



# UCU Marking assessment boycott

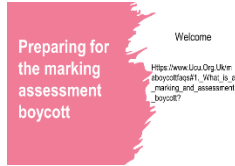


An introduction to organising around a marking assessment boycott.

Delivery notes

## Delivery notes

**Slide 1 – this is the introduction slide with the link to the FAQ section on the website**



Please use whatever welcome best suits the circumstances of your delivery.

Welcome everyone in your group.

Introduce yourself and ask others to do the same.

Explain how you will conduct the session I.e. if online will the chat be operational, if face to face will you take questions at the end or as you go.

Point out the link to the relevant sections of the UCU rising pages that contain the FAQs for the boycott.

Let people know that you will pass on any questions raised if not in the FAQs so they can be added.

The link to the relevant web page is on the slide and here

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/MAboycottFAQs>

## Delivery notes

**Slide 2 – What will be do in the next 90 mins.**



This slide briefly sets out the topic areas for the next few slides and helps frame the session. Please feel free to add any other areas you think would be appropriate to your local situation

**Let people know that over the next few slides you will be looking at the following areas**

**Why** we are taking this action – how did we get to this point & how long will the action be.

**What** is the action – what form will it take and what will members be doing or rather not doing

**How** – how can we ensure strong action involve members, and support those taking the action. How can we publicise/share/get support for our actions. We will also look briefly at some responses if challenged.

**Again, feel free to add anything that you may feel relevant to the things you want to cover.**

## Delivery notes

**Slide 3 – to go over the process so far**



**How did we get here?**

Let people know the democratic process that led to the MAB decision. The ballot was won on the 21 October 2022. On the ballot paper, in addition to strike action, there were options for Action Short of Strike (ASOS): “*working to contract; not covering for absent colleagues; removing uploaded materials related to, and/or not sharing materials related to, lectures or classes that will be or have been cancelled as a result of strike action; not rescheduling lectures or classes cancelled due to strike action; not undertaking any voluntary activities, and undertaking a marking and assessment boycott*”. Members voted overwhelmingly for both strike action and ASOS including MAB

A successful re-ballot was won on 3rd April 23. Now notice has been given to the employer with the MAB will start on 20th April

### **Why this action?**

This action was on the ballot paper and by many is seen as the absolute last resort, as it directly affects students in a way that strikes do not. It also hits the employer at the core of their business model. When HEC considered the options available, they decided that the pressure that a boycott applies would be needed to achieve movement from the employers' side to resolve the dispute.

### **How long will this action last?**

A MAB is continuous industrial action, which means once started it continues until either the dispute is resolved or until the union suspends/calls off the action. It is possible for the union to state an end date for such action when it is called (i.e. to call continuous action for a

defined period only) the HEC decision to call a MAB did not specify an end date so, when called, the MAB will be open ended.

## Delivery notes

### Slide 4 – What exactly is a MAB?

What is a boycott	What will members be doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A marking and assessment boycott covers all marking and assessment work that contributes to summative assessment decisions for students whether final (i.e. graduation/completion) or interim (i.e. progression decisions).</li><li>Once the boycott is live, UCU members should stop all summative marking and associated assessment activities/tasks.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ceasing all summative marking and assessment in any form (writing, online, verbal, coursework, field work, exhibits, experiments, presentations etc.)</li><li>Not creating assessment related work such as exam invigilation</li><li>All undergraduate, sub-degree, and postgraduate work covered - so that includes all taught postgraduate summative assessment, PhD final viva, and MPhil to PhD progression confirmation viva/assessment</li><li>No mark and grade - the point is to stop and slow down the process</li><li>Anything that contributes to a student's mark or progression. There is info about formative assessment on the FAQ pages.</li></ul>

A marking and assessment boycott consists of UCU members refusing to undertake marking or assessment work, and assessment related work, that relates directly to all forms of summative assessment. Summative assessment means assessment that generates a mark or grade that contributes to a formal course outcome grade/classification; I.e. work that generates marks that go towards a student's final module or course unit grade, where that module/course unit grade itself will contribute to their final overall course outcome grade /classification. This includes both final marks/grades and interim/progression marks/grades.

For example, a coursework essay that forms part of the formal grade in an undergraduate course or module; marking exam scripts that contribute to course/module results; assessing experimental work in laboratory-based disciplines where that assessment contributes to a formal module or course grade; assessing installations or other artwork where that assessment grade/outcome contributes to a formal course or module grade.

In short, UCU members should, for the duration of the MAB, cease all work that involves marking or assessment that contributes to summative

assessment (assessment the outcome of which forms part of a formal grade for a course or course element); and all assessment related work, such as exam invigilation and/or administration for and attendance at exam board and other assessment meetings.

N.B. Formative assessment, meaning assessment that does not lead to an outcome that forms part of a final formal course grade, is not affected by the MAB. So, marking/assessing students' work in order to provide developmental feedback, rather than generate a formal grade, is not covered by the MAB and UCU members should continue with this work.

Ensure attendees are shown the relevant pages on the UCU website which goes into greater detail.

