

Please take the time to write to your MP about the current disputes in higher education.

You can find your MP's email address by entering your postcode here:

<https://www.writetothem.com>

You can also use the appropriate template text below for your email. Remember to add your name and address so your MP can confirm you are one of their constituents.

Please make sure to personalise the highlighted areas – this is important because the parliamentary email system filters out duplicate messages. You can also add impact by including some personal detail about how you're affected by the issues at stake.

For members being balloted on pay and USS

Dear XXX,

I am writing as your constituent to ask for your help in relation to the current disputes over pay and pensions in higher education.

As you may know, members of the University and College Union (UCU) are currently balloting for strike action in two disputes – one on pay and equality and one on Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pensions.

Staff in higher education have seen the value of their pay plummet by over 20% against RPI since 2009. Over the same period workloads have risen and employers have done little to address the significant race and gender pay gaps and widespread job insecurity in the sector. The final, below-inflation offer on pay from the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) has not sufficiently addressed these issues and so we have been left with no choice but to ballot for strike action.

On USS, the dispute centres on the fact that USS employers (represented by Universities UK) have opted to impose contribution rises for members which we believe are both unfair and unnecessary. This year, member contribution rates have risen sharply from 8% to 9.6% - when combined with changes to scheme benefits, UCU estimates that this change will see the average member entering the scheme today being £240,000 worse off over their lifetime compared with someone who entered the scheme in 2011. The contribution rises are simply unaffordable for many staff and we are calling on employers to cover the additional costs.

Without action to improve pay, workload, job security, race and gender equality, and keep USS pensions sustainable for the future, there is a real risk that careers at XXX will become less attractive in the future and many staff will no longer be able to sustain a career in academia. I would be really grateful for your help in putting

pressure on the employers, including XXX, to address these concerns by improving their offer and returning to negotiations. You can help by:

- Urging the vice chancellor to put pressure on the employers' representatives to address members' concerns and return to negotiations
- Publicly calling for urgent action from universities on the key issues at the heart of the disputes through local press or social media
- Raising the profile of these key issues affecting higher education through questions and debate in parliament.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

XXX

For members being balloted on pay and equalities only

Dear XXX,

I am writing as your constituent to ask for your help in relation to the current dispute over pay and equality in higher education.

As you may know, members of the University and College Union (UCU) are currently balloting for strike action in at 147 institutions over pay and equality. The dispute is focussed on four areas which are intricately linked – pay, the race and gender pay gaps, workload and job security.

Staff in higher education have seen the value of their pay plummet by over 20% against RPI since 2009. Over the same period workloads have risen substantially – the average working week in universities is now over 50 hours. Employers have done little to address the significant race and gender pay gaps and widespread job insecurity in the sector – a third of academic staff are employed on fixed-term contracts, while women and BME staff are more likely to be employed on a fixed-term or zero-hours basis.

Without action to improve pay, workload, job security, race and gender equality, there is a real risk that careers at XXX will become less attractive in the future and many staff will no longer be able to sustain a career in academia. The final, below-inflation offer on pay from the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) has not sufficiently addressed these issues and so we have been left with no choice but to ballot for strike action.

I would be really grateful for your help in putting pressure on the employers, including XXX, to return to negotiations with an improved offer that addresses these serious concerns by:

- Urging the vice chancellor to put pressure on UCEA to address members' concerns and return to negotiations
- Publicly calling for urgent action from universities on the key issues at the heart of the dispute through local press or social media
- Raising the profile of these key issues affecting higher education through questions and debate in parliament.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

XXX