

UCU national dispute committee (NDC) statement on the forthcoming strike action

NDC congratulates branches that have delivered a strong mandate in favour of strike action on USS pensions. While some branches have been held back by the unfair anti-trade union threshold, they have delivered a strong mandate and many branches will now join us on the picket lines.

Members are forced to take action because employers and USS are misrepresenting the health of the USS scheme. Ramming through a significant detriment to members (roughly a third of the guaranteed amount for many members), at a time when the pension scheme has grown from £66.5 billion to £92 billion during a global pandemic under the pretence that there is a large deficit, is deceptive and unacceptable.

Members have already suffered from years of stagnant pay, entrenched inequalities, rampant casualisation and increased workload pressures and are rightly angry at employers' unwillingness to stand with us, despite recognising the truth in our claims. NDC therefore condemns the unreasonable actions of our employers in pushing through these cuts that will damage this healthy and growing pension scheme at a time when the scheme enjoys record membership and record assets **and the sector enjoys record incomes and record surpluses!** This is a question of employer priorities and we urge them to prioritise staff and students because we are the university.

NDC welcomes UCU's announcement of strong and continuing strike action. The withdrawal of our labour is absolutely essential if we are to save the USS pension scheme. We continue to endorse the mutual reinforcement of the Four Fights and USS disputes as the two sets of objectives are intrinsically interlinked and coupling greatly increases our leverage on the employers. Employers will now have to face members' wrath at their irresponsible and continuing disingenuity.

NDC are grateful to students, our communities and members across our union and the trade union movement for their solidarity and their involvement in a range of actions to strengthen understanding of the deceptions surrounding the employer position. We encourage all branches to continue to hold firm at strong and growing pickets, so our pensions can be saved. NDC notes that we were set up to ensure that decisions regarding the USS dispute are made democratically. As we do not have a UCU email address please contact Linda Moore at l.moore1@ulster.ac.uk or the NDC co-chair Deepa Govindarajan Driver at deepadriver@protonmail.com