## UCU Paper: Reported freeze of non-staff budgets

Members have reported to us that in a range of Schools non-staff budgets have been frozen, including budgets covering conference attendance and travel costs for staff. The following excerpt from a Head of School e-mail is an example of many similar messages:

*[...] There is also a complete freeze on any new spend against individual research / scholarship budgets in all Schools.  We have been told that the freeze on IRB/ISB spend is temporary while the university determines an agreed position on this type of fund. Schools in other Colleges removed IRB/ISBs completely earlier in the year.*

*[...] this time of year is precisely when many colleagues in AHSS disciplines tend to utilise their IRBs/ISBs for conferences and research trips. There are no exceptions to this freeze, though, and I have no discretion here, so I would ask for your patience while we all await clarity on the university's agreed position for the remainder of this financial year.*

The sudden denial of funds to staff who, as part of their job, need to attend conferences relates to working conditions. In the words of one member who was in touch:

*‘It seems to me that in our disciplines withdrawing this funding scheme at this notice is equivalent to making employees pay hundreds of pounds from their own personal savings towards reducing the institution's in-year deficit. This really cannot be acceptable.’*

We request

* immediate clarity over your policy regarding travel expenses and expenses for conference attendance across colleges and schools;
* immediate guidance be issued to staff regarding whether they should cancel planned conference attendance and should refrain from making plans to present papers at conferences or submit abstracts for conference presentations or whether they are expected to pay for these expenses out of their own pockets and what any insurance implications and risks associated are;
* that any such future freezes directly affecting working conditions be consulted on with us prior to announcement;
* confirmation that no members of staff will be held to PDR goals that were agreed in the expectation that funds for conference attendance, for research projects, etc. would be made available as in previous years;
* confirmation that School, College and University expectations (e.g. in promotion criteria, PDRs, expectations in Cardiff Academic, etc.) that require the use of Individual Research Budget funds are also on ice, and no staff will experience detriment due to being unable to meet such expectations as a consequence of enabling funding being withdrawn;
* an **Equalities Impact Assessment** be completed on the impact of this freeze. For example, colleagues in higher salary bands might be better able to continue their research and scholarship activities by funding these from their own pockets, while those in lower bands, in particular casually employed staff and those on fixed-term contracts, are unable to fund such activities from their private funds and will therefore be unable to carry them out. We know that gender pay gaps, disability pay gaps, ethnicity pay gaps (and others more) exist at this university and measures need to be in place to prevent the freeze in IRBs from entrenching yet further these differences.
* An explanation of the University’s view of the ethical implications of expecting staff to engage in activities as part of their job descriptions which now require staff to use private funds.