

Draft motion for discussion: summer 2026 branch strategy against management attacks on staff job security and workloads

This has been written as a draft motion, so that members can democratically mandate the executive committee and negotiators with a specific strategy if we feel it would be useful. It can also be read as a discussion paper.

This branch notes

- That negotiations with the University Executive Board have made very little progress – see the summary state of negotiations table below.
- That over 2025-2026 the University Executive Board has repeatedly cancelled meetings (39 cancellations since September 2025), including on the day; management responses to written union enquiries have been provided an average of 73 days late, or not at all. Recent restructures and projects, including Communications, the ASSL student space, office changes in John Percival, and the Research Service, have had no staff or union consultation at all.
- That there is a major workload crisis across Academic and Professional Services staff, which will be exacerbated from September 2026 as the delayed Professional Services model comes into effect at the same time as the beginning of the 2026/27 academic teaching calendar.
- That there is a continued 2027 timeline for Professional Services restructures which include financial savings targets; and that management continues to insist that further academic job cuts will be needed, via voluntary and potentially compulsory means.
- That sharp reductions in academic research time and administrative role hours in the new workload model may justify further academic staff cuts based on lower overall workload modelling.
- That the university management's own data shows that sick leave for work-related stress is already significantly higher than sector averages.
- That the University Executive Board have not provided campus unions with current management accounts or current financial modelling, and have shared only forecasts for projected spending cuts with staff.

This branch believes

- That as a branch, we should continue to pursue governance and structural reform through engagement with the Welsh Government and Medr; and to pursue the health and safety of staff through a potential report to the Health & Safety Executive to initiate a workplace investigation, alongside steps towards industrial action within the university;

- That the goal of any industrial action strategy is to equip union negotiators with sufficient power to force management to change course. We leveraged this threat successfully in April 2025 and December 2025 to protect staff from compulsory redundancies in 2025 and 2026.
- That members at Cardiff University are facing not just the risk of compulsory redundancy (including in the sciences, as CARBS, MATHS, COMSC were put into the Voluntary Redundancy scheme in 2026 with no staff consultation or evidence), but also the risk of dangerously high workloads for all academic and professional services staff across the university.
- That we should advance an industrial action strategy that includes (at least) two key demands for (1) no compulsory redundancies and (2) reasonable and safe workloads. This is strategic because, without this second demand, if management concede to no compulsory redundancies as in April 2025, our dispute and any associated mandate for industrial action automatically ends and we have no ongoing leverage.
- That strike action remains the last resort, but its threat gives us crucial leverage. With a live industrial action mandate, members can democratically propose additional forms of action at any time. If members choose to do so, we can also decide not to take certain forms of action that have been notified to the employer if we consider it not the right time. A local industrial action mandate puts power in members' hands and underpins a strong negotiation position.
- That our branch must mobilise members for common, collective goals to obtain a strong industrial action mandate over 2026/27, and in doing so, generating solidarity and a united front across university staff in the face of exhaustion, overwork, confusion and low morale.

This branch resolves

- To issue the University with a Failure to Agree Notice following the lack of progress at the last negotiations in June 2026 (see state of negotiations table below), as a first step towards gaining leverage in negotiations.
- To take action to increase public and political scrutiny of poor management and governance at Cardiff University via intensive Welsh Government engagement and a sustained media presence.
- To hold an EGM to determine our key priorities in advance of the Joint Negotiation Committee which would be triggered by the Failure to Agree Notice.
- If there is no progress on guarantees for staff job security and workloads at the Joint Negotiation Forum, to issue a notice of industrial action to move towards a consultative ballot at the end of September.
- To support department representatives with updating UCU membership data in August and September 2026 in advance of renewed balloting.

Risks and timelines

- There is a risk that S188 notices of compulsory redundancy may be issued by university management in September 2026–January 2027. It is possible that the selection process for redundancy could begin immediately. In this scenario, the earliest that staff would face compulsory redundancy would be in January 2026. This would fall before a mandate for industrial action unless we hold an indicative ballot and then a statutory ballot within the autumn semester, which is high risk as it would involve shorter voting windows.
- UCU Cymru believe that the above scenario would be a breach of management commitments, and they would speed up our ballot timeline accordingly.
- The benefit of issuing a Failure to Agree Notice now is that this would trigger a Joint Negotiation Forum in August, which would then be followed by our routine Joint Consultative Negotiating Forum meeting in October, providing several opportunities for negotiation progress as well as media attention.

State of negotiations – reference guide to UCU negotiation papers and management responses as of 9 July 2026, after JCNF on 3 June 2026

Claim	Summary of response
Job security	
A guarantee of no compulsory redundancies in the calendar year 2027 , and a commitment to not issue a precautionary S188 notice of redundancies in the calendar year 2027.	NO. “the University is unable to provide a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies in the 2027 calendar year. ... University management is actively prioritising voluntary measures to achieve necessary workforce adjustments. We continue to work on projections for student numbers for next academic year and are in the process of developing a proposed budget to put before Council. It would therefore be premature to make commitments about compulsory redundancies in 2027 while these processes are still ongoing and the full impact is not yet known.”
A commitment not to bring schools or teams into Voluntary Redundancy schemes without a fully-evidenced 90-day consultation with staff and unions.	NO. “in December 2025 when we took the remaining Schools out of scope, [UEB] commit[ed] to annual VR schemes as part of making the required reductions needed. ... the University can legally offer a voluntary redundancy scheme without entering into collective consultation at that stage, where no dismissals are being proposed.”

