

# Kent UCU Ballots for Industrial Action to Ward Off Compulsory Redundancies

The University of Kent UCU branch is balloting its members for strike action in order to defend against further compulsory redundancies. Over 300 jobs have been lost at the eUniversity over the last two years, and yet the University's management refuses to rule out compulsory redundancies in order to make up to [£1.6 million in savings](#). The action will be called off if management gives staff a minimum of job security and agrees that there will be no compulsory redundancies across the University during 2021.

The University has been brought to its knees by successive tranches of previous redundancies. Staff are working far above their contracted hours just to keep the institution working. Members of staff and the institution will break with further cuts. In a 2020 survey conducted by the UCU, one member wrote that 'If every staff member works the contracted hours only, management should be aware that NOTHING will get done'. The same UCU survey found that they were spending twice as long preparing teaching materials than they were before the pandemic began. As staff continue to work tirelessly to deliver the best teaching possible during the Covid lockdown, referrals to occupational health for mental health concerns are at a record high and the University recognises the extra demand by frequently advertising mental health support.

Mismanagement has led to the 300 redundancies so far. First, there was a wasteful restructure ('Organising for Success'); secondly, a 'Financial Improvement Plan' that called for £17.3 million in savings as a consequence of poor financial planning by previous Executive Group members – mismanagement so serious that the University's creditors (the European Investment Bank, Natwest Bank and Lloyds Bank) insisted that they install a Director at the level of the Executive Group.

Branch President, Iain Wilkinson, says that '[w]e are still very much in the process of recovering from the most exceptionally unsettling and traumatic year in the history of the University of Kent. The large number of staff-cost savings cuts, redundancies and austerity-gearred reorganisations have left many feeling deeply demoralised. The ongoing threat of compulsory redundancies is extremely disappointing, to say the least – and especially in a context where so many have been working so hard, and often well-beyond their current terms of contract, to maintain the University's operations and its duty of care for its students. Kent UCU remains hopeful that management will commit to remove this threat to our careers and livelihoods, both for the well-being and public standing of the University, as well as for the educational experience and quality of support it provides for its students'.

## Key information

- This formal ballot followed a previous consultative ballot that received 89.5% yes votes, clearly demonstrating members' support for the formal ballot.
- Over 300 jobs have been lost - 7% of total staff numbers.
- In September 2020 all staff were subject to a pay freeze in order to save more money

- Over the past 10 years, the salaries of the highest paid staff at Kent have increased by 326%. In that time, highly-paid staff costs have gone from £1.3 million to £5.1million per year. The UCU Kent Branch currently has a [petition open against this](#).

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