

UoN UCU Congress 2025 Delegate Report

Gertjan Lucas & Lisa Rüll, June 2025

As your 2025 Congress and Higher Education Sector Conference delegates, we are your representatives. We believe reporting back is important, so we hope you will appreciate our report. We start with some general reflections from each of us individually. Those of you only wanting to get a sense of the most noteworthy events and decisions can leave it at that.

Those wanting to see all the details can read on. Below our general reflections, you will find our voting record. Many motions at Congress and the HE Sector Conference reaffirm existing policy, principles, and values, in many cases the intent is to ensure the union continues to devote resources to such matters. Such motions passed with hardly a vote in opposition. A select few motions proved more controversial, most of which we had included in the local member consultation. We took note of views expressed by UoN UCU members in that consultation, and any motions and positions our branch has previously taken, along with other information and the debates at Congress. Where a motion was subject to considerable debate, we provide additional commentary.

General reflections - Lisa

The UCU Congress in Liverpool was the first full Congress I've been able to attend (despite being an elected delegate twice previously - health in 2023 and the lost Sector Conference last year) so it was really positive to fully see the workings of Congress. And this was a momentous Congress: our first chaired by an elected black female President (Maxine Looby), and our first hybrid Congress including electronic voting. This significantly improved accessibility for members who were unable to travel to the Congress location in Liverpool (over 50 members used this opportunity to attend in addition to the usual number of in-person attendees). Hybrid is the way forward!

Hybrid also had the additional benefit of particularly supporting disabled members, including those who felt unable to attend in person, enabling them to mitigate pressure on their health conditions whilst still fully participating. A range of adjustments are on offer to enable in-person attendance - e.g. childcare, captioning in the room - to supplement the kinds of adjustments everyone who needs them should be able to expect at this type of event. But electronic voting for all delegates, enabled people to avoid raising / holding their voting cards aloft for teller counting in the Congress room (it can be exhausting), and provided a measure of privacy from

monitoring of voting (which some factions absolutely have historically done). Congress Business Committee, formulates the agenda and works to composite similar motions received from multiple branches. In doing so, it follows the priorities set by NEC (National Education Committee - which includes those elected to HEC, our Higher Education Committee). CBC has been chaired by our own Alan Barker for a number of years and updates were provided by Alan several times during the Congress. Alan's service to UCU, and to the wider Trade Union movement, over many years has been significant and everyone owes him a debt of thanks for his labour.

General reflections - Gertjan

Congress 2025 like Congress 2024 happened against the backdrop of an ongoing dispute between Unite UCU representing UCU staff and UCU senior management. As delegates who joined an unofficial fringe event heard, the dispute has not moved at all and positions have become more hardened. Many delegates, me included, visibly expressed their support of Unite UCU. Several speakers brought the matter up although at times implicitly including the president elect chairing the HE Sector Conference. In terms of our own sector, Congress delegates were well aware of the difficult national political and geopolitical circumstances we find ourselves in, yet all refused to accept the situation as unchangeable.

Congress itself, at least compared to my experiences from earlier years, was relatively uneventful with limited disagreement about proposals. Due to the Liverpool FC celebrations taking place, Congress was forced to close 3 hours ahead of schedule on the Monday. UCU staff and Congress Business Committee took considerable effort to rearrange the agenda to ensure as much as possible was covered. While calls were made to delegates to move motions that did not change existing policy and/or would not be controversial without speeches, few did. As a result, several motions fell of the agenda. As a member of the Migrant Members Standing Committee and outgoing UoN UCU Equality Officer, I must point out that many of these motions were from the Equality sections. Most notably, a motion that has been brought for the third Congress in a row to instruct NEC to proactively seek and consider advice on how industrial action would fit with the visa terms and conditions migrant members on a sponsored visa are subject to was again not debated, nor were any of the migrant member related motions. On the positive side, a proposal to open a trade union dispute with the Secretary for Education over the HE funding model, which our branch supports, was passed. The General Secretary, Jo Grady, devoted several media appearances to discussing this new policy.

To conclude, I encourage all UoN UCU members to consider stepping up as Congress delegate for 2026. With a successful demonstration of a Hybrid Congress, the threshold to represent the branch at national level has never been lower. Since I say my goodbyes to you, our branch, the University, and the UK at the end of

September, I leave our delegation to Congress in the excellent hands of Lisa and those among you who I am sure will step up to the plate.

