BSU BRANCH NEWS

Welcome all members to the first newsletter from your BSU UCU branch for 2026/2027. Your committee have been working hard to represent you and your interests across various activities. Please see more details below and look out for future bulletins on how you can get involved with your union.

Branch Meeting 12/11/2026 - Have your Say!

This year's branch meeting schedule is as follows.
All meetings take place online (via Teams), from 1pm-3pm

Wednesday 11 November 2026
Thursday 14 January 2027
Wednesday 10 March 2027
Thursday 13 May 2027
Wednesday 16 June 2027 (AGM)

These meetings are an important opportunity for members to have their voices heard and share their views with committee members, so please come along – we want to hear from you!

If you are unable to make the meeting but would like to feed into the discussion, please email your contributions or questions to ucu@bathspa.ac.uk. The dates for the branch meetings are also on our website: Schedule of branch meetings | Bath Spa University UCU

We Stand in solidarity with our colleagues facing cuts...

UCU stands in solidarity with our colleagues in BSU Foundation (Integrated Foundation for Art & Design), who have recently been informed that the programme will be discontinued.



Students, staff and visitors enjoying BSU Foundation's annual 'inflatables' installation at Locksbrook Campus, Nov 2026

READ & SIGN OUR OPEN LETTER REGARDING THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF BSU FOUNDATION

"Across nine highly successful years of the programme, Foundation alumni have gone on to be articulate, critical and generous contributors to their BA cohorts. Embodying the foundational ethos in their approaches to their developing art & design practice has resulted in brilliantly proactive students...

This ill-conceived action by the university is unfortunately systemic of wider programme cuts being made to the art & design sector across Higher Education, seen recently at **Goldsmiths, University of London, University of Leicester, Edinburgh College of Art** *and* **UWE.***"*

tinyurl.com/BSUfoundation

University and College Union

BSU BRANCH NEWS

Workload campaign

Staff across higher education are experiencing spiralling workloads, long working hours, a fall in real terms pay, the erosion of professional autonomy, and diminishing job security. This is causing significant stress and ill-health.

And, based on data presented to the SoS by HR at the end of last year, things look to be especially bad at BSU. BSU were presented as being above sector averages for the number of staff taking extended leave, with the primary reason relating to workplace stress (not to mention the recent removal of pay rises for those promoted to Reader or Professor).

As very little is being done to improve our working conditions - and if anything, things are getting worse - a key focus for the committee is to build a workload campaign that compels senior management to change their approach. We want to make sure that reality matches the PR spin that BSU is a good place to work.

To do this, we need participation and contributions from members. This will be a key item for discussion at our first branch meeting this year, so please bring your ideas of how to build and orient our workload campaign.

The university recently shared a workload planner (WLP) call for evidence, as part of a new process launched last week. We are actively addressing specific issues with this process: for example, that the 180 hours allocated in an FTE contract for research and scholarship is deemed appropriate to be used as part of teaching preparation time. And, that the call for evidence implies that the formulation of current tariffs was evidence based, when the union has never seen any evidence of this kind.

In line with UCU's national workload campaign, one approach is to link our campaign approach to health and safety. In the Vice Chancellor's summary of the February 2026 Staff Engagement Survey, which focused on workplace stress and mental health, it was seen as 'reassuring' that 'a majority' of the questions put to staff exploring experiences of stress received a positive response.

This summary belied the fact that nearly half of all respondents (42%) agreed either that 'stress is having a negative impact on me but I can cope' or 'I'm overwhelmed and I cannot cope'. This amounts to around 500 members of staff at BSU directly telling management that they are being negatively affected by stress. This is unacceptable and we will need to fight for better working conditions.

Connecting staff and student mental health

In recent years, the higher education sector across Europe has become increasingly aware of - and concerned about – the declining mental health and wellbeing of students. And for good reason, with the number of students declaring a pre-existing mental health condition to their university more than doubling since 2014.

Yet, there is little acknowledgement of the interlinked relationship between staff and student wellbeing within higher education. Several recent reports show how BSU's workplace stress survey results are mirrored at universities across the sector, with sizeable proportions of those surveyed showing signs of workplace-related stress, anxiety and depression.

A recent report for the European Commission concluded that staff and student wellbeing are not separate iss ues and should be considered as mutually dependent parts of the same ecosystem. Universities need to help our staff, in order to help our students.

If you have any suggestions or feedback on our workload campaign you wish to share, or relating to staff and student mental health and how these should be related to our workload campaign, please email ucu@bathspa.ac.uk

UCU University and College Union

BSU BRANCH NEWS

UCU National Day of Action – Friday 20 November



UCU has called a National Day of Action at every university in the UK on Friday 20 November, to highlight the relentless attacks on higher education. This day of action has recently been extended across further, adult and prison education.

