

**Request for Nomination – National Executive Committee –**

**Higher Education General Seat:**

Joanne Tapper, University College London UNISON Branch

Membership Number: 21320995



Dear Branch Secretary,

I would like to request that your branch nominate me for the **Higher Education (G) seat** in the forthcoming 2023 NEC elections. My name is **Joanne Tapper** and I am standing from **University College London UNISON**.

I am also asking you to nominate **Kath Owen for the Higher Education (F) seat**, standing from **Leeds University UNISON**. She has been a member of the NEC since 2017 and has done incredible work for our union so far.

I have worked in higher education for over 6 years and am **Joint Branch Secretary at UCL**. I am also a member of the Exec Committee for my local CLP in Uxbridge & South Ruislip, receiving a personal endorsement from the Labour MP for my neighbouring constituency of Hayes & Harlington, John McDonnell. I am passionate about my work in higher education but as many of us are, am concerned about the increasing commercialisation and outsourcing which threaten our working conditions.

I am a keen organiser and believe that **NEC representatives should be involved in organising on a grassroots level**. My union work began as a Health & Safety Rep who was thrown in at the deep end during COVID, but quickly won a first victory in securing paid leave for security guards with extremely vulnerable family members, where I advocated for them as a Rep on the university's Health & Safety Committee. When it comes to the safety of our members and their families, we cannot afford to wait – we need to act.

I want UNISON to have a stronger voice in advocating for workers' rights in higher education, particularly for lower paid workers, BAME workers and women. Yes, of course we need more female professors – but we also urgently need to be asking whether **the woman who cleans the boardroom** is receiving fair pay, security of employment, rights in the workplace and safe working conditions. **If she isn't, then we need to be the ones to speak out for her.**

We need to never let our employers forget that Black Lives Matter. We need to never let our employers forget that outsourced lives matter. **I have spoken for the TUC several times on the topic of in-housing outsourced workers (most recently at TUC Unionreps Connect Conference 2022)** and am eager to work with other unions cross-sector to tackle outsourcing giants such as Sodexo and Mitie.

I am also passionate about the rights of disabled and neurodivergent workers, as a dyspraxic worker myself.

I believe in progressive socialism, workers' rights and equality, organised by members and not imposed from outside or above.

### **What we stand for**

**UNISON must be a member-led union** – We believe this means that elected members should run our union, not selected full-time officials. We want to work with all our paid officials, but it is members and their elected representatives that should be the real leaders. **We need to be an organising, not a servicing, union** – we cannot solve all of our members' problems on a one-by-one basis. Members will always need individual support, but the focus should be on collective action. We need to increase UNISON's collective and organising activities and to empower our members. **Every large city and county** should have a proud UNISON resource centre in the high street: we need to make it as easy as possible for members to find us. We must present UNISON as a vibrant, democratic, fighting and organising union.

**The pay crisis** – UNISON must end the scourge of low pay. For too long UNISON has failed to adequately fight poverty pay, pay freezes and below-inflation deals. We cannot simply approach pay negotiations the way that UNISON's leadership has done in the past. Hikes in the price of fuel, heating and food are seriously impacting our members. No UNISON member should have to rely on food banks. We need fully funded and staffed public services. Members should not pay the cost of Tory austerity. **To achieve this, we want more cooperative relationships with other unions.** We should work together whenever we can.

**We must support members needing to take industrial action.** Strike pay rates have increased substantially, but there is more to do. UNISON only has a national strike fund of £21 million. This must change if we are to show employers and government we mean business. Also, we need to ensure that every region supports branches who need to carry out effective strike action.

**UNISON's finances** – We need full disclosure and transparency as to how members' money is spent. We must make best use of the surpluses made nationally and locally during the pandemic. Also, we must review UNISON's large property estate and where appropriate, free up resources for organising. We must continue to bring the UNISON Staff Pension scheme deficit down to manageable levels. Members' subs should not be required to keep the scheme afloat. **We should insource all outsourced UNISON services wherever feasible**, based on our trade union values and our aspirations for our union. **We need a green agenda within UNISON**, including an audit of UNISON company cars and the proliferation of meetings requiring members and staff to travel long distances.

**We believe that UNISON should play a positive but challenging role in the Labour Party.** UNISON resources and influence should be used to promote the removal of anti-trade union laws, public

delivery of public services and a green new deal that tackles the climate emergency through the creation of green, well-paid, union jobs.

**Equalities in UNISON are central to our vision.** There have been some major developments over the last two years. But there is much more to do to make equality a reality through our entire union, not just its NEC but at all tiers of our union, including within its staffing.

**Legal advice** – We must review UNISON’s main legal services contract and particularly the difficulties branch secretaries have accessing timely employment law advice.

**We need a robust and effective review of** staffing to ensure that the great work our staff do is as efficient and meaningful to members as it can be. **We believe UNISON members should decide whether our most senior roles should be elected.**

**We must end once and for all the punitive culture of disciplinary action.** Disciplinary investigations into members take far too long, with no regard for welfare. We must continue to look at these processes from top to bottom and end their use to resolve political differences.

We are confident that the ideas we support will build on the progress made over the last two years. We urge all UNISON members to **vote for Time for Real Change candidates** in these NEC elections, including **Kath Owen and myself** and, if you are able, to help us campaign for real change in UNISON.

Kind regards,  
Joanne Tapper

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