

VOTE UCU LEFT ★ For a campaigning, member-led union

# WHY WE ARE STANDING



*Our candidate for Vice President:  
Maria Chondrogianni, University of Westminster,  
currently Vice Chair of HEC and national pay negotiator*



*Our candidate for Honorary Treasurer:  
Dr Deepa Govindarajan Driver, University of Reading,  
currently Vice Chair of HEC and USS negotiator*

**U**CU is in the fight of a lifetime. Our union has to rise to the challenge.

Maria Chondrogianni and Deepa Driver, alongside other UCULeft candidates, are standing in order to be part of the leadership of a union that wins for all our members. Maria is standing as Vice President (becoming President in due course), and Deepa is standing for Honorary Treasurer. We hope you will vote for both of us.

Neoliberal policies are corroding all sectors of education. Following the introduction of undergraduate tuition fees, wages fell, equalities gaps became more pronounced and for many, pensions were slashed while shiny new campuses and buildings were erected. In FE, not only were wages cut by 30% but 25,000 teaching posts have disappeared from the sector.

These attacks are intensifying.

Across Britain, we are seeing Dickensian levels of poverty and inequality, levels we have not seen in our lifetimes. Many of

our colleagues – especially those in unstable or part-time work or those privately renting on insecure contracts – are forced to choose between heating and eating. This is why UCU got a record turnout in both HE ballots, and why over 40 FE colleges voted for action last year.

The current strikes show that working people have had enough and don't want to take this any more. UCU members are joining teachers, civil servants, nurses, rail staff and postal workers. Together we must win, and our victory must be decisive.

We need a leadership in our union that we can all rely on. Our union must empower branches, reps and activists. We must actively defend members and press for decent pensions, pay and conditions. When we are under attack and when we take action, members must know that the union stands firmly by their side. Through grassroots organising, we must build the confidence of members to strike back and win.

## Deepa says

To quote trade unionist Bob Crow "If we fight we might lose. But if we don't fight we will certainly lose."

I have sought to earn the trust of members by walking the walk, not just talking the talk. I am on the frontline working as a negotiator as we take necessary industrial action to defend pensions, jobs, pay and working conditions.

## Maria says

UCU Left stands in elections to create a leadership of experienced union activists who work together to win, while being accountable to members.

Deepa and I are proud to be members of UCU Left. We have shown by our track record that we can lead from the front. We are ready and willing to work with others in the best interests of our members.

For more information about the UCU Left platform and candidates visit [uculeft.org](http://uculeft.org)



# UCU Left is supporting the following candidates in the NEC elections 26 January - 1 March 2023

<b>Vice President</b> Maria Chondrogianni	1	<b>North West FE</b> Carol Cody	1	<b>UK-elected HE</b> Marion Hersh	1	<b>LGBT+</b> Bee Hughes	1
<b>Honorary Treasurer</b> Dr Deepa Govindarajan Driver	1	<b>South HE</b> Mark Abel	1	Roddy Slorach	2	<b>Black members</b> Juliana Ojinnaka	1
<b>Midlands HE</b> Rhiannon Lockley	1	Dr Deepa Govindarajan Driver	2	Dr Richard Wild	3	Cynthia Akwei	2
Alan Barker	2	Ryan Burns	3	Donna Brown	4	<b>Migrant members</b> Dr Khizer Saeed	1
<b>North West HE</b> Saira Weiner	1	<b>South FE</b> Graeme Elliott	1	<b>UK-elected FE</b> Sean Vernell	1	Omar Feraboli	2
David Swanson	2	<b>Scotland HE Hon. Secretary</b> Dr Carlo Morelli	1	Saleem Rashid	2	<b>Casually employed</b> Sarah Lahm	1
				<b>Disabled</b> Dr Marian Mayer	1		

## Testimonials for Maria Chondrogianni and Dr Deepa Govindarajan Driver

*I am endorsing and voting for Maria Chondrogianni for UCU Vice President because I have worked with her in the Women's Members Standing Committee and in other capacities in the UCU.*

*My experience of working with Maria convinced me that she would be an excellent candidate for UCU VP in her work with all sectors of our union. Vote for Maria and see standards in all sectors of post 16 education and rights of members in UCU strengthened in the fight for better pay and closure of all pay gaps.*

**Juliana Ojinnaka**  
**Chair UCU Black Members Standing Committee**

*I will be voting for Deepa Driver for national Treasurer and HE South. I served alongside Deepa on UCU's NEC from 2019 to 2021.. I also visited her branch during the 2018 strike, and I have seen first-hand what an effective organiser and communicator she is. Deepa is deeply committed to equality for all, and to ending the horrors of casualised employment. With Deepa what you see is what you get. She has experienced casualisation first hand,*

*and the difficulties faced by black disabled staff. She always carries conviction. She will be a very capable UCU treasurer, with her knowledge and experience combined with the right priorities.*

**Lesley Kane**  
**Secretary of Open University UCU**

*I will be voting for Dr Maria Chondrogianni, not only because I have worked with her for many years, but also because Maria working at a Post 92 inner city university understands the link between FE and HE in some of the most disadvantaged communities in our nations. This enables Maria to understand the challenges facing colleagues across all sectors of education including ACE and offender education. Maria arrived in the UK as an immigrant and is able to empathise with all of us who welcome refugees and wish to support them into new lives through education.*

**Peter Evans**  
**LGBT+ FE NEC Member**  
**Vice Chair UCU Equality Committee**

*Maria has a proven track record as a branch activist. Westminster UCU is one of the post-92 branches that has consistently won mandates and taken industrial action. Maria is currently Vice Chair of the HEC and a national pay negotiator.*

