



USS Dispute

Guidelines and FAQs for taking industrial action short of a strike

Introduction

The HEC calls upon all the members described below to take part in a comprehensive boycott of all setting and marking, course work, assignments with effect from Thursday, 6 November, 2014.

Who is called to take action?

Full members (excluding clinical academics and heads of institutions), employed by institutions involved in the dispute, as set out in the list at the end of this guidance.

Any members employed by subsidiary university companies, the Medical Research Council, or otherwise not directly employed by the higher education institution at which they are a UCU member, are not included in this call to take action.

Boycott of assessment and examinations activity

This action short of a strike does not apply to any member whose designated role consists entirely or substantially of assessment and examinations work.

This will usually affect only a small number of specialised administrative staff, for example, a registry examinations officer who centrally administers examinations.

'Assessment' covers:

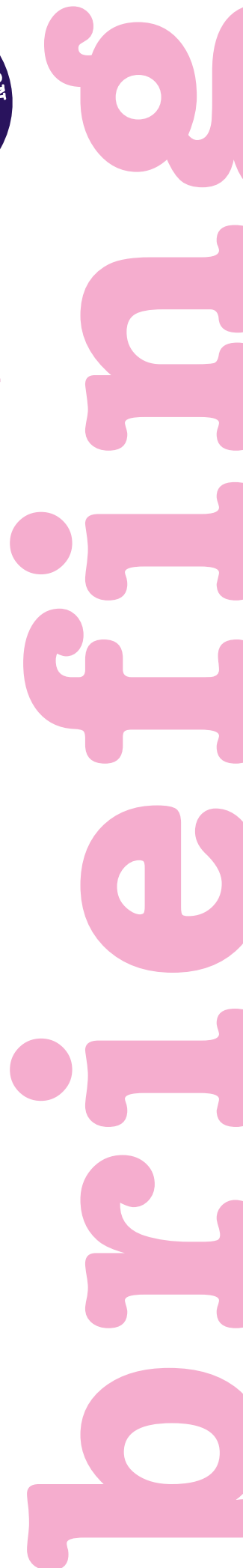
Any form of student work which attracts a mark or score or other form of evaluation

from the member of staff, and which formally contributes to the award or classification of any degree, certificate, diploma or any other formal qualification. As well as final awards or qualifications, the boycott also applies to assessments which determine or contribute to decisions relating to a student's suitability to continue with their studies or to undertake particular courses or options, even where such assessments do not contribute to the final award.

Assessment, therefore, includes any assessed work on all courses, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, full-time or part-time and whether delivered on campus or by distance learning. It includes all forms of assessed student work, not only formal examinations. Thus, essays, project work, placements, practical work and performance are included, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations and theses, including research degrees.

Members should not:

- set examinations or other assessable student work falling within the above description
- mark or examine any such work, including projects, dissertations or theses
- provide informal guidance to students



with regard to their mark, grade or assessed progress

- process marks or assessments in any way – including those which originate before the beginning of the assessment boycott
- attend or participate in any way in any meetings or parts of meetings in which student work is assessed or examined.

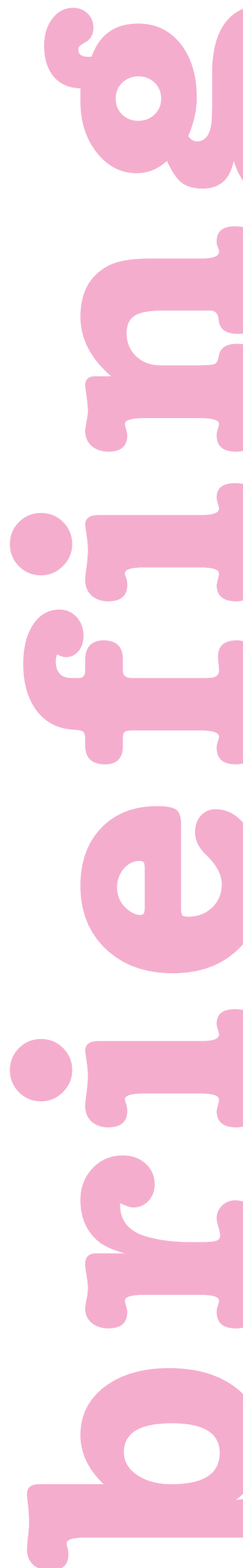
Continuation of other duties

Members should be clear that they should at all times continue with their other normal duties which are not part of those duties described above.

Members (excluding clinical academics and heads of institutions) employed by the following institutions are being called to take continuous action short of a strike, as described in this document, beginning on and continuing from Thursday, 6 November 2014:

University of Aberdeen
 University of Aberystwyth
 Aston University
 Bangor University
 University of Bath
 University of Belfast
 Queen's University of Belfast
 Birkbeck College, University of London
 University of Birmingham
 University of Bradford
 University of Bristol
 Brunel University
 University of Cambridge
 University of Cardiff
 City University
 Courtauld Institute
 Cranfield University
 University of Dundee
 University of Durham
 University of East Anglia,
 University of Edinburgh
 University of Essex
 University of Exeter
 University of Glasgow
 Goldsmiths College, University of London

Heriot-Watt University
 University of Hull
 Imperial College London
 Institute of Education, University of London
 Keele University
 University of Kent
 King's College London
 University of Lancaster
 University of Leeds
 University of Leicester
 Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine
 University of Liverpool
 London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
 London School of Economics
 Loughborough University
 University of Manchester
 Newcastle University
 University of Nottingham
 Open University
 University of Oxford
 Queen Mary, University of London
 University of Reading
 Royal Holloway, University of London
 Royal Veterinary College
 Ruskin College
 University of Salford
 School of Pharmacy, University of London
 Scottish Association of Marine Science (academic partner in the University of Highlands and Islands)
 Senate House, University of London
 University of Sheffield
 SOAS, University of London
 University of Southampton
 University of St Andrews
 St George's, University of London
 The University of Stirling
 University of Strathclyde
 University of Surrey
 University of Sussex
 Swansea University
 University of Ulster
 University Campus Suffolk
 University College London
 University of Wales, Trinity St David
 University of Warwick
 University of York



FAQ: ACTION SHORT OF A STRIKE

The following FAQ contains answers to the most commonly asked questions received from members so far. It will be added to as the action proceeds. Please check the FAQ regularly for additions.

