

# ***Glasgow Caledonian UCU makes big impact on Scottish Congress***

The UCU Scottish Congress took place in Edinburgh on March 23rd with full involvement of your representatives from GCU. The branch was represented by president Douglas Chalmers, honorary secretary Brian Pillans, health and safety rep John Biggam and Barrie Levine.

In contrast to last year's Congress when GCU members spoke, but did not present motions, almost one third of the motions at Congress this year were from our branch - a suitable reflection of the increased activity in the last 12 months.

All GCU motions were passed unanimously after a vigorous debate. These were on University Governance, GCU London, INTO, and on the implications of the GCU Staff survey. Your branch reps also took full part in the debates on Scotland's Constitutional Future, and also on an emergency motion on the next steps in the fight to save all our pensions. John Biggam, also introduced and led a session on Health and Safety at work.

The branch mounted an exhibition showing the posters, leaflets, and other materials produced over the past year, and also had a iPhoto slideshow of the years activity, which delegates commented on favourably.

## ***Guest intervention from Education Minister Mike Russell***

Opening Congress, a keynote speech was given by the Education Minister, who announced he was keen on strong partnership working with the UCU and others.

Amongst the points that Mike Russell put to congress, was the government's belief that ***the existing four year degree was not a weakness, but a strength***, and had to remain the cornerstone of what the Government offered.



*Mike Russell, Education Minister, addressed Congress on a range of issues, and answered questions on various topics including GCU London*

On Governance, the minister announced ***broad support for the two recent reviews which he wanted to take forward, so that Governance was 'Fit for purpose, accountable, and where Governors fulfilled their roles***. When questioned on conditions at 'satellite' institutions linked to Scottish based universities, he declared that he would expect Scottish universities to be 'a beacon of equality and good treatment, in terms of conditions at these institutions'.

## ***UCU Scottish President outlines continuing issues for next period***

The congress was opened by Gordon Watson, UCU Scottish President, who reminded delegates of the notable activities of the last year, and the challenges still facing our members.





UCU Scotland honorary secretary Angela O'Hagan, office manager Anne Cowan, president Gordon Watson, and FT official Mary Senior on the platform

The president's address was wide ranging, covering equalities, casualisation and fixed term contracts, REF, and the increasing problems of points based immigration and the pressures towards fees in Scotland - which both government and union would continue to resist as well as the anomaly of charging *Rest of the UK* students fees - something that could not continue indefinitely. He talked of the warm support given to us by the public, during last November's day of action, and finished by pointing out the the Chancellor's tax cuts had effectively given wage increases of £4,000 to the vice principals of Scotland's pre 1992

### Debate on Governance sets the tone

The debate on current mis-governance of Scotland's universities set the tone for the rest of the congress. Delegates were clearly angry with the present system which some felt was clearly not fit for purpose.



Terry Brotherstone, who had been one of the authors of the recent report, talked of "*the concept of meaningful consultation - not dismissive superiority*" A resolution from GCU branch calling amongst other issues, for *a formal response* from HE authorities to the independent review of Governance, was passed unanimously, with one of our delegates putting the notion to congress that *good governance was an idea whose time had surely come.*

### GCU Staff Survey results shock delegates

Delegates were shocked to hear of some of the results of the recent GCU staff survey, and unanimously passed a resolution, which called on the UCU Executive to seek from the GCU Court (amongst other

results) *a formal response to the survey, including a confirmation of its role and responsibilities in resolving GCU senior management's clear failure in leadership.*

### Debate considers the latest changes at GCU London

Following a debate about the best use of Scottish HE resources, which mentioned *inter alia* the expansion of GCU London facilities to provide facilities for commercial organisations to CPD and staff training, congress passed a resolution - noting the contradiction between the GCU Order of Council objectives and latest practice in relation to GCU London. Congress "*condemned the use of public resources by Scottish Higher Education institutions that are inconsistent with the objectives of a university and are therefore ultra vires*"

Copies of the full Congress resolutions can be obtained from GCU Honorary branch Secretary Brian Pillans at: [r.pillans@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:r.pillans@gcu.ac.uk)



