

Subject line: UCU industrial action this term

The University & College Union (UCU) Higher Education Committee has confirmed that they will be instructing members to take a further 14 days' strike action. UCU has given notification of strike action on the following dates:

- Thursday 20 and Friday 21 February (two days)
- Monday 24, Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 February (three days)
- Monday 2, Tuesday 3, Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 March (four days)
- Monday 9, Tuesday 10, Wednesday 11, Thursday 12 and Friday 13 March (five days).

This is in addition to the current period of action short of strike, which continues until April 2020.

Before Christmas around one-third of UCU members at the University of Reading took part in up to eight days' strike action. It is regrettable that our students may now face a second period of disruption in this academic year.

It is important to note that, as we have seen previously, it is unlikely that all UCU members will participate and therefore impact will vary across Schools, Departments and Functions. We anticipate that the professional Functions including Support Centres, the Library, cafes and other facilities on campus will remain open.

Our primary priority is to minimise disruption for you, our students. We have our established [Impact of Strike Action on Academic Performance](#) process for you to notify us of instances where you feel you have been academically disadvantaged in an assessment as a result of industrial action. We will continue to share further developments by email and on our [industrial action webpages](#), which will be updated when we have further information.

This announcement of further strike action is particularly disappointing given that national discussions between UCU and employer representatives are ongoing in relation to both the USS pension scheme and the national pay negotiation process (and related matters).

On pensions, the Joint Expert Panel, which includes representatives of both the UCU and employers, published its [second report on the USS pension scheme](#) in December. The report was welcomed by UCU and UUK, and it provides a platform for ongoing negotiation about how we strengthen the scheme, ensure that it remains sustainable and deliver the best outcomes for members and employers alike.

On pay, the employer representative, the Universities & Colleges Employers Association, has been clear that they have no mandate to revisit the 2018-19 pay settlement. UCEA has, however, presented [a range of positive proposals](#) to address important issues around employment in universities, focusing on casual employment, workload and the gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

The ongoing discussions on both issues demonstrate, I believe, the goodwill on behalf of university employers to engage constructively.

We have also continued to make very positive progress with our local UCU branch here in Reading on the important issues of sessional teaching staff and Grade 6 Teaching Fellows. We are committed to work together on closing the gender pay gap too. The outcomes of these discussions will benefit our University community and I hope to be in a position so that we can share the results of an agreement on new arrangements soon.

Please do continue to check your University email address and the [Me@Reading student portal](#) regularly. If you have any specific queries about the impact on you and your studies, please contact your Academic Tutor, Support Centre, Henley Helpdesk or ISLI Teaching Office. Postgraduate research students should contact your School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies or the [Graduate School](#).

Kind regards,

Robert

Professor Robert Van de Noort

Vice-Chancellor

University of Reading