

Statement on behalf of former employees of Ruskin College, ILTUS department August 2017

We, as former employees of Ruskin College, in the department of International Labour & Trade Union Studies (ILTUS) refute the college's statements regarding how and why we left the college.

Key facts

- Although college management state that we took voluntary redundancy (VR), we are clear that this was not a voluntary arrangement. The business case clearly states this was a process of compulsory redundancy, as per the letter of 19th January 2017.
- 3 permanent full-time employees in the ILTUS department were put 'at risk' of redundancy, and 2 fixed-term employees in the ILTUS department were subject to early termination of contracts, subject to 2 months' notice.
- 1 full-time, permanent post was offered for competitive interviewing to the 3 full-time employees.
- On the advice of a UCU Regional Official (RO), on 23rd January we submitted a collective grievance on behalf of the 5 employees, which was ignored by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), who continued with a process of individual meetings with those affected, rather than collective consultation (as requested in the grievance).
- On the advice of UCU, the 5 employees did not attend individual meetings.

On 15th February 2017, the UCU RO registered a Trade Dispute with Ruskin College, on behalf of the 5 employees, on the following grounds:

- **Failure to meaningfully consult with the staff at risk of redundancy or with UCU as the recognised union**
- **Failure of Ruskin College to consider the grievance submitted by UCU members about the flawed process of redundancy**
- **Failure to produce a meaningful Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposals to restructure the ILTUS department**
- **Less favourable treatment of UCU members employed on fixed-term contracts in breach of the *Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002*.**
- **Failure of Ruskin College to consult on a proposed suitable alternative employment post, including statements suggesting that Ruskin College would withdraw redeployment opportunities to alternative posts for staff at risk of redundancy as a punitive measure.**

The college SLT did not respond to any of these points, except to correct the unlawful notice period of 2 months given to the 2 fixed-term employment employees and agree to a 3-month period, as per their contracts. The College were also forced not to discriminate against the 2 fixed-term employees and to include them in the competitive interviewing process for the proposed suitable alternative employment post.

We were subsequently dismissed on Friday 24th March 2017, when all 5 contracts were terminated. Because of the unlawful process and a culture of bullying by SLT members that had developed over this period, we felt the relationship and trust between us and SLT had broken down to the point that none of us felt able to work at the college any longer, so we all agreed to termination of contracts. No enhanced payments were received by any of us.

We have never disputed the fact that Ruskin College was in a financially precarious situation: we actively sought to work with the college to support a resolution of the financial situation. In fact, Tracy Walsh sought a meeting with the Principal at the start of the January term, to discuss ways of developing the department in order to bring in more students and money. At this point, there was no indication of the redundancy process. If the college had been pursuing meaningful consultation, this meeting would have been the last in a line of focused discussions, rather than heralding the start of an unlawful redundancy process as a reaction to a financial crisis.

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Caroline Holmes

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Dr Fenella Porter

Tracy Walsh