy and labour markets” in with what appears to be a preferred focus on STEM subjects - rather than anything to do directly with employment. There have been suggestions that for some non-specialist institutions, abandoning their popular arts provision could even threaten their survival, as well as removing opportunities that on the face of it support the so-called levelling up agenda the government says it wants.

The redirection of funding that is being portrayed as good housekeeping is really a huge cut (especially for London-based higher education non-specialist institutions) in areas the government really does not care for, and perhaps considers to be uncontroversial low-hanging fruit for funding reductions. Unite disagrees.

If you are reading this but are not yet a member, **welcome**. We hope you will see the importance of belonging to a union in the face of so many threats to jobs, fairness and well-being at work. **Join us here:** <https://unitetheunion.org/>

The London & Eastern Education Regional Committee supports Unite activities in your institution. [Contact us via your local representative.](#)