

## **Effective strike participation guidance**

In order to ensure impactful participation in the upcoming strike, it is helpful to organise in advance. Planning and organising effective strike days is hard work and takes strategic planning but it can be done.

These suggestions are intended to be helpful to both new and seasoned picket organisers.

### **1. Set up a strike committee**

Step one in the run up to any strike should be to set up a local strike committee. Ordinary members should agree to send a representative from each department who can feed back information given at these meetings to colleagues to ensure maximum participation in the upcoming strike. These meetings should focus on operational planning of the strike days. Do you want to organise marches? Demos? Invite speakers? Organise placard making events? Write locally focused leaflets? Organise socials? Send speakers to local political meetings to garner support? Organise your local strike fund... All of these things can be organised and planned during these meetings.

These meetings should convene on a weekly basis in the run up to the strike and can continue daily during the strike if necessary.

### **2. Send out a picketing survey**

A picketing survey of members should be sent out as soon as possible. This is easy to set up locally using survey monkey or your preferred survey tool. Set the survey up using 'time blocks' starting at the time you want your picket lines to begin. Eg: 6am to 8am, 8am to 10am, 10am to 12pm and so on. Create these time blocks for each of the eight strike days. This allows members to let you know what times and days they can participate in picketing. It also allows people with caring duties to let you know when they can contribute without affecting their responsibilities.

The idea of a picketing survey is to allow you to have an indication of the absolute minimum picket line participation you will have over each of the strike days. Not all members will complete the survey so you will, hopefully, get far more picketers but you will have an understanding of your baseline picket capacity in advance.

Use strike committee reps to 'Get the survey out', ask departmental contacts who attend strike committee meetings to prompt colleagues to complete the survey. During the 2018 USS strikes we advised members to form departmental whatsapp groups so they could

stay in touch with each other during the strike and make sure their assigned area was effectively covered at all times.

### **3. Organise an accessible picket registration point**

Many universities are unlawfully inaccessible and many of our union offices are inaccessible as a result, that is if you have a union office. Look at your student unions, if they are not a university building, speak to your students and see if they will allow picket registration in an accessible area of their union building. If not, look at local accessible venues and book for each day in advance. Make sure they open early!

### **4. Gather local information**

Speak to members to find out what's happening locally. Are there any high profile events, meetings taking place during the strike days? When are your winter graduation dates? Are there any open days planned? Gathering this local information allows you to strategically picket or lobby events.

### **5. Targeted picket lines**

Universities tend to have a multitude of entrances where picket lines could be set up. It is usually unfeasible to expect a picket line on every single entrance so we have to be strategic. Talk to your sister campus unions, find out from Unison, Unite, GMB, EIS, where they think useful pickets might be located.

Aim for buildings which house prominent senior management or where the entrance is located on a main road. Use 'Honk for support' placards to ensure university managers can hear the public supporting you!

Have UCU sign-up forms/capability on picket-lines – there are often people who will join up on the day.

### **6. On the day picket organising**

Identify central picket co-ordinators and picket registrars. These should be branch officers or reps who have been fully briefed on organising the pickets centrally. There should also be a picket supervisor identified for each day of the strike. These should be senior branch officers where possible. The picket supervisor is the main point of contact for police, the employer, head office etc.

Prior to your first strike day, print out a large map and a number of smaller maps (not all members know every building!) of your campus. Also, print out a spreadsheet with the name of each building/entrance you want to picket and agreed time slots (leave enough

space to write a few names in. It is best to print out this spreadsheet for each of the eight days in advance of the strikes.

Identify on the spreadsheet which are your high, medium and low priority picket lines.

**Table one:** (you can download this table in Word here)

<b>STRIKE DAY #</b>			
Picket line	6am-8am	8am-10am	10am-12pm
HIGH PRIORITY  University management buildings (Front entrance)	Use these boxes for picketers names only – their phone numbers should be on the registration sign in sheet so you can cross ref with this to contact them.		
HIGH PRIORITY  Main buildings (Front entrance)			
MEDIUM PRIORITY  <insert name> Building			
LOW PRIORITY  <insert name> building			

As picketers turn up, register them and give them a picketing guidance sheet which must include the phone number of the registration/central picketing office. On registering, picketers must provide their mobile phone number.

