

DMUnionise!

A big well done to all who struck last month, especially those who turned out on our strike day pickets. UCU is now in negotiation with the employers' representatives, but it's only the threat of more action from you, our members, that enables those negotiations to take place.

Let's keep up the pressure, stick to ASOS and, if need be, stay prepared for more actions in 2023.



Communication let me down

Not just a problem it seems for Spandau Ballet's Tony Hadley*, we note an email has been sent to all students suggesting that strike action was triggered by pay. Well yes, we've had a 25% real terms drop since 2010, but also, as our students will know, because it's been on TV and everything, the strikes are also about pensions and workload. We've been impressed, thankful and warmed by our students' support. We also know that they are intelligent, and perfectly capable of watching the TV news, or spotting spin when they see it. They can see how fewer lecturers are delivering courses. They can see clearly when people paid more than prime ministers try to suggest our members are being greedy. Please don't insult our students by being disingenuous.

We note also some senior executives suggesting emptier car parks during the strike might be a result of block teaching meaning lecturers are all marking at the same time. Of course, things are marked at the same times each year, we have exam boards, graduations, and other things in a calendar which are the whole point of a university. It's beyond worrying when some on high salaries with much responsibility seem to think marking happening at the same time is new.

We encourage executives who haven't noticed the strike action (and we think some of them do when they zip past pickets at unsafe speed) to watch the news every once in a while, much as our excellent students do. One thing we're not striking about, is management saying things which are plain embarrassing for everyone. Perhaps let's do that next time.



*Tony who? Oh, [him](#) – eds.

To get involved with the UCU Workload Group, email ucu@dmu.ac.uk

Be sure to put "Workload Group" in the subject line

When Teams is good: the new large face to face meeting zeitgeist.

Members are increasingly reporting meetings where attendance is compulsory, and all are required to attend in person. 'Isn't it great to be back on campus?' Gush various managers as if this is an epiphany to be impressed by. Yes, with our students. We see a lot of our students, meeting people on campus isn't actually a novelty, and we welcome it. Because the students are more important than executives holding big meetings.

Hello, we're visiting from the 21st Century

Against a backdrop of rail strikes, new modes of work, the university (welcome) flexible working policy, the sustainability team's (welcome) objective to reduce travel and pollution, and the huge exodus of staff making every hour count for those remaining, many members are reporting an insistence on multi hour, often half day 'briefing' meetings, with no option to attend online, mostly comprising powerpoint, which can easily be shared online. This is how we deliver courses.

Seriously? We managed to run every lecture as hybrid through the pandemic. It's a fairly basic and easy thing to do. It boosts productivity, and being easier to attend, more are able to, which is good for team building. Many meetings across the university, are still being held online and they are as efficient as any other face to face meeting and then some. Not having to print piles of papers for a face to face meeting saves trees, saves the university money, contributes to sustainability and helps the planet stay a little greener, literally. Add to that the rising cost of commuting (whether by car or public transport) in the middle of a cost of living crisis, equality and disability implications and the fact that staff susceptible to Covid may not feel safe to attend a large face to face meeting, and the conclusion is self-evident. Yet there are some executives who want to turn the clock back. No, it is not just Elon Musk, but also some of those "empowering" senior managers closer to home who seem to share some of his employment related ethos, in more ways than one.

Allow us to translate: "We're holding a big face to face meeting because we're worried our staff can't manage without senior managers". What we know this means of course is "We're holding a big face to face meeting because we're worried our staff can manage without senior managers".

We are also deeply concerned about putting a hundred plus staff in one room for three hours at the end of a term who have often just been in contact with a hundred plus students each. This sort of thing seems a terrific way to spread Covid, just in time for Christmas. If this is meant to be a Christmas present from management, thanks, but we would rather have a pay rise instead and spend the Christmas break close to our loved ones rather than having to self-isolate.

When Teams is not good at all: sling another chair leg on the fire, mother!

It can feel a little like living in a [Pam Ayres](#) 1970s poem at the moment, so here is a summary of what's been found out by the branch on the strange, dangerous, and disempowering telephone disconnection, as if the university can't afford real telephones.

It's a serious matter though. Working on an inner-city campus, all members will have seen or heard about crimes in the area. All will have seen an emergency at some point. Anyone who has needed to call security is usually relieved at the rapid response and professionalism they exemplify.

Of course, if we can call them. Booting a computer, logging into Teams, waiting for Teams to start up, are valuable seconds or minutes which can turn an emergency into a disaster.