Congress voting record and comments on motions – in the order in which business was taken

Congress sets policy and makes decisions on matters that concern all members of the union, so anything that is not sector specific. See [here](#) for all Congress motions debated. As this year's Congress was the first to have electronic voting, we have voting records for nearly all motions as they were read out by the chair albeit too fast or not audible enough for your delegates (or the transcribers) to note down in some instances. Any motions labelled by Congress Business Committee as existing policy are indicated with * in this report.

Opening business Day 1 (Saturday morning)

Issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
Reduction of speaking times to 3 minutes for movers and 2 minutes for other speeches	For	For	248/26/19 - Adopted	The standing orders prescribe 5 respectively 3 minutes. The time available in Congress per motion barely covers what is needed for moving speeches so as happened in prior years a suspension of these specific standing orders was agreed.
CBC report including changes to the scheduling of business - as amended by the challenges (see	For	For	270/9/9 - Adopted	Covered the 2nd report (agenda as published) and the 3rd report which was provided in the Congress hall and included proposals to reorder the schedule due to the earlier

Issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
below) that were upheld				close of Congress on the Monday. Typically, several decisions of CBC, especially in terms of what motions are ruled out of order, are challenged. Most challenges required a two-thirds majority,
Challenge 1: to order onto the agenda late motion B17 Local elections and increased vote for Reform	Against - agreed with the speaker challenging the motion has some language that is more specific than the other motion and existing policy, but nothing that rises to the level necessitating a late motion and displacing other motions already on the agenda	Against	133/139/29 - Fell	CBC argued this was covered by existing policy and motion 43 already on the agenda and therefore did not order B17 onto the agenda.
Challenge 2: to order onto the agenda late motion B15 Vote of no	Against - I agree with much of the criticism of the GS in this	Against - I am more sympathetic to the position of the GS. I	149/129/? - Fell	CBC argued the issues mentioned in B15 could not be verified by Congress and there

Issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
confidence in the General Secretary	motion but given the rules of the union it is symbolic. As GS, Jo Grady has survived and ignored similar motions in the past, while taking excessive speaking time in her right of response. The result has been more infighting in the union and no improvement to issues for which we can justifiably criticize the GS.	cannot speak to the criticism of Dr Jo Grady “taking excessive speaking time” since this was my first substantial attendance at Congress (due to health, effect of strikes and personal availability). With only 2025 to draw on, I don’t have enough evidence to support the criticism, but as a union we do indeed spend a significant portion of time infighting over the GS and UCU National ‘failings’		was a risk that Congress deciding on it would mean the union would not observe due process. The GS has employment rights as an employee of the union, including proper disciplinary procedures. Congress does not have the authority to ‘fire’ or otherwise sanction the GS. The National Executive Committee does have powers to instruct the GS.
Challenge 3: to move motions 64, 65, 77 and 78 higher up the agenda	against - none of these motions seemed to materially change UCU policy. And there is a danger	for - noting the strong active support for Palestine within our branch, grouping the motions together made	145/134/27	Each of these motions concerned Palestine as the main topic. The CBC chair explained all motions are ordered based on where in the

Issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
	in messing with the order of motions, since there are equally convincing arguments on why some other motion should take precedent.	sense. There will always be difficulties with such an overly packed agenda affecting how motions are ordered		NEC report to Congress related issues are mentioned. CBC later proposed to take all four of these motions in one debate at the point on the agenda where 64 and 65 were originally ordered.
Challenge 4: to move motion 32 higher up the agenda	Against - There are other means to achieve this. If there was broad support for having such a special congress, it should not be difficult to comply with the requisitioning provisions in UCU Rule 16.1.	against	144/155/33 - Fell	Motion title: Special Congress on UCU Democracy
Challenge 5: to extend Congress business by 1 hour on Saturday and Sunday.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	This was ruled out of order by the chair as practical constraints, including UCU staff availability, make this impossible. Also, congress is

Issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
				not allowed to directly instruct UCU staff.
Challenge 6: Order motion B8 back onto the agenda	Against - the main aim seemed to be to ensure anyone subject to a proposal to be removed from office would have the right to speak in the general members meeting where it is being discussed, for which there is currently no impediment in the rules.	against	34/219/45	This regarded rule 12 of the model branch rules which provides for a process of political will to remove members from local office. CBC argued that the proposal would make the rule into a disciplinary process, which is already provided by Rule 13 of the national rules.
Challenge 7: to move motion 68 up the agenda	Against - similar to challenge 3	against	91/181/23	Title: Employments Rights Bill - Repeal Anti Trade Union Legislation

Due to the time taken to address the long list of challenges, we ran out of time and there skipped Section 1: Business of the education committee (motions 1-6). These motions were rescheduled to an additional Congress session on the Sunday afternoon created by shortening the Higher Education and Further Education Sector Conferences.