Make sure all picketers have an 'official picket' armband, placard etc then assign them to a picket line according to your prioritised list. Put their names next to the picket line you have allocated them to. Cover your highest profile or most impactful picket lines first. You can expand to cover more picket lines if you have capacity as the day progresses.

It is helpful to have at least two people set up on two different desks where possible, one to register the other to allocate picketers. If lots of picketers turn up, managing both can be tricky.

The picketing survey should mean you get a constant stream of new picketers coming in at different time slots. Feedback told us that the two hour slots made picketing seem more manageable to members who had never participated before.

## **7. Picketeer breaks**

Remember, picketers need lots of breaks. Especially in cold weather. However, they must not leave their assigned picket line without cover. Set up a system where they can ring into your central picket co-ordinating office and let you know they want a break. You can then send newly registered picketers to cover or move picketers from lines which have extra capacity.

## **8. Sister union support**

It is advisable to reach out to your closest CWU branch in advance of strike days. They have always agreed not to cross our picket lines provided an official picket line is set up at the entrance they deliver at the time they deliver. This local knowledge feeds into where your targeted picket lines should be and from what time. Stopping post getting into universities is very impactful.

It is also a good idea to send branch speakers to local political meetings where possible. Trades council meetings give you access to a wide range of sister unions who can send support to picket lines, demos and marches, provide you with speakers and arrange donations for your local strike funds. Also look at anti-austerity groups, active pensioner organisations, Constituency party meetings are good but unfortunately in the run up to the general election these will not be accessible unless you have members who sit on the exec committees. It is also imperative that you reach out to student groups. Look at local student societies as well as your official student union. Ask can you speak at any of their meetings or send them a statement explaining the reasons for the strike and why we value their support. Consider organising a pop-up Q&A stand in the students union, for students to ask any questions.

## **9. Meet regularly during the strike**

It is important to keep members engaged and up-to-date with the progress of the strike and any negotiations during strike action. It is good to have a regular place booked where the branch can meet at lunch-times after picketing and these can be a great opportunity to swap picket-line stories/successes and to gauge the mood of the branch so that your local branch can feed members opinions up to the national union too.

## **10. Teach-outs**

Many branches organised teach-outs to take place throughout the strike. These can be great opportunities for members and students can get together to and continue significant discussions and to foster further UCU/student co-operation. Get a timetable out before the strike commences and advertise this as widely as possible.

## **11. Pairing up with other universities**

If you are lucky enough to be in a well-organised branch and have been able to organise healthy numbers of pickets, then consider pairing up with other local universities which might be less organised, invite them to the teach-outs or local actions. Can you send supporters/speakers to help them?

## **12. Use social media**

Consider, for example, setting up a Twitter handle for pickets to use to tweet strike news.

Wrap up warm and happy picketing!

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## **For the 2019 strike days in particular we should organise action around the following:**

RCN members in Northern Ireland have voted for strike action – can we make connections with nurses in dispute there?

National Disability Day of action – 4th December.

There's an election on 12 December - invite local, friendly, candidates to picket-lines.

There will be a lobby of USS on 4 December in London.

Invite a National Disputes Committee to your picket-lines.

London Region have suggested the following timetable:

WEEK 1

- 25 Nov – Whose university / whose education? Market + tuition fees
- 26 Nov – Anti-Casualisation Day
- 27 Nov – Pensions (USS / TPS)
- 28 Nov – Workload
- 29 Nov – #Climate Strike - March + Rally – this is a national day of action

WEEK 2

- 2 Dec – Pay + pay gaps
- 3 Dec – Resistance to Trump – defend migrants
- 4 Dec – Disability Equality #includeus – this is a national day of action