A major industrial action ballot is currently being prepared across the Further Education (FE) sector in England, but the same issues of pay disparity, workload, plus the lack of binding national bargaining and governance of the sector are relevant for all UCU members

UCU asks all branches to organise meetings, share images of downloadable posters - covering further education, adult education, prison education, and higher education - and work with student groups (who have their own protests on this day) to make the day as successful as possible. Branches should tag the national UCU social media accounts in any online posts we make so the central union can help to amplify them.

Please come to our first branch meeting ready to share ideas for how our branch can participate in this day of action, or send you ideas or plans to ucu@bathspa.ac.uk

BSU FORUM: The Workload Planner

UCU members are supporing the facilitation of BSU Forum community discussions, focused around shared concerns experienced by BSU colleagues. The aim of these sessions is to build networks between schools and campuses, so as to gain collective strength. The sessions are in person at this time, but online provisions may be explored in the future.

The next session will be held at Newton Park and at Locksbrook on the 20th November to coincide with the 'National Day of Action'. The theme for these events will be the workload planner (WLP).

These events are not union exclusive, all are welcome.

Newton Park Campus
11am (CM.111)

Locksbrook Campus
2pm (LR.201)

Friday 20th Nov

BSU FORUM The Workload Planner
An open space to discuss our current and evolving working conditions as a community.

University and College Union

BSU BRANCH NEWS

Call for promotions to Reader and Professor

We would like to bring people's attention to the fact that, contrary to the pay framework agreement, the university is no longer implementing pay rises for academics promoted to Reader or Professor. The union is challenging this, including by highlighting its implications for compliance with equality legislation.

If you would like to become involved in work the union is doing to promote EDI at the university, please let us know by emailing ucu@bathspa.ac.uk

Having problems? We are here to support you...

Our caseworkers have been supporting many colleagues over the past few months, offering support and guidance. We are here for all union members who have issues that they want to raise or discuss with union caseworkers.

If you have an individual issue you would like guidance with, please complete this form

For more general issues and enquiries, especially things that you want your branch to be aware of, please email ucu@bathspa.ac.uk

November is Join the Union month!

Perhaps you think that the University could do things better in some way?

A bigger union means more representation. More diversity. Greater breadth of experience.

But it also means a stronger voice when we demand change.

We all know that consulting experienced staff at the front line of teaching and research is often the best way to figure out how to make internal improvements work for the overall good of the University. The Union allows staff to speak to their employer collectively, thereby avoiding any individual worries that a staff member may suffer detriment for flagging issues.

As a union member you are protected by law from discrimination or being treated differently as a result of your membership. We are a recognised trade union and are directly supported by our employer with whom we work in collaboration. We know that criticism is not the same as negativity and that collaboration on issues with the University is the best way to make our community work for all its members. We love our university and want everyone in it to thrive.

Do you know a colleague who you think might like to raise critical ideas and/or concerns but doesn't want to be singled out for doing so, or be seen as someone who is just complaining, when the aim is to provide constructive feedback?

Do you have a colleague on a non-fixed contract who could benefit from knowing more about how the UCU supports and is fighting for a better deal for casualised, precarious workers?

Is there a staff member who is interested in joining the union but is unsure how to join?

Recommend that your colleagues join the UCU union today.
People can sign up through this link www.ucu.org.uk/join or if they would like to discuss membership, they can email ucu@bathspa.ac.uk

University and College Union

BSU BRANCH NEWS

UCU Members Teams channel

We recently emailed all members as we update our UCU Members Teams channel membership, to reflect and include new members.

If you are not already a member of the UCU Members Teams channel and would like to join, please email ucu@bathspa.ac.uk so that we can add you. If you are already a member and would like to opt out, please email to let us know.

If you're not sure whether you are a member, please follow the link below while logged into your BSU email/account.

The link to the site is General | UCU Members | Microsoft Teams. We use this channel, alongside email, to share news, meeting links and as a space for members to discuss issues, ideas and thoughts more informally. v

UCU Members Whatsapp group

Our UCU Members Whatsapp group acts as an additional communication channel and space for members to share news and engage in discussion.

If you would like to join, please follow this link (https://chat.whatsapp.com/KQycEitf4l9FxzaaTNu9ml) or scan the QR code below:

UCU Bath Spa Whatsapp

Our current means of communication are:

Email: ucu@bathspa.ac.uk

Teams: General | UCU Members | Microsoft Teams

Whatsapp: Join

Website: BSU UCU

Education. It's ours

Every job, every course, every campus.