Section 2: Business of the Recruitment, Organising and Campaigning Committee (Saturday morning & afternoon)

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
7* including amendments 7A.1 and 7A.2	For including amendments	For including amendments	7A.1 243/31/18 7A.2 239/15/37 Motion as amended 2818/2/7	
8*	For	For	273/10/5	
9*	For	For	273/5/12	
10*	For	For	242/26/25	
11*	For	For	260/17/13	
12* including amendment 12A.1	For including amendment	For including amendment	12A.1 256/15/16 Motion as amended 271/9/12	
13	For	For	274/10/9	
14	For	For	261/1/10	
15	For	For	234/36/24	

Section 3: Business of the Strategy and Finance Committee to be taken in private session (Saturday afternoon)

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
18	Against - UCU has had these auditors for a considerable number of years, it would be better to change every 3-5 years to avoid the relationship becoming too cozy	Against - having previously worked in accountancy, re-appointment is too often cosy as an arrangement.	263/4/14	Reappointment of auditors
19	For	For	240/3/12	Financial statements
20	For	For	244/28/17	Budget
21	For	For	222/19/7	Subscription rates to become more progressive
22	Against - this motion makes assumptions on what works best for everyone that is heavily biased to those with kids in education, while needs and preferences for those who do not are	Against - the problem is with Congress as a format, with too much to cover (not helped by the inability of too many delegates to move motions from the floor to get to the vote and needing to speak - especially problematic	86/177/29	The status quo on congress scheduling is to alternate between weekday and bank holiday weekend scheduling in late May.

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
	ignored. Besides, you can never find a solution that satisfies everyone so the status quo which gives flexibility is preferable.	where motions are relatively uncontentious)		
23 - Remittance	For remittance - makes sense for NEC to look at what would be the most practical solution for the problem the motion meant to address yet does not.	For remittance	189/68/27	Remittance was proposed as the way the motion would only change how prison education sits in the UCU democratic structures, rather than how support for prison education branches is organised within the UCU bureaucracy. The movers and supporters seemed to believe it would do the latter rather than the former.
24 including amendment 24A.1	For including the amendment	For including the amendment	24A.1 - we did not catch the result motion as amended 230/33/1	Gertjan moved amendment 24A.1 which our branch submitted.
25	For	Abstain - unclear on how beneficial further	84/124/60	

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
		business for Congress would be managed		
26 including amendment 26A.1	For including the amendment	For including the amendment	26A.1 247/7/14 motion as amended	
Section 4: Rule Changes, to be taken in private session (Saturday afternoon)				
27 including amendment 27A.1	Against amendment and then against motion since the motion was voted on	Against amendment and as amendment was adopted, voted against the motion. Our	27A.1 157/95/17 motion as amended	
Motion/issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
CBC proposal on scheduling	For as amended - the removal of the indicative ballot will remove the ability to filter out ballots where there is no clear member	For problems lay with the constraints of Civica postal ballots, which requires legislative change. The union cannot afford in terms of costs/resources to fund every ballot for IA decided by a barely quorate branch meeting where there is little evidence large numbers of members would actually take industrial action. We	174/28/12	To end the HE and FE sector conferences on Sunday 1 hour ahead of schedule and return to Congress business starting with Section 1 Business of the Education Committee
34	For - having received clarification when support and thus discussing with prevent union another delegate this resources/time from being strained. We publishing information not move quickly, but have to balance the union for FOI style requests	Abstain - still remained unclear how publishing information might avoid FOI pressures	125/124/27 - Lost	There was some discussion on what this actually meant. A legal opinion NEC received was provided to Congress delegates.