A commitment to maintaining education and employment standards, including through in-house provision of programmes and the end of expanding use of Study Group private outsourcing with significantly worse pay, conditions, and standards.	NO. “Cardiff University is fully committed to maintaining high academic standards and a positive working environment. However, it does not accept that partnership provision inherently undermines these aims, nor that it would be appropriate to commit to ending or restricting such arrangements in the manner proposed. ... We bring again to your attention the fact that our partnership with Study Group is an important part of securing our financial, as well as our educational, future.”
The same guarantee of 'roles for all' in the PS transformation extended to ELP and LEARN.	NO. “it is not possible to commit to make such a guarantee until the full scope and timelines of transformation activity for Phase 2 are known. The Trade Unions and staff will be advised as soon as the detail on Phase 2 transformation is confirmed and a further PS consultation meeting has now been arranged for 7 July.”
A commitment to a dedicated mechanism for trade union scrutiny and negotiation over the use of fixed term contracts, including their use to mitigate the impacts of redundancies or substitute permanent contracts; and the contracting and secondment of staff for Transnational Education projects.	No further commitments beyond existing mechanisms. “The University already has a careful and thorough process in place for managing fixed-term contracts. We hold collective consultation meetings every quarter for colleagues whose contracts are due to come to an end and solicit any Union responses. These cases are also reviewed by the Redundancy Committee, which is chaired by the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to ensure appropriate oversight. Any decisions are then formally approved by the Chair of Council. An update is provided to Trade Union colleagues at each JCNF of the data on this. The University does not believe any further mechanisms are required.”
A commitment to discontinue the use of job descriptions which specify the need to travel internationally until an assessment of the potential for indirect discrimination has been carried out and procedures have been agreed with the trade unions which	NO. “we do not consider it appropriate or necessary to suspend the use of job descriptions that include international travel requirements pending a further assessment or to subject such requirements to union agreement in all cases.”

ensure that these job descriptions are only used in cases of genuine necessity.	
A commitment to a wider audit on the number of Grade 5 employees across the university who are ineligible for Certificates of Work under new UKVI regulations , and for mitigations to be made to secure their roles, along with other commitments to avoid this situation in the future.	No further commitments beyond existing mechanisms. “The University is fully aware of staff who may be impacted by the new UKVI regulations. HR have been working with individuals and supporting them within the constraints available to us. Whilst the regulations are outside of the university’s control we will also continue to advocate for those individuals via the appropriate channels. ... The University have already these raised concerns with UCEA and will continue to work collaboratively with relevant parties on this.”
A commitment to a formal PS promotions procedure and to reinstate HERA regrading.	NO. “The University has no plans to establish a Professional Services Promotions Process. We are currently considering when the University will be in a position to reopen Grading Review. It is important to note that Grading Review and Promotions are very different processes, for different purposes.”
A commitment to consult with Trade Union on changes to working conditions and campus spaces , including the provision of financial evidence for projected savings, and a commitment to use these savings to secure staffing levels.	NO. “The University has endeavoured to share relevant financial information with TU colleagues (for example in advance of the meeting with the Chief Financial Officer in March 2026) where it has been appropriate to do so to ensure a mutual understanding.”
Workload	
A commitment to change academic ‘nominal hours’ to a contracted working hours of 35 hours per week; a commitment to co-develop a mechanism to develop a shared transparent process to for agreed individual workloads for the following academic year that do not measurably and/or routinely exceed the contracted 100%-workload working hours of 35 hours per week (pro rata); reflecting a commitment to the values developed by the UCU workload campaign.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
Fair, TU-negotiated workload models for all salaried and hourly-paid staff.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.

Assurances from the employer that any workload model will not cause any detriment in comparison to the current tariffs in effect for any member of staff (that is to say, less time is not allocated for tasks while performance expectations remain unchanged). This includes no reduction in the time taken to complete activities unless concrete efficiencies are already evidenced in practice.	
A commitment to paying all staff all overtime if they are asked – and agree - to work extra hours at any grade to deliver business-critical University activities.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
Workload modelling for both academic and professional services staff to include tasks related to TNE as well as tasks performed at home, including any related to updated internal systems and process and the effects of late changes and addition, such as the increased student intake resulting from the foundation year students.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
A formal Equality Impact Assessment and modelling testing effects on specific categories (e.g. protected characteristics) to be carried out yearly before the workload model is approved; A review, oversight and follow-up process for individual workload variances above the contractual 35-hours working time for both academic and professional services staff, and assurances that exceptions data will be reported annually, communicated to the Trade Unions and evened out over the next 2 years.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
An open and evidenced re-evaluation of SSRs and proposed staffing reductions, linked to workload calculations above, based on new student recruitment impact.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.

A realistic timeframe for implementing the proposed foundation year programmes (Academic year 2027/2028).	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
A guarantee that all workloads will not be adversely affected by the Academic Futures project and its effects, both foreseen and unexpected.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
Governance	
The pausing of reform programmes until an agreed timetable with unions and staff is in place that can secure business as usual and rebuild confidence in governance	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
The provision of full, timely financial information to trade unions for proper scrutiny; a town hall financial briefing from the Chief Financial Officer to all staff on a quarterly basis	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
Proper consultation of all staff on governance reforms	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
An immediate commitment to the absolute minimisation of use of external consultancies, and if used, full transparency on the costs and purpose of external consultancies	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
A clear and funded plan for rebuilding staff morale, focused on job security, safe workloads, reasonable promotions and regrading pathways for all staff	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
The publication in full of the 'lessons learnt' report on Academic Futures by the previous Chair of Council, commissioned by UEB in 2025.	No response as yet. Deadline was 8 July for a response.
Staff safety	
We have requested extensive evidence and data on health and safety including stress monitoring and action plans; and sickness absence data.	UCU has written an updated paper with specific requests and are still waiting for a response.
That OH and EAP referrals rollover year on year as having to reapply for these takes a huge amount of time and causes immense stress to staff.	No response as yet.