GENERAL***When does the action start?***

From Thursday, 6 November, 2014 UCU members will be asked to participate in a comprehensive boycott of student assessment and examinations activity.

When will it finish?

There is no finish date at present. The union is determined to continue the action until its objectives are met. PLEASE REMEMBER that full support for the action from all members is the best way to force the USS employers to the negotiating table as quickly as possible.

What exactly does the boycott include?

The boycott is intended to be comprehensive and to include all formal student assessment, including the formal setting of assessed work. By 'formal' we mean any assessment, whether expressed numerically or in any other form, which contributes to the award or classification of any degree, certificate, diploma or any other academic or professional qualification. It applies to all levels, sub-degree, undergraduate or postgraduate, and to all forms of higher education and professional training, full-time, part-time or distance learning. As well as final awards at the end of courses, the boycott also covers assessment that contributes to decisions about the suitability of students to continue with their studies (eg at the end of the first year of a degree course) or to undertake particular options or modules (eg where they have prerequisites).

The assessment boycott is not restricted to final examinations, but includes any form of in-course continuous assessment. It will include traditional essay setting and marking, but also setting and assessment

of any student work falling within the formal assessment defined above, including, for example, the setting or assessment of projects and dissertations, laboratory and other practical work, performance (eg in music or drama) and supervised practice (eg in teacher education). Examination of dissertations and theses at postgraduate level, as well as vivas, are included in the action.

What about the administration associated with student assessment?

Yes, all administration associated with formal student assessment is included in the boycott. For example, members should not set examination papers or attend any meetings or parts of meetings at which student work is assessed or examined (including, of course, examination boards) or act as invigilators.

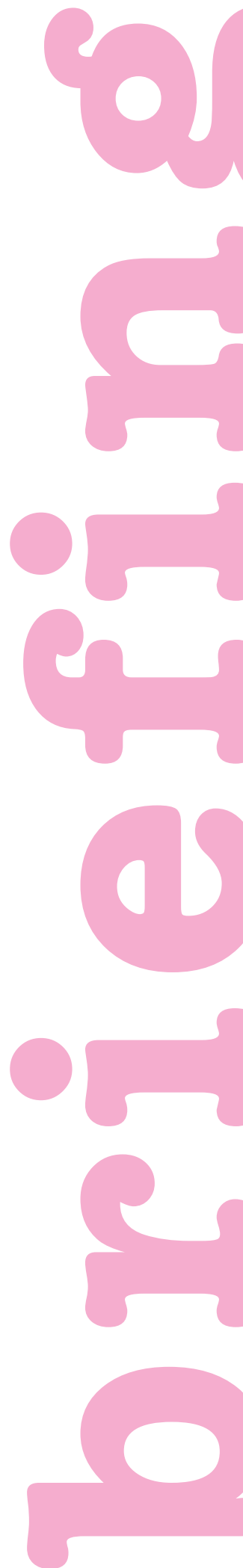
But what if my job is almost entirely devoted to the administration of examinations?

There are a small number of members, such as examination officers working in university registries, whose jobs are wholly or substantially devoted to examinations work. They are not covered by the action short of a strike and while they should refuse to take on the work of others who are participating in the action they should continue to work normally.

What about marks and assessments that were produced before the action started. Should I withhold them?

NO, you cannot withhold marks if requested to release them by your employer, and, in certain circumstances, by students. Our action is non-marking, not withholding of marks. It is therefore vitally important for members NOT to carry out any formal student assessment, thereby ensuring that they have no marks or any other records of assessment or outcomes in their possession.

Of course, there will still be opportunities to prevent the processing of existing



marks and assessments, for example, by boycotting exam boards.

Is external examining included in the action?

No. We have balloted members in relation to their principal employment. External examining involves a contract with a separate employer and was not covered by the ballot.

I have a separate contract for my internal examining duties; does that mean that I am exempt from the assessment boycott?

No. There are a few cases of institutions where internal examining duties attract additional payment and perhaps operate under a separate contract. However, so long as the contract is with the same employer (in contrast with external examining) the student examining and assessment duties are covered by the action.

Can we still give students feedback on their progress?

We are boycotting all forms of student assessment which contribute to the final award or grade, or relate to formal decisions about student progress through their courses. Members should not carry out any assessment that falls within those areas or use such assessments in student feedback. Any other form of feedback to students on their work and performance is part of teaching, and not included in the action.

What about the assessment of supervised practice in professional courses?

There are several courses leading to professional qualifications which involve supervised and assessed practice and placements; teacher education and social work are two examples. Members should of course continue with the supervision of such practice, but should not carry out any formal assessment of students in relation to it. As far as giving feedback to students is concerned, the same principle applies as described in the under the previous question.

Quality assurance processes are concerned with student assessment are they therefore included in the action?

No. This action is a boycott of student assessment itself and of its administration. QAA-related processes may well involve reviews of assessment practices and methodologies but they do not involve the actual assessment of students. To be absolutely clear: UCU is not boycotting the QAA or institutional quality audit.