Motion/issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
35	For	For - as submitted by the branch I supported this, but with practical reservations (which were reflected in how the motion was lost). What would be deprioritised to accommodate a Sector Conference? Given Congress FINALLY moved to hybrid, how would that practice be accommodated for maximum participation (since neither online nor in-person suit everyone's access needs?)	166/100/16 - Lost	A rule change motion submitted by our branch, Gertjan spoke in favour of this motion.
36	Abstain - either situation is open to abuse so not convinced it would help, while also acknowledging the	Against - as argued it was really unclear to what extent it would fix or create additional problems depending on who is for or against	157/110/17 - Lost	

Motion/issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
	status quo means a chair can use their position for partisan advantage.	the stance of the Chair or the challengers.		

Section 5: Business of the Equality Committee (Saturday afternoon)

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
40*	For	For	2541/1/11	
41*	For	For	254/5/7	
42*	For	For	237/4/26	
43* including amendment 43A.1	For including the amendment	For including the amendment	43A.1 234/10/11 motion as amended 242/3/13	
44 including proposal for remittance	Against remittance, for the motion	Against remittance, for the motion	Remittance 58/179/19 - Lost motion 198/38/19	Remittance proposed due to disagreement with some of the wording

Section 1: Business of the Education Committee (Sunday afternoon)

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
1*	For	For	230/1/5	

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
2*	For	For	240/1/2	
3 including remittance	Against remittance, for the motion	Against remittance, for the motion	Remittance 31/197/10 - Lost motion 212/7/15	Remittance proposed due to it suggesting UCU would support student fees.
4*	For	For	207/14/19	

Opening Business Day 3 (Monday morning)

Issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
Congress 2024 minutes	For	For	153/3/12	This was missed in Day 1 opening business
CBC fifth report	For	For	179/1/11	

Section 5: Business of the Equality Committee - continued (Monday morning)

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
45	For	For	187/13/11	
46	For	For	205/9/11	
47 including amendment 47A.1	For motion and amendment	For motion and amendment	47A.1 179/24/19 motion as amended 191/19/16	
48* including amendment 48A.1	For motion and amendment	For motion and amendment	48A.1 209/6/12 motion as amended 227/1/?	
49	For	For	229/1/5	Following this motion there was a request to preface a story about distressing medical events with a trigger warning Lisa: whilst stories and experiences are often shared

Motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
				from a position of good intention, fair warning before going into this can be very important.
50	For	For	225/0/8	

Section 6: Business of the Strategy and Finance Committee to be taken in open session (Monday morning)

Motion/issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
62	For	For	209/5/4	UoN UCU member consultation showed broad support for this motion
63	For	For	124/85/29	UoN UCU member consultation showed considerable support for this motion
64	For	For	229/2/6	These motions were taken in a single debate in line with the proposal in CBC's fifth report
65	For	For	221/1/5	
77	For	For	215/2/6	
78	For	For	222/1/5	
66	For	For	207/2/19	
67	For	For	we did not catch the result	

Motion/issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
68 including amendments 68A.1 and 68A.2	For motion including amendments	For motion including amendments	68A.1 213/1/4 68A.2 210/1/2 motion as amended 208/1/1	
69	For	For	216/0/2	
70*	For	For	204/3/3	
71*	For	For	189/16/5	
72 proposals to remit and take in parts were made	For remittance, our branch is for a realistic position on this issue that takes into account the realities of the situation and ensures the Ukrainian people get to convey their own position rather than us dictating that to them.	For remittance - this had the potential to put branches in the difficult position of having to explain to their own branches and Ukrainian members that they couldn't expect to have a say in their own destiny.	Remittance 116/100/9 - Carried so not further votes	This motion contained wording that brought back the issue for the 2023 Congress motion on Ukraine which led to much discussion in the press and within the union
73*	For	For	200/2/2	The chair was about to close Congress but then the GS intervened to propose we take this motion in honour of Maxine Looby's presidency.

Motion/issue	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
Remit all unfinished business to the NEC	For	For	we did not catch the result - Carried	So NEC is instructed to give those proposals consideration. However, unless it's existing policy they hardly ever do.

Higher Education Sector Conference (HESC) voting record and comments on motions – in the order in which business was taken

HESC sets policy and makes decisions on matters that are specific to Higher Education. See [here](#) for all HESC motions debated. As this year's HESC was the first to have electronic voting, we have voting records for nearly all motions as they were read out by the chair albeit too fast or not audible enough for your delegates (or the transcribers) to note down in some instances.

