

SUCU GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION TO MEMBERS ON INDUSTRIAL ACTION UPDATED NOVEMBER 2019

Sheffield UCU committee remains hopeful that Universities UK (who represent the employers on USS matters) and UCEA (who represent the employers on pay) will return to meaningful negotiations ahead of the planned industrial action.

Our advice between now and then is that you should write to Koen Lamberts - send him an impassioned plea to intervene with the employers' bodies on vc@sheffield.ac.uk and copy us in (ucu@sheffield.ac.uk). Ask him to exert pressure on UUK and UCEA. [Talk to your students](#), and ask for their support. Come along to one of our [meetings](#), get in touch with your [departmental rep](#), talk to your colleagues and ask them to [join us](#). Posters and leaflets should be prominent in your department - put them on your doors and notice boards (you can [download](#) them [here](#), or collect from our office at 2 Hounsfield Road). Talk about the dispute on social media, if you have it.

We'll be sending you a lot of emails over the coming weeks. Please read them, and talk to us if you need to - we are here to support you. We know this is tough and we're committed to ensuring that all of our members are supported to undertake the action asked of them.

Here is the latest information for members. This is a long document, but it's important - please read it all!

NOTE: UCU nationally will be issuing detailed advice to all members ahead of the 25th November. This will include tailored advice for members who are visa-holders, detailed information about action short of a strike, and updated fighting fund information. We will update the local guidance below when this advice has been published. Please keep checking back.

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Strike Action

UCU members are asked to take strike action on the following dates:

NOVEMBER 2019					
Week 1	Mon 25th	Tues 26th	Weds 27th	Thur 28th	Fri 29th
DECEMBER 2019					
Week 2	Mon 2nd	Tues 3rd	Weds 4th		

When you are on strike, you do not work.

This includes time before 9am and after 5pm and includes any activity which is part of your work such as teaching, administration, meetings, emails relating to work, marking, research, events, or conferences where you are *directly or indirectly* representing your employer. **Don't do any work!**

We believe that the University will be deducting pay on the basis of 1/365th of your annual salary per strike day.

We don't yet know what arrangements will be in place to ensure continuity of service in USS. We'll update you when we have that information.

You can read the University's FAQs on industrial action [here](#), but please take our advice where there are differences in the messaging.

Research-only contracts:

If you are on a research-only contract and you are taking strike action, you should not work and should follow all other advice.

We have heard from several research-only members who have expressed concern that their strike action does not have an impact on the University. It does: your work will be

slowed down and your email auto-responses will go to your funders, partners and colleagues. Your presence on the picket lines will help our action.

Research-only externally funded contracts:

If you are employed by the University on an externally-funded contract and you take strike action you should not work and should follow all other advice.

If your employment contract is with an external funding body, or any other body or agency, you should not strike.

Hourly-paid and GTA contracts:

If you are employed on an hourly-paid or GTA contract and you take strike action you should not work and should follow all other advice.

PLEASE NOTE: in order to be eligible to claim from the fighting fund, all GTA members must ensure that you have 'standard free' membership, not student membership. This is essential. You can update your membership via [MyUCU](#) (you will need your membership number, which you can find in the email welcoming to you to UCU).

Research leave:

If you are on research leave and you take strike action you should not work and should follow all other advice.

Annual leave/parental leave/sickness absence:

If you are not at work for these reasons during strike action, you cannot strike. This is the only 'dispensation not to strike' that our members have, and we encourage you to donate any earnings to the local hardship fund if you can.

Action Short of a Strike

Members will also be taking action short of a strike starting **Monday 25th November** and continuing until further notice. This might include:

- **working to contract**
- **not covering for absent colleagues** (unless your contract specifies that you do; for example, being asked to cover classes or teaching for a colleague who is unwell)
- **not rescheduling lectures or classes cancelled due to strike action.** This includes any scheduled teaching activity which would have taken place on one of UCU's strike days and applies to all UCU members, not just those directly

responsible for the relevant lecture or class. You should refuse to reschedule this activity when asked, stating in response that you are supporting UCU's action short of a strike. You should also not share materials that would have been covered in a lecture or class cancelled due to the strike.

