

via email only

Tuesday 24th March 2026

Dear Jane and Tom

Pensions and Pay Negotiations

A. Request for clarification

I write to seek clarity on the University's proposals and plans. There are three questions here that we would like urgent answers to.

In the update from the Vice Chancellor sent on 12/03/26, he states '*I will focus on the practical details of what we are doing next*'. He then states that '*the University will implement the changes as outlined in the final offer issued on 9 February 2026, with some small adjustments.*' However, what is not clear is how this will occur.

There is an attempt to outline what will happen in your email on 20/03/26, but this is not clear, and I have not been provided with the communications that you have been sending out, nor the links with further details which are incorporated into the correspondence you have sent to our members.

To understand the next steps and how we advise members, I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions as soon as possible:

1. If a member of staff wishes to move from one pension scheme to another, by what process will they change from their current terms and conditions to a new employment arrangement? What will that look like? Please provide an example correspondence of how you intend to do that. Perhaps the template?
2. If a member of staff wants to fix their retirement date to a date before 31/07/28, by what process will they change from their current terms and conditions to a new employment arrangement? What will that look like? Please provide an example correspondence of how you intend to do that. Perhaps the template?
3. How will the University manage the change in terms and conditions should staff wish to remain with their existing pension arrangements? What will that look like? Please provide an example correspondence of how you intend to do that. Perhaps the template?

A less pressing question is:

4. What will the terms and conditions look like for the two new categories of academic staff that the University will be employing from 01/08/26? What will that look like? Please provide an example correspondence of how you intend to do that. Perhaps the template?

B. Communications

We cannot let the two pieces of communication which went out on Thursday 12th March 2026 pass without comment.

You wrote to UCU (at some length) to '*summarise (sic) where we feel we've got you and to confirm next steps*'. To be clear, this is your document, and not one that we have formally been asked to comment on, nor one that you have asked us to amend. It would have been polite to let us know this was a document that you intended to make available to the entire University community. Not least because you have singled out individual UCU representatives and attributed comments to them which you have not had the courtesy to check with them, or the others in the meeting at the time.

It is standard practice NOT to make public minutes of a meeting until they have been agreed by those there. Moreover, your reference to (and detail of) meetings and conversations that took place on a Without Prejudice leaves us in a position where it is difficult to engage in them again. Trust is a key part of conversations like that, and making them public is, at best, unhelpful.

Your failure to do what are basic and courteous things, in a difficult industrial relations climate, seemingly in a rush to get out a message, speaks volumes. Sending it out just two hours after making it available to us, and just 24 hours after our meeting with you where you said that the University was going to consider what it was going to do after our meeting has left us wondering how genuine your engagement with us was at that meeting.

As you have made public the correspondence that we take issue with, we are left with no choice but to make this correspondence available to our membership, and others who ask. Likewise, to be courteous to the two of you, we will also make available any response that we receive to this letter.

C. USS pensions team on site at Northumbria University

Your note to staff on 20/03/26 informs them that '*Colleagues from the USS pensions team will be on site*' next week. Setting aside the message that this sends, it is disappointing that you chose not to share this with us prior to telling all staff or ask us what we might think of such a meeting. To be clear, our view is that it is outrageous that you are affording an opportunity like this to just one of the pension providers at the University, and one in which a minority of people pay into.

D. Pay Negotiations

I will write to you separately about this.

I hope to hear back from you soon about questions 1, 2 and 3.

Yours sincerely,



Jon Bryan
Regional Support Official