

Assessment and marking boycott: information for students [suggested text for UCU members to send to their students]

Dear students,

Since 20 April, Warwick University UCU members have been participating in a marking and assessment boycott (MAB). This is part of a national dispute between the University and Colleges Union (UCU), which represents staff working in higher education, and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), which represents university employers, over pay and working conditions. As part of this industrial action, UCU members will postpone marking student work until UCEA chooses to make a meaningful offer on pay and ending gender, race and disability pay gaps, as well as reducing workloads and casualisation.

UCU members, who are your teachers and the professional services staff supporting assessment processes, do not wish to disrupt students' progression. However, we have been forced into this situation because working conditions in universities have become untenable, thereby undermining the learning conditions for students. This letter includes the following:

1. What is a marking and assessment boycott;
2. How UCU members will continue to support you;
3. How you can help to bring an end to this dispute as soon as possible.

1. What work will be affected:

A marking and assessment boycott delays delivery of grades that contribute towards the award of degrees as well as progression. This means that:

- Staff participating in the boycott will postpone marking your work;
- Staff will not participate in exam boards. These exam boards, and the External Examiners who assist with them, are needed to ratify students' grades (and therefore degrees).
- Unless UCEA makes a meaningful offer to UCU in a timely manner, it is possible that there may be a delay to graduation for final year students.

Senior management may well ask other staff who are not participating in the marking boycott, who may not be experts in the relevant topics, to cover the marking of staff who are participating in the boycott. UCU hopes that this does not happen because it would mean that the university would be willing to risk your grades at the hands of people who do not know what you have been taught or what are the requirements for your assessments. To avoid any devaluation of your degree (should the university opt to use unvalidated marks and incomplete processes), we need your help in pushing the University towards a sensible solution on pay and working conditions (see further below).

2. How UCU members will continue to support you:

This is a dispute between UCU and UCEA (that is, between staff and employers), not between staff and students. UCU members will try to ensure that individual students are not disproportionately affected.

- UCU members will support students taking up offers for postgraduate studies by providing letters of recommendations. The UK higher education sector is aware that there will possibly be disruptions because of the current dispute. They will be understanding and we will be communicative.
- UCU members will support students in job applications, writing references and indicating past and projected performance. You can email your teachers and personal tutors for reference letters.
- International students on time-sensitive visas will be fully supported (especially where they require a PhD viva to take place to stay in the country).
- This is a marking boycott, not a learning boycott. Teachers can provide informal feedback, continue to supervise postgraduate dissertations and support students preparing for their final assignments.

3. What you can do

- Write to Stuart Croft, Vice Chancellor, and ask him to pressure UCEA to urgently make staff a fair and reasonable offer on pay and working conditions to end the dispute as quickly as possible. UCU has created a template email for this purpose ([here](#)).
- Sign the forthcoming letter from Warwick Student Union to the Vice Chancellor. See [here](#) for more details as well as the SU's statement on the marking boycott.

We recognise that disruption caused by the marking boycott may be creating anxiety and stress for students. Please be assured that your teachers are committed to marking your work as soon as the dispute is resolved.

Warwick UCU continues to work with Warwick SU to keep students in the loop and to build a university that is fair and supportive of everyone. Your learning conditions are staff working conditions.

You can reach out to us to discuss concerns and plans. You can find Warwick UCU on twitter ([@warwickucu](#)) or via email at administrator@warwickucu.org.uk.

Yours,

[name of staff member]