Issue/motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
Reduction of speaking times to 3 minutes for movers and 2 minutes for other speeches	For	For	139/7/2 - Adopted	The standing orders prescribe 5 respectively 3 minutes. The time available in Congress per motion barely covers what is needed for moving speeches so as happened in prior years a suspension of these specific standing orders was agreed.
CBC fourth report	For	For	161/0/4 - Adopted	

Issue/motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
HESC 2024 minutes	For	For	we did not catch the result - Carried	
Special HESC May 2024 minutes	For	For	134/0/30	
HE1	For	For	190/1/3	
HE2 including amendment HE2A.1	For - as per member consultation	For - as per member consultation	HE2A.1 111/63/20 motion as amended 145/45/12	Our member consultation indicated the motion as amended was the preferred option
HE3 including amendment HE3A.1 - and a proposal to remit	Against remittance, for the motion and amendment	Against remittance, for the motion and amendment	Remittance 52/138/11 - Lost HE3A.1 117/12/? motion as amended 158/32/7	UoN UCU member consultation showed broad support for this motion
HE4	For	For	158/32/7	
HE5 - with a proposal to take points ii, iii and iv in parts	For taken in parts and against those parts because they would reduce local autonomy and could result in delays to local action	For taken in parts, against parts, for final motion without those parts	Take in parts 113/81/15 Part ii, iii and iv 81/109/15 Motion without part ii, iii and iv 143/41/14	UoN UCU member consultation showed considerable support for this motion
HE6	For	For	153/34/10	Similar to our local branch motion on senior pay. UoN

Issue/motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
				UCU member consultation showed broad support for this motion.
HE7	For	For	180/3/12	
HE8	For	For	181/5/2	
HE9	For	For	181/5/6	
L1	For	For	167/17/16	The debate made clear the date stated would be unrealistic and the motion would be implemented with that to mean as soon as possible [the demonstration has since been organised for June 11]
L2	For	For	174/1/4	
HE10	For	For	175/1/4	
HE11	For	For	180/1/2	
HE12	For	For	129/27/17	
HE13	For	For	174/4/11	
HE14 including amendments HE14A.1 and HE14A.2 - and a proposal to remit	Given our branch position voted against the amendments as the supporters of HE14 identified those to be	Against remittance and against amendments - for motion as per branch vote on this	Remittance 54/134/6 - Lost HE14A.1 70/109/13 HE14A.2 78/108/11 Both lost	Our branch adopted a position in favour of this proposal.

Issue/motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
	problematic. Against remittance and for the motion.		Motion 144/43/8	
HE15	For	For	159/11/9	
HE16 including amendment HE16A.1	For motion and amendment	For motion and amendment	HE16A.1 161/20/17 motion as amended 110/77/9	
HE17 with recommendation 2 voted on separately	For report and recommendation 2 - skeptical about CI but it's not good strategy to reject proposal before they are fully developed. UCU has criticized employers/USS for doing so, so should avoid doing so themselves	For report and recommendation 2 - CI has issues but we need options to be fully explored.	Recommendation 2 71/36/33 Remainder of the report 110/11/16	Recommendation 2 was about UCU's position on USS efforts to explore conditional indexation (CI) options
HE18 including amendment HE18A.1	n.a.	n.a.	Fell given recommendation 2 in HE17 being carried	
HE19	For	For	113/14/12	

Issue/motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
HE20 including amendments HE20A.1 and HE20A.2	Since this was about TPS, I did not vote in line with convention	Issue for TPS members to vote on	HE20A.1 80/1/18 HE20A.2 90/2/14 motion as amended 93/1/13	
HE21			72/2/18	
HE22	For	For	157/3/3	
HE23	For	For	168/0/2	
HE24	For	For	159/0/4	
HE25	For	For	170/1/4	These proposals may be difficult to implement
HE26	For	For	162/2/5	
HE27	For	For	168/0/5	
HE28	For	For	172/0/3	
HE29	For	For	167/6/7	Speakers in the debate noted that contributors to the proposed work should be compensated for their contributions.
L3	For - ensuring both pre- and post-92 branches are represented is worth the additional work	For	161/0/12	

Issue/motion	Gertjan	Lisa	Results (for/against/abstain)	Notes
Remit motions 30-39	For	For	Carried	So HEC is instructed to give those proposals consideration. However, unless it's existing policy they hardly ever do.