

## University strikes – working with MSPs and local politicians

We need to get as much support as possible for our industrial action.

A vital part of this is the support of politicians who can not only apply pressure locally to employers, but make important public interventions supporting our cause.

MSPs and MPs have been sent a briefing by UCU but politicians will often pay more attention if contacted locally by those living and working in their constituency.

With this in mind we're encouraging branches to contact politicians in their area to let them know what is happening locally and to ask for their support. Remember you have both a constituency MSP and list MSPs who cover your area.

### The asks

We want you to make three key asks of your local MSPs and politicians:

1. visit their nearest picket line on one of the strike days to meet UCU members
2. write to principals in the area calling on them to resolve the dispute
3. release a statement and post on social media saying they support university staff.

If your MSPs or MPs agree to meet you on the picket line, let UCU Scotland know (@UCUScotland) and we'll share photos on twitter under the hashtag #ucuRISING

You can also make the same demands of your local councillors – many of whom will be willing to help.

You may already have a good relationship with your local MSPs, MP and councillors but you can find their contact details here:

- MSP contacts - <https://www.parliament.scot/msps>
- MP contact - <https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons>
- Local councillor contacts - <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors>

### Contacting your local politicians

When you email, it's best to send individual, personalised emails to each politician. Politicians receive a lot of correspondence and so they appreciate clarity.

Try also to keep the issues as local as possible: refer to your institution by name and the issues impacting members in your area. Include your address or the address of your branch.

It is also the case that not all MSPs or MPs will traditionally be supporters of UCU's demands and some will be worried about the disruption on campuses. However, it is still vitally important that you contact them to make our union's case, although you may wish to avoid inviting them to the picket line.

Your email is best structured like this:

1. introductions
2. invite to picket line
3. background to the dispute
4. final asks: release a statement, post on social media and write to the vice-principal.

Key national talking points you may wish to include:

- up to 8,000 UCU members in Scotland are taking unprecedented national strike action at 17 universities in Scotland, on Thursday 24, Friday 25 and Wednesday 30 November
- staff pay has fallen by 25% since 2009
- across the sector in the UK 90,000 staff are on insecure contracts.
- for USS members, the guaranteed future retirement income of the average UCU member has been cut by 35%
- staff are working on average 16 hours extra each week because of toxic workloads
- shocking gender, race and disability pay gaps exist across the sector
- UCU delivered historic mandates with over 8 in ten voting for action in both disputes
- UCU has the support of the National Union of Students in Scotland
- UCU is clear further disruption can be avoided if employers negotiate seriously and make improved offers.

## Increasing the pressure

By supporting this work, you will be helping UCU to further increase the pressure on principals and vice-chancellors.

Those who lead our universities will sit up and take notice when constituents and politicians speak out in one voice.

As the disputes develop, we will produce similar briefings to support local engagement.

### **UCU and PROUD.**

If you have any questions about this briefing, please contact Murdo Mathison, UCU's Scotland policy and communications officer, via [mmathison@ucu.org.uk](mailto:mmathison@ucu.org.uk)