

## **The USS strike – a briefing note for casualised members**

### **Why casualised staff should support the USS strike**

#### **It's about security**

University employers are attacking security for everyone. They want staff to be cheaper to hire, easier to fire and cheaper in retirement too. This is part of a multi-faceted attack on security of employment and security of living in our sector. Whatever your age and whatever the stage of your career, you will be feeling the effects of this attack. That's why the fight for pensions, like the fight against casualisation is a fight for security.

#### **It's your pension scheme**

Many casualised staff are not part of their occupational pension scheme and for many it can seem like a distant dream. But this fight is about what kind of scheme will be open to you if you get access to it. Will it be a stock market dependent annuity or will it be a decent scheme which carries security in retirement?

#### **This is what solidarity means**

Trade unions are where working people with different issues come together and support each other. Our union is the only thing between your employer and you as an individual. Without our union, each person faces the employers' onslaught alone. Without our union there would be no resistance to the looting of our pensions, just as there would be no campaign against casualisation.

#### **This is an opportunity to build the campaign against casualisation**

UCU has made the campaign against casualisation one of its national priorities. We've put resources into making membership easier, we're pushing our branches to take up local claims on behalf of casualised staff and in many places we're winning real improvements.

You can see [more about what we're doing here](#) and some of our [success stories here](#).

We need more groups of casualised members making the argument in their branches and working with us to build local campaigns, making the argument that solidarity goes all ways.

At this time, when the issue of solidarity is so alive, this is an opportunity to make the case for branches to campaign on security for the casualised as well as security in retirement.

## **What to do during the strike**

Because of the enormity of the attack on the pension scheme, UCU has called a total of 14 days of strike action. During a strike do not do any work that relates to your employment.

If you have more than one contract (eg. with different institutions) you should continue to work normally where the institution is not currently part of the current dispute.

Employers often write to staff asking them to confirm whether they will be taking action. You do NOT have to tell them in advance of taking the action and we would discourage you from doing so because it helps them to mitigate the impact of what we're doing.

For the same reason, don't reschedule any classes that are cancelled because of the strike but you should continue with work on any days where you are contracted to work if it is not a strike day.

## **What support you can get**

UCU understands that casualised staff can suffer a disproportionate impact for participating in industrial action.

That's why the UCU strike fund will be made available to members and within its rules, the needs of casualised and low paid members will be prioritised. Strike pay will be up to £50 per day from the 4th day of the action. You can read more here. Branches will also be receiving guidance on establishing hardship funds. If your teaching falls on a strike day, please support the strike and make use of the union's strike fund. Make sure your branch know your situation too.

If you feel under pressure to commit to working or you feel that your access to work is threatened by your support for this strike, the best defence is the collective strength of the branch. UCU branches will be guided to collectively challenge any attempt to intimidate members for taking part in lawful action.

## **What if you're not employed by the university?**

Some insecure staff are employed by a third party like Unitemps. If that's the case, you are not covered to take industrial action as our dispute is with university employers. Please

do what you can to support the strike. Publicise the action among students in particular.