

UCU has another template email you can send to the Vice-Chancellor [here](#).

1. General email in support of UCU

anthony.freeling@admin.cam.ac.uk

bhaskar.vira@admin.cam.ac.uk

Dear Acting-Vice Chancellor Anthony Freeling,

This email is also FAO of Professor Bhaskar Vira, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education,

I am writing to you as a student at Cambridge to express my support for the ongoing UCU Marking Boycott. In your inaugural address to the University on October 1st, you expressed that during your time as Acting Vice-Chancellor you intend to 'make the greatest possible progress' while passing the baton from your predecessor to your successor. I write to you now concerning your opportunity to do just that.

Your address praised the 'collective enterprise' of the University in which staff and students are 'united in our aspirations'. You are correct in that the staff and students are 'united', but those in positions of University power such as yourself have historically tried to divide us. Our academic staff are woefully underpaid, and our gender pay gap is at 19.6%. The staff that actually deliver the education that keeps the University running are unable to lead a dignified life or retirement, unlike yourself.

You expressed your desire to 'enhance Cambridge's academic excellence', but this can't be done if the staff that make our education possible are underpaid, on insecure contracts and working for poor pensions. With the Cost of Living Crisis we are experiencing, it's shocking that Cambridge still has such a huge wealth disparity between the lowest paid academics and the likes of yourselves.

With staff worried about their workload, and stress related to their workloads, it is no surprise that there is a mental health crisis amongst both staff and students in our universities. This means our lecturers take more time off due to stress, and less consistent teaching for us. As a world leading University, we should be an equitable institution, where everyone can work, learn and study to their highest ability - but conditions like these only set us back.

I fully support UCU in their action and their reasons for it, however it is for the good of everyone if the problems that have caused this dispute are reconciled as quickly as possible. This means that you should use the influence you have to publicly support UCU's asks for better pay, working conditions and a fairer pension scheme, and to lobby the USS and the broader Higher Education sector for reform. If we do not take action soon, then working in Higher Education will become unsustainable for staff, and students will miss out on the talented educators and support staff who do so much to make our experiences world class.

My education is being disrupted by this marking boycott and it is in your power to stop them by engaging in negotiations. I urge you to act swiftly.

Yours,

2. Email option for final year students about going to do further study

Dear Acting-Vice Chancellor Anthony Freeling,

I am supposed to graduate this term but the UCU marking boycott is putting that at risk. I need to reach a specific grade **[include the number]** to meet my Master's offer but I won't know if I've got this until the marking is completed. The mitigations the University is putting in place won't help me at all because I still won't know my specific grade.

If I can't do my Master's I will need to urgently start looking for jobs and re-planning my year next year.

Cambridge needs to use its position in the negotiating room with UCEA to settle the dispute and call for an end to the disruption to my education. If Cambridge was to make a public statement calling for a dignified pay offer to UCU, we might be able to bring this boycott to an end.

I am incredibly disappointed in my University's response so far. Please take a stance on this and let me graduate.

3. Email option for final year students about getting a job

Dear Acting-Vice Chancellor Anthony Freeling,

I am supposed to graduate this term but the UCU marking boycott is putting that at risk. I have a job lined up to start in the early summer but I won't meet my offer requirements if the marking boycott continues. The mitigations the University is putting in place won't help me at all because I still won't know my specific grade.

I need this job and I can't afford to not know what I'm doing next.

Cambridge needs to use its position in the negotiating room with UCEA to settle the dispute and call for an end to the disruption to my education. If Cambridge was to make a public statement calling for a dignified pay offer to UCU, we might be able to bring this boycott to an end.

I am incredibly disappointed in my University's response so far. Please take a stance on this and let me graduate.

4. Example email from a final year student [real example sent by a student]

Dear Dr Freeling,

I am emailing you as a final year student, who, having put blood, sweat and tears into my academic work during my time here, am now faced with the possibility that my work will not be marked by specialised staff because universities are refusing to engage with staffs' demands for liveable wages and fair conditions. My graduation -- which should be the culmination of all my hard work and the hard work of my peers and supervisors -- is at risk of being delayed indefinitely. As students, you can understand why we are angry. We share our anger with our teachers and supervisors, who are also being treated unfairly by this university.

University staff are the backbone of our universities and dedicate their working lives to supporting students, ensuring they can get the best out of their time studying. But staff have already endured over a decade of falling wages, with pay falling behind inflation by at least 25% since 2009, while 90,000 staff are employed on temporary or insecure contracts.

I am horrified by news that universities across the UK are planning to deduct huge sums from staff wages simply for taking lawful industrial action short of a strike, in the form of a marking and assessment boycott. As you know, staff will still be carrying out most of their duties, researching, teaching, lecturing and assisting students as they always have done.

Making such punitive deductions smacks of vindictive and bullying behaviour. Administering these attacks on staff is also quite clearly a poor use of the university's time and resources. The fallout from this punitive behaviour will be distributed unevenly, falling hardest on academics already faced with massive gender and race pay gaps, and those on precarious and insecure contracts. University resources and time should be directed towards addressing these pay gaps, rather than exacerbating them.

There is very little support for these extreme actions, especially during a cost of living crisis. It is shocking to watch this happen, particularly in the richest higher education institution in the country.

I am urging you to rethink plans to make punitive deductions and instead focus on producing a fair offer that will resolve the pay and working conditions dispute, and allow university staff to get back to doing their jobs and helping students to flourish.

Yours sincerely,