

## Industrial action guidance for GTAs and PGRs

*This document is intended to provide information that is specifically targeted to PGRs and GTAs. It provides specific information that may not be covered in other guidance documents. You should follow all the advice given in the SUCU guidance and information for members on strike action here: <http://ucu.group.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/SUCU-industrial-document.pdf>*

You can access national guidance on strike action here:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/he-action-faqs>

### I can't afford to go on strike – will the Union help me?

Yes, there are local hardship fund and national fighting fund that you can apply to.

After the strike, all members are able to apply to the national [UCU fighting fund](#). For members receiving a monthly salary, strike pay will be calculated as follows:

- those of you earning below £30,000 will be able to claim up to £75 per day from the second day onwards.
- those of you earning £30,000 or more will be able to claim up to £50 from the third day onwards

For hourly-paid casual staff, UCU will pay appropriate strike pay for each strike day upon which you would have worked based on your normal working patterns.

While the loss of income through striking affects everyone, it hits worse those who are already in very financially insecure situations, and these people will be prioritised – e.g. hourly-paid workers; postgraduates who teach/demonstrate.

You can only apply for strike pay once the industrial action is over, and you will need to show evidence of lost pay. This will be more difficult for hourly-paid workers, but please hold on to timesheets or emails confirming your normal working patterns, if you can, and the branch will support your claim.

SUCU recognises that the national fighting fund may still leave some members in hardship. As such, we also have a local hardship fund which members will be able to apply to. Once again, you can only apply to the local fund once the strike is over, and after you have applied to the national fund. However, we expect local claims to be processed a lot quicker than national claims, and hourly-paid and casualised staff will be prioritised.

Accessing the the local hardship fund is easy and straightforward. To do so please follow this link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvU9z1Q8E9kClYcYpCm0XK0tedeCVc2dzjINyqPs2GbSokoQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvU9z1Q8E9kClYcYpCm0XK0tedeCVc2dzjINyqPs2GbSokoQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

If you are a PGR student who also teaches, in order to draw from the national fighting fund you need to have “standard free membership” rather than “student free membership” of the UCU. You can change your membership through the My UCU portal - you will need to have your membership number for this: <https://ucu.org.uk/>. You must do this BEFORE the start of the strike (25th November).

#### If I am striking, how should I fill in my timesheets?

Once the strike action is over and you have returned to work, you should fill in your timesheets to say that you have not worked during the strike period. If you are asked why you did not work during the strike period once the strike is over, you should respond truthfully to any query from your employer as to whether you have taken or are taking industrial action. UCU recommends that you do not notify the department that you will be on strike before industrial action has begun because doing so could result in your classes being covered.

#### If I am asked to cover for striking lecturers, should I do it?

You should not cover for striking colleagues, you are under no obligation to do so, and covering for them would undermine their strike action.

#### Should I reschedule classes or provide materials for hours of teaching missed?

You should refuse to reschedule teaching activities or share materials that would have been covered in the class or lecture when asked stating in response that you are supporting UCU's action short of a strike.

#### I have a viva/confirmation review coming up – should it be rescheduled?

Asking for a viva or confirmation review to be rescheduled could undermine the action short of a strike taken by the viva or confirmation review panellists.

However, we appreciate that rescheduling vivas could potentially impact your access to paid work if, for example, a postdoc is contingent on your passing your viva by a certain date. Likewise, a significantly delayed confirmation review could mean that you're unable to collaborate with external partners for your PhD or delay your fieldwork. We ask that you think carefully about the impacts of this on you and discuss with your examiners or supervisors. We encourage you to not attend vivas or confirmation reviews during the strike period and to think carefully about the possible implications of rescheduling.

Should I reschedule supervisions that fall during strike action?

We ask that you don't reschedule supervisions that fall during strike action

Can I still be working on my PhD during the strike?

Although PGRs' status as both students and staff members can make things difficult, we encourage you to not work on your PhD during the strike period. Even if you're working from home, you would still be using the university's online resources and electronic picket line is still a picket line.

What if my PhD is funded by external bodies such as from the private sector or a scholarship fund in another country?

You should still take strike action and follow all other guidance from SUCU

Will taking strike action affect my visa?

If you are on a Tier 2 or 4 visa, you should not be penalised for taking strike action and it should not jeopardise any future applications for Leave to Remain. There are detailed guidelines on this here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/heaction-migrantworkers>