

UPDATE

for UCU members in the

North West Region



University and College Union

July 2021

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University of Liverpool slammed for failing to give almost 1,500 students their degrees

**Situation 'entirely avoidable' say staff and students
Students stand in solidarity with at-risk staff**

Management at the University of Liverpool should be 'ashamed', students and staff said today after it became clear that entire courses would not receive their results for this academic year until next week at the earliest.

Students should have received moderated, externally examined, results this morning. However many have taken to social media to complain, as the university has said graduates in at least four subject areas will not receive their full results today. UCU estimates around 1,500 final year students have not been given their degree classification.

Pro-Vice Chancellor for education professor Gavin Brown [emailed](#) students to warn those studying life sciences, maths, modern languages and psychology will not receive their results for at least a week. He also explained that many students on other courses may also be told they have failed some modules on the university's results portal.

The university has been unable to award students their results because it has refused to resolve a dispute with UCU over the planned sacking of 21 staff in the faculty of health and life sciences. UCU members began a marking boycott on 18 June to pressure the university to halt the compulsory redundancies. The university responded by refusing to meet with UCU to resolve the dispute, or to allow [ACAS](#) to mediate between UCU and management, and [withholding](#) 100% of pay, locking out staff taking part in the lawful

marking boycott. Staff previously [took](#) three weeks of strike action, from Monday 24 May to Friday 11 June.

[External examiners](#), 62 [Professors](#) in the faculty of health and life sciences, and the [Liverpool Guild of Students](#), which speaks for the student body, all wrote to the university to warn that proceeding with awarding degrees during the boycott is likely to imperil academic standards at the university and have called on management to end the dispute. Complaints include the impact incomplete grades will have on student progression onto postgraduate courses and graduate training schemes.

Liverpool Guild of Students' vice-president Chloe Field said: 'University managers have treated students with disdain and have caused them a great deal of stress on what should be a happy and exciting day for them. Students will not be fooled by claims from the university that staff are to blame, and we stand in complete solidarity with our teachers whose are trying to stop the 21 compulsory redundancies. The university needs to halt its plans to sack staff and meet with UCU to resolve the dispute so students get the results they deserve.'

University of Liverpool branch president Anthony O'Hanlon said: 'It is an indication of the sheer mayhem at the University of Liverpool that the senior leadership team is prepared to put staff and students through a chaotic results day to defend the indefensible. Management's responsibility to its staff and students cannot be ignored any more. Its attempts to set staff and students up against one another have failed spectacularly. It is time to end this chaos, restore the jobs of our colleagues and restore the integrity of our degrees.'

Show your support: donate to the Liverpool strike fund and join the march for health jobs

The University of Liverpool has told staff taking part in a lawful marking and assessment boycott as part of the UCU campaign against redundancies that it will withhold 100% of their wages, despite staff being willing to carry out a majority of their duties. You can support your UCU colleagues at Liverpool [by donating to their strike fund here](#).

UCU NW members are also encouraged to join the March for Health Jobs at 1230, Saturday 10 July at the Bombed Out Church.



Covid guidance is changing: keep up to date with the [latest UCU coronavirus updates here](#).

Fury as St Helens College and Knowsley Community College threatens to axe 22 staff

UCU has slammed SK College Group - which runs St Helens College and Knowsley Community College - for its plans to axe 22 staff from a pool of 76 teachers it has put at risk of redundancy. The plans are the fourth round of redundancies in just 12 months.

The plans would mean almost one in ten (8.8%) teachers across the college would go, including in accounting, science, engineering and sport. They would also see over half the teachers in computing sacked. The college says it is making the cuts to 'maximise efficiency' and create 11 'progress coaches'.

The college's mission statement says it aims to make sure 'each individual is respected, valued and safeguarded as part of an enjoyable, supportive and caring learning and working environment'. It also says it wants to ensure students are well prepared for 'work in Britain today'.

The union said a fourth set of job cuts in less than 12 months threatened to cause serious damage to students and to educational opportunities across the region. It said if managers want to live up to the college's professed vision then they need to immediately halt these cuts and concentrate on supporting staff, and creating a caring learning and working environment. UCU's members are meeting on Wednesday 7 July as they build their campaign against to job cuts.

UCU regional official Martyn Moss said: 'Putting a further 76 teachers at risk of redundancy after already sacking staff in three sets of redundancies this year points to a failure of management. The college says it wants to create a caring learning and working environment, but getting rid of expert teachers doesn't sound like a good way to improve learning. The college says it wants to support students into good jobs at the same time as halving provision in essential skills like computing. Management appear to have no strategy other than sacking more and more staff.'

'The college needs to immediately reverse these plans and work with UCU to build a proper strategy to protect jobs and create a caring learning environment. If it refuses to do so, staff are determined to fight these cuts.'

City of Liverpool #RebuildFE strike ballot opens

#RebuildFE

Invest in our **STAFF**

Invest in our **RECOVERY**

Invest in our **COMMUNITIES**

For more than a decade FE has been neglected and underfunded. Staff working in FE have suffered a real pay cut of over 30%. UCU City of Liverpool is currently balloting in the [#RebuildFE campaign](#). [Send your messages of solidarity to the branch secretary here.](#)

Jo Grady pledges support for UCU Burnley College



UCU General Secretary Jo Grady said that UCU would provide 'all the support necessary' as she addressed a busy UCU members' meeting at Burnley College in June. The meeting took place as concerns were raised regarding the employer's increasingly hostile approach to industrial relations. UCU have raised a number of concerns over health and safety following [the death of UCU member Donna Coleman of Covid-19](#) in January 2021.

Outlining a plan to reinforce support for members at Burnley College, Jo Grady said: 'Health and safety threats in our workplaces remain real, and it's very disappointing that some employers refuse to work productively with us.'

A motion calling for solidarity with Burnley members was passed at the UCU North West Regional Committee and the employer's actions were condemned at the UCU national congress.

UCU Chester put employer on notice and organise rally on 24 July to save jobs

UCU Chester branch has given the employer [a deadline of 1 September to withdraw all remaining redundancy proposals or face industrial action](#). The branch has also called a [rally in Chester city centre on 24 July at midday](#) to defend jobs and the sector which will be attended by General Secretary Jo Grady and local MPs.

In February the University announced plans which put 86 members of staff at risk of redundancy. Following a concerted campaign by UCU and student-groups, the number of staff at risk has reduced to single figures. The branch has held regular meetings of over 150 participants, [joined student-led protests](#) and received support from [local MPs who have raised the threat to jobs in parliament](#).

The university's plans to make staff redundant were announced amidst growing concerns of perceived financial mismanagement by the university. These include the loss of £814,000 in legal costs in a failed challenge to the Health and Safety Executive's ruling that the construction of the Thornton campus next to an oil refinery was unsafe.

A spokesperson for UCU Chester said: 'We are pleased to have pushed the university to save jobs in a number of departments. But UCU members have always been clear, we are fighting for no compulsory redundancies. And we encourage all UCU members from across the North West and other trade unions to join us in Chester on 24 July to continue the fight against compulsory redundancies.'