

## **Statement from UCU at QUB & UCU at UU on academic freedom (1/11/2022)**

The Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University branches of the University and College Union condemn the recent media and social media attacks on QUB Professor Colin Harvey. These attacks are unwarranted, abusive, dangerous and an attack on academic freedom and on human rights. UCU stands in solidarity with Professor Harvey.

Prof. Sean O'Connell, President of UCU at QUB said: "We would ask for more mindfulness and care in publicly questioning the work of academics and engaging in public debate more generally. Within the context of the on-going debate around the NI Protocol and academic and public debates about the constitutional future of NI – a debate which is entirely legitimate we hasten to add – publicly questioning the integrity of academic staff and their research is both inappropriate and dangerous".

Dr. Léonie Hannan and Dr. Véronique Altglas, staff representatives on QUB Senate, stated: "There is a real concern that the nonviolent disagreement that is at the heart of academic research, and its contribution to public debates on important matters of public interest, can, through ill-informed commentary, lead, albeit unintentionally, to threats and put academics at risk. No one should fear any academic research, the essence of which is the development and articulation of different perspectives, the stress-testing of ideas via peer review and the encouragement of vigorous debate. The force of the better argument, not the threat of force, should mark public debate".

We invite anyone to come and talk to the University and College Union here at QUB or at UU to discuss their concerns. No one should fear debate. But no one should fear participating in or contributing to debate either.