It may be useful here to reiterate that any industrial action is not always easy, but this is industrial action. It is not a demonstration or a protest, it is legal and legitimate industrial action designed to stop the university producing graduates. To target the university at the core of their business model.

## Delivery Notes

### Slide 5 – How can you involve members



This slide looks at some ideas around how you can involve members – they are just ideas please feel free to add your own

## **Know where and who the members taking action are – mapping**

Talk about the importance of mapping your membership and adding extra information to help with organising. Clearly the most important information you need in this case is which members (and non-members if possible) will be marking and therefore taking action. So, a map of where and who those taking action are, is essential.

Mapping will also allow you to see which members are not involved in marking. Those not involved will be a good source of support for those taking the action.

## **Conversations are powerful – talk to people about the expectation and the support they may need or can give.**

Let people know that talking to members and non-members about the action is probably the most important form of communication. Those taking action need to know what's expected and how they will be supported. Those not taking action need to know how they can support and bolster the action.

Let people know the importance of accurate information and how to counter any management arguments.

Reiterate the importance of building alliances – with other campus unions, local alliances, other local unions, sympathetic leaders.

It may be useful to do a branch analysis of supportive people and people who may try to intimidate members taking action. This will help target support and mitigate challenges.

## **Keep people informed – use the materials provided**

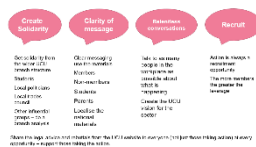
Let people know the importance of up-to-date information, make sure they know where to find it. Use materials on the UCU website and get the message out at every opportunity. Again, stress the need to counteract any management propaganda.

Regular meeting e.g., Liverpool had online meetings every morning to stay ahead of the curve and brief members taking action.

Regular contact with those taking action will help to support and coordinate action. Hear about how Liverpool ran a successful Marking boycott <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5yNG7Fwew8>

## Delivery Note

### Slide 6 – Organise



This slide you can speak to directly as it is self-explanatory.

**Colum 1** – create solidarity. Pick up on the last point regarding a branch analysis of those groups who might be helpful. You may also encourage people to consider who, or which groups may be obstructive and think about how you might mitigate their actions.

**Colum 2** – clarity of message. Pick up on the importance of tailoring the message to the specific group. You might encourage supportive people from specific groups to help you draft appropriate communications.



**Colum 3** – Relentless conversations. Encourage those present to listen to people's concerns, then set out a UCU vision for your institution, relate the vision back to their concerns and let them know what improvements UCU are demanding. Let people know how management may react and that things will not improve unless we stay UCU and proud. Ensure they understand that the blame is firmly at the feet of the employer and that a different future is possible if they take part.

**Colum 4** – Recruit. Let people know that any action is a recruitment opportunity!

## Delivery Notes

### Slide 7 – Challenges

**Challenges**

- Have rebuttals ready
- Make sure all those involved know what to say when challenged
- Have standard emails members can send and a reporting mechanism for challenges
- Report any talk of deductions asap follow the guidance on the members area of the website

I'm unable to attend this meeting / mark these scripts / invigilate this exam because I am taking part in UCU's lawful industrial action in the form of a marking and assessment boycott.

I'm continuing to perform all my normal duties other than those affected by the marking and assessment boycott and any other lawful action short of strike / industrial action currently called by my union.

This is official action - UCU have informed you it is taking place.

I am under no obligation to inform you in advance of my intentions regarding industrial action.

Explain there will be challenges, and people should be prepared with the relevant rebuttal. It would be naive to think that individuals will not be challenged by management. Let people know the importance of preparing both those taking the action and those supporting.

There will be some common rebuttals on the UCU website which can be adapted for your own institution.

The important thing is to let members know that there may be challenges from management or individual managers. However, good preparation will give people the confidence to manage the situation.

Let members know if you have started a MAB committee and ensure contact details for members of that committee are available. Members who run into issues, have questions or are experiencing challenges will want and need support swiftly. They will need to know who to contact for advice and information.

If your branch has not already, then it is worth thinking about starting a local hardship fund. This will allow you to offer HPL/PGRs financial support during action and all those not involved in the marking boycott to support the action financially.

It will also be vital to ensure people know that any mention of pay deductions should be reported to the branch immediately and the advice on the UCU website followed.

## Delivery Note

### Slide 8 – summary



Again, this slide speaks for itself and is a summary of the basics.

Make sure you send attendees away knowing that this is one of the ways we can hit the employer at the core of their business model. They should be able to place the blame firmly on the employer.

Ensure they know where the FAQ's are and that they have links to your MAB organizing committee. Clear lines of communication and arguments to counter challenges.

Make sure you send attendees away knowing where to access the information on the website along with knowing who to contact.

## **Delivery Notes**

### **Potential activity**

#### **Activity**

Discuss some of the potential challenges with the marking assessment boycott and note some potential solutions.

The question above might help to stimulate conversations with members and elicit some of their concerns. You will know your members best, and know best how to illicit their concerns and overcome most of the challenges locally.