

UCU STRIKES – WHAT YOU CAN DO!

UNDERSTAND WHY THE STRIKES ARE HAPPENING:

UCU (University and Colleges Union) are going on strike for three days on two different disputes. We want to stand in solidarity with them and therefore it's important that we know why they're on strike.

Dispute 1: Pay and Conditions (Four Fights)

- UCU has been negotiating with the University and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) on a number of different areas: pay, workload, casualisation, and gender and ethnicity pay gaps.
- This year UCU members were given a 3% pay rise which, with inflation at 11%, is effectively a 9% pay cut on top of years of below inflation pay rises. UCU are calling for a 12% pay rise.
- Precarious contracts and zero-hour contracts are rife across the sector impacting Postgraduate Researchers, and limiting the security of staff. UCU are calling for casual contracts to be scrapped.
- There are a number of pay gaps across the sector, a 17% racial pay gap, a 19% gender pay gap, and a 9% disability pay gap. UCU are calling for Universities to take real action to close these.
- Higher education staff are overworked and need a proper workload model to ensure that they're paid for the hours of work that they do. UCU wants a 35 hour workload contract implemented for all staff.

Dispute 2: USS Pensions

- This is a long running dispute about the pension scheme that UCU members are part of.
- Most recently the 2020 valuation in the USS Pension scheme resulted in significant increases in pension payments while cutting the benefits of the pension payout.
- UCU estimates that this will mostly impact staff under 40, with most losing between 100-200k from their pension.
- Recent accounts from the USS Pension Scheme have shown that the scheme has a surplus so that cuts were unnecessary.
- UCU are calling for the cuts from 2021 to be revoked and for the benefits from the scheme at that time to be restored.

These two disputes point to an underlying issue in higher education. The introduction of tuition fees has turned universities into a marketplace where they compete for students to increase their income, while underpaying their staff so they can invest in more fancy buildings. For the Young Greens the strikes are about fighting back against marketisation of higher education. We want universities that work for all of us and that means changing the system. Supporting the UCU strikes is a key part of that.

JOIN THE PICKET LINE:

This one should go without saying, but make sure you turn up to the picket line! It's very important to have students physically supporting the strikes, so make sure your society attends, and advertise your attendance well beforehand to maximise the number of people who join you.

You'll be able to find information about the specific time and location of your university's picket lines at <https://www.ucu.org.uk/yourcontacts>. Your local UCU branch will also be posting about their picket lines on their social media and your Students' Union will probably also share picket line locations. Most will run in the early morning and end with a rally but it'll depend on your local branch.

GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR LOCAL UCU BRANCH

Visit <https://www.ucu.org.uk/yourcontacts> to find the contact details/social media pages for your local UCU branch. Here, you'll be able to find information about where/what times the strikes are happening at your university so your society can go and join. Most branches will have an active twitter so we'd recommend following them and sharing their tweets.

UCU branches always appreciate hearing from students so do drop them a message as well. They'll be able to give you details about any strike activity, picket lines, teachout and you may get some cool UCU merch.

SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THE STRIKES:

The Young Greens will be posting information across our social media giving information about the strikes as will many other organisations including UCU. We'll also be posting information about solidarity support from UCU branches around England and Wales as well as sharing all of your picket line pics!

If your society has social media accounts, please share what we post to your stories and share your own photos from the picket lines. It's really important to show solidarity on social media, both to make people aware that the Greens support striking workers and to educate people as to why the strikes are happening.

UCU has made [social media resources](#) that you can share or you can make your own! don't forget to use #UCUrising.

ORGANISE A PRE-STRIKE EVENT TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS IN (OR OUT) YOUR SOCIETY TO JOIN YOU ON THE PICKET LINE:

Run an event before the strikes start, this could be a meeting to talk about the strikes and why they're important. However, even better is a group session making signs and banners to hold up on the picket line. Doing this is both a fun event to run as a society and also gets members more invested in the strikes and likely to join the picket line.

There will likely be other groups like student solidarity groups that are also running their own event. If your Students' Union is standing in solidarity with the strikes then they might be running drop-ins or teach-outs too.

BE PREPARED TO EXPLAIN TO MEMBERS WHY UCU MEMBERS ARE STRIKING AND WHY YOU DON'T CROSS THE PICKET LINE:

Some members may not understand why the UCU strikes are happening or want to cross the picket line. If this is the case, make sure you have information to give them - we've put some links at the bottom of this document that should help.

Detailed information from UCU can be found [here](#), whilst our infographics will offer more bitesize info. A pre-strike event/social is a perfect place to talk to members about why the strike is happening, as well as through posting on social media and in group chats.

If you've never been involved in strike action before, or been a Union member, then now is a great time to get involved and start learning and educating each other about the importance of Union membership. [Find your union!](#)

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS:

- jamie@younggreens.org.uk
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OTHER RESOURCES

- [UCU rising resources for students](#)
- [Calling for a tuition fee rebate is playing into the hands of the neoliberal university](#) by Tom Hazell
- [What are the strikes this week all about?](#) by Wonkhe
- [A toxic culture is harming university staff](#) by Sol Gamsu
- [How striking lecturers won their students' support](#) by Alessio Koliulis
- [Time to shutdown the education factory](#) by Sol Gamsu
- [UCEA's strategic ignorance of staff turnover in UK universities](#) by Nicky Priaulx, and Gail Davies