- **not undertaking any voluntary activities** (that is, work you have a choice about. This will differ by contract but, for example, working on a Saturday is voluntary for many members)

Please note the ballot we voted on included a marking and assessment boycott as part of ASOS. We have a mandate for that action but it is not as yet being called as part of the November-December action. We will update you further if this changes.

If you have already rescheduled lectures or classes that were scheduled during strike action, or your Head of Department has rescheduled them, then once action short of a strike has started after November 25th you should not teach them.

If you are a professional services member of staff, you too are covered by ASOS and working to contract and there is specific guidance for PS staff from UCU nationally [available here](#).

Working to contract means abiding strictly by the terms of your employment contract.

If you're in any doubt about what you are required to do, check your contractual documents - your offer letter, statement of main terms and conditions and/or any staff handbook. **Contact us for further advice if you need it.**

Taking action short of a strike does not mean that you can refuse a reasonable request from your manager to undertake something that isn't covered by the examples above.

How reasonable any request is will depend on the terms of your contract and custom and practice. If in doubt - or if your actions are challenged by someone senior to you - temporarily suspend your action and contact us for guidance.

The University is unlikely to make punitive salary deductions when you are legitimately working to contract.

Notifying the University

You are **NOT** required to formally notify anyone in advance of 25th November that you are intending to take action. If your manager asks you in advance, you can reply that your union has advised you that you shouldn't answer this.

If your manager asks you whether you are taking action short of a strike on or after 25th November, you should answer them truthfully. However, you should not answer any such query while you are undertaking strike action.

If your manager asks you after strike action whether you took it, answer them truthfully.

We recommend that you complete a notification form for strike action after you have taken the strike action, but not one for action short of a strike.

If you experience problems or need guidance on notifications, get in touch and we'll help.

Financial Support for Strike Action

UCU Fighting Fund

Members earning over £30,000 pa can claim strike pay after the third day of action for up to £50 per day. Members earning below £30,000 pa can claim £75 per day from the second day of action. Financial support will be prioritised to lower paid members and those on insecure contracts. Full information and details of how to apply will be circulated as soon as we have them.

We strongly encourage you to apply to the fighting fund if you need to.

If you can manage without, or claim a lower amount, please do.

SUCU Hardship Fund

Your first port of call should be the central fighting fund - UCU nationally has vastly more resources than we do locally. We recognise, though, that national strike pay may still leave some members experiencing hardship; either because of the level of deductions or because of their personal situation.

Members who are sole-income households, or are on precarious or part-time or temporary contracts, may be particularly affected. **We will circulate information about how to apply to the local hardship fund as soon as we can.**

The SUCU Hardship Fund is made up of solidarity donations and branch funds.

Information for migrant members

Since the UCU industrial action in early 2018, there have been changes to the immigration rules that make explicit that unpaid leave for the purposes of industrial action is exempt from the reporting duties for sponsors of Tier 2 and Tier 5 visas.

The change was announced in July 2018 by Sajid Javid (see full statement [here](#)): “It is not the Government’s policy to prevent migrant workers from engaging in legal strike action; and, to date, I am not aware of any case where a migrant worker has had their leave curtailed, or been removed, as a result of having engaged in legal industrial action. However, to put the matter beyond doubt, I will be making changes to the guidance and Immigration Rules for migrant workers (under the Tier 2 and 5 immigration routes) and their sponsors.”

You can view the updated rules [here](#), and the updated guidance for sponsors [here](#).

Student Support for Strike Action

UCU and the NUS are sister unions, and we have support for this action from them both nationally and locally. A motion was passed at Sheffield’s SU Council in early November in support of the action, and NUS nationally released a [joint statement](#) with UCU in early September:

“NUS stands shoulder to shoulder with UCU and asks its members to:

call for higher education employers to recognise the seriousness of the situation, agree to reopen negotiations on casualisation, workload and pay inequality and put pressure on USS to implement all of the recommendations of the JEP
write to their institution head to raise concerns about the impact such disputes will have on their learning
participate in local demonstrative solidarity action, both during the disputes and the likely strikes, in support of UCU members.

