

Endorsement from Vivek Thuppil, University of Bangor UCU and migrant members' representative on NEC

Hi, I'm Vivek Thuppil and I'm a representative for migrant members on UCU's NEC.

I'm proud to endorse Dr Jo Grady for reelection as general secretary of UCU.

In a union that can be at times riven by intense factionalism, Jo's done a fantastic job of leading us towards a common goal. HE members who are members of the USS pension scheme will see lower contribution rates and increased pay cheques from this month onwards and restoration of their pensions in full from April onwards. FE members at over 60 colleges have voted to accept pay rises of up to 10%, and strikes are continuing at other FE institutions. And whilst not enough to make up for a decade of below inflationary pay rises, HE members have received a pay rise of 8% over the last two years, which is similar to other public sector workers.

I think we should be very clear about this that none of this would have happened without our union's leadership, and Jo Grady has been a big part of that. And one thing I'd like to comment on is despite facing what seemed like weekly motions of no confidence and calls to resign from the factions that oppose her, the fact that she has led us to this victory still is a testament to her resilience, mental fortitude and strength of character. And I'm incredibly impressed by that.

I think what's most important to me, specifically from a migrant member perspective, is that she's been measured in her call for action, and she has strongly resisted what to me are the most reckless elements of our union. So two of Jo's opponents in this election, Vicky Blake and Saira Weiner, both were on the NEC and voted on the NEC for indefinite strike action a little more than a year ago in early 2023.

Very few of our members, migrant or not, can afford the punitive deductions from indefinite strike action or a prolonged marking and assessment boycott, as we saw this summer. But this is especially true for migrant members who have to pay thousands of pounds in visa fees for themselves and their family members. Additionally, there are reporting requirements by the Home Office that mean that prolonged periods of strike action, like indefinite strike action, are not feasible, or if they are possible, they're not impactful for migrant members.

Our union at this point needs a General Secretary who has the maturity and strength of character to stand up to the most extreme elements of our union and crucially, if we need to win our dispute going forward, we need to bring along the vast majority of our membership and not just the dozen or a handful of dozen of members that show up at branch meetings at institutions where there are thousands of members.

That individual who can carry along the majority of our membership, the majority of all of our membership is Dr Jo Grady, which is why I'm so proud to endorse her for this election.

Thank you very much.