1. Health and Safety were not consulted by ITMS when they did this. ITMS said this had happened, yet it did not.
2. The existing VOIP phones (the type that run on the IT network), now piled up in boxes awaiting to be taken away, can still work if ITMS connect them.
3. Members were told that analogue phones (which require no power) are available in all safety critical areas. We know this has not been the case.
4. Members are now reporting how difficult and hampering of productivity it is, to make or take something as simple as a phone call, especially from a student.
5. ITMS said that desktop phones could be made available by request. Members who have asked for a desk phone, have heard nothing.

The solution to both of these things seems to be so obvious as to be embarrassing for us to have to write it here. Stop wasting time with longwinded meetings, and actually give us back the tools for the job. If Teams is good enough for an emergency call, it's good enough for a meeting. If it is not good enough for a meeting, obviously it's no telephone replacement either.

A tour of the Digital Transformation microsite

Your intrepid committee are well up for new initiatives which engage stakeholders and are passionate, and also going forward. Or something like that anyway. We get excited about the idea of IT systems which could take a student's grades, and well, that's it. Copying them over by hand from one IT system to another for no reason whatsoever is lots of fun, and time well spent. It's every bit as empowering as not being able to make a telephone call.

So, we took a tour around the Digital Transformation Microsite to see what our senior executives have been spending valuable time and resources on planning while DMU is apparently under intense financial pressure.

Clicking on one of the folders reveals these slides which explain the DMU Digital Transformation Policy, explaining in more clarity than emails sent to all staff.

Slide 3
Blah blah blah blum



The next image is concerning, this suggests an external provider is already dropping content on DMU digital space, or someone is writing this material with more than a hint of othering, viewing themselves as an external provider. This runs counter, clearly, to the tenet of being enmeshed in the university. In any case, the wording is strange.



The website linked to to explain Internet of Things (something whole departments already knew about for decades) in education contains a very badly written article on a website called OAPublishingLondon <https://www.oapublishinglondon.com/zyx/internet-of-things/>

So who are OAPublishingLondon? They publish (this is the front page), high quality articles like these, so clearly well geared up to inform a complex university on expensive IT policy. Perhaps management have been having Dolphin Dreams, which is nice.

They also advertise dream interpretation, tarot readings, prayers and spells. This ought to cover most of the requirements of an empowering university.

<p>DOLPHIN DREAMS</p> <p>Dolphin Dreams - It Symbolizes Harmony And Excitement</p> <p>Most cultures see dolphins as a representation of fun and camaraderie. Dolphin dreams...</p> <p>Dec 13, 2022</p>	<p>Biblical Meaning Of Killing Spiders in Dreams</p> <p>Biblical Meaning Of Killing Spiders In Dreams - Greed And Envy</p> <p>The biblical meaning of killing spiders in dreams represents weakness, death, sickness,...</p> <p>Dec 13, 2022</p>	<p>Dream About Nails Falling Off</p> <p>Dream About Nails Falling Off - The Lack Of Confidence In Your Abilities</p> <p>Dream about nails falling off can indicate that your self-esteem is low if you've been feeling...</p> <p>Dec 13, 2022</p>
<p>DREAM OF FRIED FISH</p> <p>Dream Of Fried Fish - It Symbolizes Good Luck And Quick Success</p> <p>The dream of fried fish symbolizes your concerns and flaws in your self-image. Nobod...</p> <p>Dec 13, 2022</p>	<p>DREAM ABOUT MASS SHOOTING</p> <p>Dream About Mass Shooting - A Sign Of Suppressed Rage And Fear</p> <p>A dream about mass shooting is a sign of unreleased rage. You are suppressing a lot of unfavorabl...</p> <p>Dec 13, 2022</p>	<p>DREAM LIFT</p> <p>Dream Lift - Reflecting Your Achievements Or Aspirations</p> <p>Dream lift may be extremely suggestive of how you are feeling in real life. Going up and down...</p> <p>Dec 13, 2022</p>

So, the DMU digital transformation site references at least one information provider, who is simply magical! That seems appropriate for Christmas. We fully sympathise with the plight of executives who have to try to learn about IT from mystics. This must be a difficult position to be in.

Not in the union yet? Sign up at ucu.org.uk/join

The AEIOU of union organising

The branch Organising Committee follows the **A E I O U** of union organising. That is, to:

- **A**gitate against poor treatment of staff from management
- **E**ducate about why it's in all our interests to be more effectively organised
- **I**noculate against potential misinformation from management
- **O**rganise staff members
- **U**nionise – recruit new members to the branch and enable greater union activity from those who are already members

Published by **UCU DMU Branch Organising Committee**

For workplace help and support (Casework Committee) contact: ucu@dmu.ac.uk

Get in touch with the branch Organising Committee at: DMUnionise@gmail.com

Branch website at: ucudemontfort.wordpress.com

UCU DMU branch on Twitter at: twitter.com/UCU_DMU