All GCU resolutions were adopted unanimously by delegates

## Your work - as seen by the Congress

Delegates were enthusiastic about the materials the branch had produced and used over the last year



### Congress calls for clarity on the due diligence carried out with regards to INTO at GCU

Given the recent news that Strathclyde University had rejected a partnership with INTO following what their Principal Jim McDonald referred to as "*the due diligence undertaken by the university*" Congress passed a resolution asking for the UCU Executive to request clarity from GCU as to how it carried out due diligence on INTO University Partnerships Ltd, and to call for GCU to review its relationship with INTO in light of the growing public criticism of INTO and its failure to deliver on its promise.

### Branch delegates differ on issue of condemning UCU Executive regarding pensions action

Everyone shared the anger at what was happening to pensions for university staff throughout the country. However, when an emergency resolution was proposed condemning the UCU executive, (see over)

## Branch Soundbites

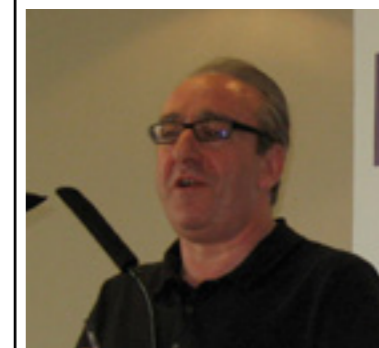
The UCU needs to transform itself so that it can answer the new questions that devolution - or further constitutional change - is bringing and will continue to bring.

- Douglas Chalmers, branch president, in the debate on the implications of Scottish Constitutional Change



The Health and Safety of staff in universities is under attack on many fronts. We say - this stops now!

- John Biggam, branch H&S representative opening a debate on Health and Safety



It is our job as a union to prevent further privatisation of university services - and education 'on the cheap'

- Barrie Levine, branch congress delegate

# UCU Congress 2012

## Branch delegates differ.....

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for cancelling the day of action following similar decisions by other unions, branch delegates differed on whether the UCU executive should have pressed on to strike alone.

One point of view put by a GCU delegate suggested that the fault should not be targeted at the leadership alone, and that condemning without additional positive proposals was unduly negative.

A point of view put by another GCU delegate however was that symbolically a continuation of the proposed day of action would have mobilised staff at universities, and this was the position that the UCU executive ought to have taken. After a wide range of views were expressed, the emergency motion condemning the leadership was defeated by the narrowest of margins - one vote, showing the level of anger about what was happening to our pensions, on all sides.

## What did Congress pass?

### 1. Governance:

Higher Education Governance in Scotland- (Ab'n)  
Scottish Governance Report - (Glasgow and Abertay)  
*Independent review of HE Governance - (GCU)*  
*Glasgow Caledonian University Staff Survey - (GCU)*

### 2. Post-16 Education

Post-16 Education (Executive)  
Institutional Collaboration in Delivering Post-16 Education (Abertay)

### 3. Health and Safety and management of workload

Health and Safety Issues in Universities (Executive)  
Performance Management and Development (Glasgow and Abertay)  
Workloads (Glasgow)

### 4. Political and Campaigning

STUC Independent Referendum Commission (Glasgow)  
*INTO at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)*  
*GCU London (GCU)*  
Overseas Students and Workers (Executive)

## We want your help:

Our Scottish Organisation has its own Congress, its own officers, its own full time officials, its own policies. This bulletin gives some idea of how the UCU decides what it thinks. We don't all agree on everything - but we **do** agree that the interests of UCU members come first, and at GCU, we have a first class record of defending our members' rights on all issues to do with conditions at the university and in Scottish education in general.

Importantly - we are an organisation where **YOU** matter. We have regular meetings at Glasgow Caledonian, of our branch executive, of our 'activists' and of our branch so that it's your voice that the union represents.

But we could always do with a hand. If you're in the UCU and want to speak to us about contributing a bit more to the life of the union at GCU - give us a call and we'll chat about it over a coffee. If you're interested in the area of equalities, of green policies at the university, of health and safety, or of just making life for your colleagues much more fulfilling - we're sure there is something we can do together. Get in touch!

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