In response, UCU agrees to:

work closely with NUS to explain to students why action is taking place and to update students as matters progress
commit to meaningful negotiations to resolve the disputes
continue to support NUS in the wider struggle for a fair and just education system.”

We are working closely with Sheffield SU on this action and we are incredibly grateful for their support and solidarity.

Please talk to your students about the action, and ask them for their support. Our working conditions are their learning conditions, and we’d like them to join us in writing to Koen Lamberts directly with messages of support, asking him to exert pressure on Universities UK and UCEA to go back to meaningful negotiations immediately. The email address is vc@sheffield.ac.uk.

Teach Out Programme, Events, and Pickets

We're thrilled to have put together a programme of alternative events for strike days. Members from across the University will be delivering talks in the Students' Union in the afternoons of all strike days on a whole host of topics that showcase some of the fascinating work we do here.

As soon as the programme is fully finalised, we'll share it with you - in the meantime, if you'd like to volunteer to deliver a talk, please contact Eda Yazici on eyazici1@sheffield.ac.uk.

Please also join one of our picket lines. If you were a member in 2018 you will remember that our pickets were scenes of fun, creativity, home-baking, music and fancy dress. We will be picketing all major University buildings, and you can collect placards and at the union office at [2 Hounsfield Road](#) (it's just behind the Sainsbury's at the University tram stop, opposite the back of the Harley, and has big UCU signage - you can't miss it) from 7.30am on strike days. Get your colleagues involved!

Making picketing more accessible:

We appreciate that being outside for extended periods of time, often standing up, and holding placards can be challenging. Here's some advice on how to make that process easier:

- Organise picketing shifts within your department so that not everyone needs to be there for the whole picketing period (your departmental rep/contact should be able to help with this)
- Feel free to bring along a small camping chair or similar if you need one, but do take care not to block the pavement or prevent anyone else's access to the building
- If you have a medical condition that might require immediate access to a toilet, feel free to use the one closest to you regardless of whether or not it is behind a picket
- Remember that coffee shops, pubs, the union office at 2 Hounsfield Road and the Students' Union are all 'neutral spaces' that you are free to use throughout strike days.
- Feel free to take a break from the picket if you need one.
- Free sandwiches from John's Van are available to all picketers wearing an armband or carrying a placard or otherwise identifiable as a striker on strike days: please make use of this
- Please read and familiarise yourself with [UCU's guidance on picketing](#). **If in doubt, please call the picket supervisor.**

Further Information and Resources

Upcoming meetings

We'll email you about these and publicise them on [twitter](#) - please do come along. If you're having a departmental UCU meeting and you'd like a branch officer to come along too, get in touch.

Background to the dispute

There is an enormous amount of information now in the public domain about our ongoing disputes over both the USS scheme and pay and equalities. Please browse our blog, watch the videos from our branch officers and national negotiators, and email us or come along to a branch meeting if you have any questions.

Email auto-responses

We recommend that you set these up starting from the 25th November and leave one or both on (depending on the date) until the dispute is over. If you need help setting up an auto-response, see [here](#).

ON STRIKE: I am on strike today until [date] as part of UCU's industrial action over the USS pension scheme and our pay and conditions. Your email will not be read and you will need to resend it on [date].

ACTION SHORT OF A STRIKE: I am working to contract as part of UCU's action short of a strike over the USS pension scheme and our pay and conditions. There may be a delay in my response due to workload issues.

You might like to include links to further information about the disputes in your out-of-office messages, or direct any students you work with to alternative sources of support.

An Appeal from your Branch Officers

We need your help. This is voluntary work on our part - the paid time we get to undertake UCU business, which is called facility time, doesn't remotely match the work on our own time we do on behalf of all our members. We support individual members through casework, negotiate policy, contracts and terms and conditions, campaign on important issues facing the sector and much besides.

If you'd like to get involved with any aspect of the current dispute, or are interested in otherwise becoming more active in SUCU, please contact us on ucu@sheffield.ac.uk.