

Dear student

As you may know, staff members in the University and College Union (UCU) are currently being balloted over two issues: to defend our pay and our pensions. UCU has a long and proud history of working alongside NUS, students' unions and students to defend education and when we work together, we can win. We are asking all students to please support us in our struggle for decent pay and conditions and to ensure that we have a pension that meets our needs in retirement.

Strike action is always the last option for university staff. We would prefer to be at work, helping students to learn, providing student support and continuing with our important research but we feel that we are left with little option. University staff, on a yearly basis, have faced real term pay cuts while our employers continuously impose pay rises which are less than inflation insisting that we pay more every month towards our pensions.

More of us than ever before are on insecure contracts and living with high levels of uncertainty from year to year. This is bad for morale and significantly affects our ability to commit to our teaching and research. This means that students are increasingly getting a worse deal. So this strike action is also action to defend your education.

None of this is necessary and we have asked our employers to work with us on pay and pensions but there has been very little movement on their side.

In 2018, university staff were forced to take 14 days of strike action to defend our pensions. This was 14 days lost to staff and students. The strike only ended when our employers agreed to convene an expert panel (the JEP) to look at our

grievances. The panel vindicated the position that staff on strike had taken. If our employers had listened to us in the first instance, we would not have taken strike action and instead continued to work as normal.

Our employers are ignoring us yet again. They have chosen not to implement the changes which the JEP recommended and have insisted that we raise our pension contributions again. If they are not prepared to negotiate properly and reasonably with us, then we have no other option than to ballot for strike action.

Students and staff working together can make a difference. Together we can get our universities to see sense so that these strikes do not have to take place. Please:

1. complain to the vice-chancellor at your university
2. work with your students' union in support of our fight
3. help us to get the word out that these strikes are not necessary
4. join with staff in defending decent teaching and learning conditions
5. if you are a postgraduate you can join UCU for free as a student member – go to www.ucu.org.uk/free

Thank you

Your lecturers, librarians, IT and administration professionals