*Deepa is the other Vice Chair of the HEC and has been a national negotiator for USS pensions for several years.*

*Both Maria and Deepa understand that it is only by fighting that our union can defend pay, pensions and working conditions. They believe that members involved in industrial action should have more control over their disputes. They stand for a leadership which is accountable to the membership.*

*Please vote for Maria for Vice President and for Deepa for Honorary Treasurer and please also vote for UCU Left candidates for the other National Executive seats.*

**Mark Abel**  
**Chair University of Brighton UCU**

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# For a democratic, fighting union at the centre of a rising tide of struggle

Election runs from 26 January - 1 March

## A rising tide of workers' struggle

**U**CU's industrial action in FE, HE and prisons is part of a growing wave of trade union struggle. The systematic attack on living standards and the attempt by the Tories to impose a new regime of austerity have sparked growing numbers of workers to fight back. Union after union are winning mandates for action in industrial action ballots. Strikes are at the top of the news bulletins. We in UCU are no longer fighting on our own.

Their side is coordinated. It is clear that the Tories are working with employers to resist trade union demands. Government ministers refuse to meet our leaders, block the possibility of deals, plan even stricter anti-union laws, and prepare for the army to help break the strikes. They know that if one trade union breaks through they will not be able to hold the line with the rest. This is why we need coordination of our struggles, starting with joint action across HE and FE.

We in UCU need to push to synchronise our action with other unions as much as possible. So far, we have struck alongside postal workers and some of the other HE unions.

If we are to stop pay cuts and resist austerity, 2023 must be the year when we make ourselves part of a much bigger movement, striking with teachers and health workers as well as rail and postal workers. Anything less than inflation is a pay cut, and we must continue to fight against pay gaps, insecure contracts and unmanageable workloads. Enough Is Enough.

## Members in control - for action that can win

Whether facing our employers in Further Education, Higher Education or prisons, we need action that can win. In FE, the reclassification of colleges as part of the public sector provides the opportunity to fight for a real national bargaining framework. In HE, we must learn the lessons of our own previous disputes and those of other unions. Long drawn out campaigns of single or even blocks of strike days are not effective against intransigent employers backed by government. We need harder-hitting, more sustained action.

Taking sustained action is not easy. It can only be achieved when members feel they have

control over their own disputes. Members are not chess pieces to be deployed by the General Secretary. Action should not be called off for negotiations. It is members' action that can deliver victory and it is they who are making sacrifices to take it.

Union democracy is not just right in principle. It is the best way to maximise members' unity in action and the only way to win. Members have a right to decide what action they take and what kind of deal will end the dispute. These decisions must be taken as a result of proper debate, not on the basis of survey questions written at Head Office. Decisions taken by our democratic bodies must be carried out, not declared 'unimplementable'. The General Secretary is accountable, just like any other elected representative and must maintain UCU's unity in the face of the employers.

## Another Education is Possible

Our education institutions are increasingly becoming corporatised. They are now run by business people rather than

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educationalists. The courses they offer are increasingly instrumentalised - geared towards gaining qualifications for work to suit the needs of business. Freedom of expression and academic freedom are being curtailed as courses are closed for 'market reasons' and research is determined by 'impact' metrics.

Our employers cite 'enhancing student experience' to justify their policies. But students do not benefit from any of this. Their horizons narrow as they are encouraged to view themselves as consumers of an off-the-shelf product, rather than as participants in their own self-development. Colleges should not be exam factories. The market and the student fee regime in higher education which drives commodified education must end. Our institutions must be taken back from unrepresentative boards of governors and returned to democratically accountable governance.

## Combating the threat from the right

The cost-of-living crisis is part of a growing crisis of legitimacy for the Tories, the bosses and their system, not just in Britain but across the world. The Tories respond to strikes with

weapons of their own - ramping up their attacks on migrants and waging a 'war on woke' to seek to divide us. The threat from the right is real. Fascists exploit the demoralisation caused by recession and falling living standards: in Italy the political descendants of Mussolini are in office, in France Rassemblement National continues to grow and in Germany a Nazi putsch had to be thwarted. In many countries women's abortion rights and rights of LGBT+ people are under attack.

Here, the Tories ridicule efforts to decolonise the curriculum and attack those speaking up for the Palestinians or trans rights. They want freedom of speech for bigots, but not for students protesting against inequality. We are committed to upholding and furthering UCU's equality agenda on anti-racism, women's rights and trans inclusion. We say refugees are welcome here.

## World in crisis: climate emergency

Climate change is a trade union issue. Governments and corporations are doing virtually nothing to address the warming planet which is already claiming victims through floods, wildfires,

storms and crop failures. COP27 was a dismal failure.

Universities proclaim their green credentials but pour vast quantities of concrete for their new buildings, offloading the CO2 emissions to the building contractors. Bosses will always put profits and competition ahead of meaningful action on climate change, so it falls to organised workers to take up the fight, press for disinvestment from fossil fuels, and join the students and young people demanding 'system change not climate change'.

Imperialist wars across the globe are causing massive human suffering, forcing people to flee and having a devastating impact on the environment. We oppose all governments and organisations, especially our own rulers, whose actions drive these conflicts.

Let 2023 be a year of hope and struggle. It's time to stand up for workers' rights and human rights internationally. UCU must be at the heart of these battles. It's time for victories for working people.

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UCU Left calls on members to vote for candidates who are committed to building the fights against the attacks faced by workers in Further, Higher and Prison Education. UCU Left candidates stand for strengthening democracy in our union, and for using the power of trade unions to fight for a more equal, sustainable and peaceful world. Please encourage your colleagues to use their vote. Democracy depends on participation and low votes give comfort to the employers.