

Exeter UCU Committee motion re UoE's Voluntary Severance scheme (TERS)

-Motion passed by Committee on 17 April 2024

The Exeter UCU Committee notes:

1. The University of Exeter's decision to operate a Voluntary Severance scheme (TERS), was presented to the branch leadership on 13th March 2024 as a fait accompli with little opportunity to challenge and change decisions therein.
2. The Voluntary Severance scheme was announced to the university community on 25th March 2024 in the Vice Chancellor's All Staff talk and via email.
3. An Exeter UCU branch meeting was held on 2nd April 2024 to hear the views of members, where various concerns and points were raised, which are reflected in this motion.

The Exeter UCU Committee believes:

4. Insufficient financial details have been presented to Exeter UCU or the wider university community to enable people to determine for themselves whether staff job losses are necessary.
5. Insufficient details around future spending and strategy have been presented to Exeter UCU or the wider university community to determine for themselves whether other choices are possible, and to be able to debate as a university community these choices with a view to challenge and change decisions, as appropriate.
6. Council approval of this Voluntary Severance scheme should have been contingent upon receipt and analysis of details about how much it will cost, how much money it will save, the numbers of staff anticipated who will leave under Voluntary Severance, how that money will be reinvested, and other such financial and strategic details.
7. Exeter UCU, our sister campus unions, and the wider university community deserve to have access to these details, so that the scheme, its assumptions and its implications can be fully understood and tested, and to ensure transparency and accountability in university decision-making.
8. If, on the other hand, such financial and strategic details do not exist, this would also be a matter of serious concern.
9. The timing of these measures may well leave insufficient time to plan strategically for the next academic year, resulting in poor strategic decisions, loss of institutional knowledge, and higher workloads for remaining staff.
10. Significant numbers of staff leaving under Voluntary Severance will result in serious harm to the student and staff experience, and having to firefight the emerging problems will hinder rather than support the university's strategic ambitions.

The Exeter UCU Committee resolves:

11. To request that sufficient financial and strategic details are immediately published to Exeter UCU and the wider university community enabling people to determine for themselves:
 - a) whether staff job losses are necessary,
 - b) the nature and extent of any negative impacts on remaining staff and the student community,

c) whether other choices than the Voluntary Severance scheme are possible, and
d) to be able to debate as a university community these choices with a view to challenge and change decisions, as appropriate.

12. If such detail has not been provided by 3rd May 2024, to bring a motion of “no confidence” in the Vice-Chancellor, University Executive Board and Council for debate at our next Exeter UCU branch meeting.

13. Until further notice, to advise staff not to undertake voluntary duties and to engage in a general spirit of non-cooperation with the Voluntary Severance scheme (to the extent permitted contractually) until such a time as the University leadership is operating transparently with respect to such choices.