

# STUDENTS, SUPPORT THE STRIKES!

Later this month, having voted overwhelmingly for industrial action, university staff across the UK will go on strike to defend their pay and pensions. **Staff will be on strike from Monday 25 November to Wednesday 4 December.** This leaflet offers a brief explanation of what these strikes are about, what they mean for students, and what you can do to show your support.

## WHAT IS A STRIKE?

A strike is when, as a result of unacceptable working conditions, members of a trade union collectively refuse to work. Instead, they gather outside their workplaces to protest; these gatherings are called picket-lines.



## HOW ARE STRIKES MEANT TO WORK?

Strike action is the last resort workers have when negotiating with their employers. It's not something anyone treats lightly. Unions have to meet stringent requirements to declare a strike; meanwhile, striking workers lose their pay, often suffering significant hardship as a result. But it's a tried and tested way of protecting and improving working conditions.

## WHAT ARE THE STRIKES SUPPOSED TO ACHIEVE?

### UCU is calling for:

- A modest pay-rise - to match inflation, and to start making up for ten years of cuts;
- An end to precarious employment practises, including zero hour contracts, in universities;
- A concrete and binding plan from employers to close the gender and BME pay gaps, and to reduce workloads;
- No rises in pension contributions.

Universities say they can't afford to increase pay. But over the past ten years, the proportion of revenue they've spent on staff has fallen, while spending on flashy buildings has soared. That's where your tuition fees are going - to university vanity projects, not to the people who teach and support you.

## HOW WILL I BE AFFECTED?

During the strikes, lectures, seminars, classes and demonstrations organised by your faculties may be cancelled. This will cause disruption for students, and the university will blame it on striking staff. However, they and their representative bodies, UUK and UCEA could have avoided the strike but chose not to act. Entrances to the campus will have picket lines at them. This will not prevent you from entering the campus if you want to but we would appreciate it you show solidarity and come and visit the picket.

## SO WHY SHOULD I SUPPORT THE STRIKES?

Because worsening conditions in higher education affect us all. Your teachers' working conditions are your learning conditions. Staff don't want to go on strike: they'd much rather be teaching, researching, providing services and support, and doing the work they love. In fact, strikes are a way of making sure they can continue doing what they do. Insecure employment, intolerable workloads, unequal pay, and uncertain futures - all these threaten the future of higher education as we know it. The union is fighting back on behalf of students and staff alike, to build a better and fairer university for everyone.

## HOW CAN I SHOW MY SUPPORT?

There are plenty of ways to show your support for university staff:

**Picket lines**, if you feel like it, come and join them! We may be doing activities that you can join or having a BBQ or some soup. Make a placard bring it along!

Themed strike days: **Nov 29th** climate strike, **Dec 3rd** Non academics /academic support, **Dec 4th** Disability action day. (further days TBA)

**Join our rallies: Bristo Square, Edinburgh Nov 25th. Glasgow Dec 2nd**

**Join the Union:** if you are Postgraduate student you can get FREE UCU membership.

**Write to the Principal:** tell Richard Williams you back your lecturers and teachers, email him at R.A.Williams@hw.ac.uk or use the UCU form

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/studentvoice>

**Stay informed:** for regular updates on the strikes as they progress, keep an eye on our website; or check out the Heriot-Watt Student Union and **HWUCU Twitter**

**@UCU\_HWUBranch** and **Facebook @UCUHWU** for more information on what's going on and how to get involved.

**When staff and students unite, we can make real change happen.**

**Only by coming together can we resist the cuts that threaten our university, and make it a fairer place for the future.**

 @UCUHWU  @UCU\_HWUBranch <http://heriotwatt.web.ucu.org.uk/>