



The boycott of assessment and marking activity

Advice for Students' Union officers

What is included in this boycott?

Under such a boycott, UCU members in universities will cease to carry out all work relating to setting and marking, course work, assignments and this therefore includes all student work submitted for assessment. Members of the University and College Union (UCU) will begin a comprehensive boycott as of 6 November until a resolution to the pensions dispute can be reached.

They will continue to teach and take seminars and lectures. But they will not set or mark essays, projects or dissertations, neither will they assess or grade any practical work.

UCU seeks to avoid taking actions that damage their students' interests but they have been driven to it by the significant and permanent threat to their pensions.

What is this dispute about?

The proposed changes will:

- cost current and future members thousands of pounds a year in lost benefits
- close the final salary section of USS and move all into the career average scheme
- introduce a £50,000 earnings cap above which benefits will not apply.

- The income from a new 'defined contribution pot' will depend upon investment performance and so cannot be guaranteed.
- On a like-for-like basis USS members will have significantly lower pension benefits than colleagues who are members of TPS.
- This is likely to lead to recruitment and retention problems with staff opting for the employers who offer the best pensions.

UCU and Students' Unions

UCU places huge value on its relationship with the NUS and with local Students' Unions. We have campaigned together on many issues nationally and locally.

At a time when university leaders are concerned with promoting lean management and making their institutions more commercial and less democratic, staff unions and Students' Unions have a key role to play in working together to ensure that universities do not lose sight of who really makes them run and who they are run for.

Our members now need your support.

How Students' Unions can help

We understand that this action will cause huge anxiety among some students. We do not want to take this action, but we are running out of time and options. Our branches have been asked to make contact with you to discuss joint work.

Here are a few concrete suggestions for ways you could help

1 Distribute UCU's briefing note for students to all your members.

You can find this at:

defenduss.web.ucu.org.uk/resources

2 Meet up with your local UCU branch and try to develop a programme of joint campaigning activities that raise the profile of the boycott and the issues behind the dispute among your members.

3 Write to your vice-chancellor or principal on behalf of the Students' Union calling on them to state publicly that they will write to the employers' national negotiating body, UUK*, demanding that they resolve the impasse in the pensions dispute.

4 Raise this call at your university's governing body meetings.

5 Ask your members who have concerns about their courses and progression to write to their vice-chancellor or principal calling on them to end the dispute. They can use a version of the following form of words:

Dear _____

I am writing as a student at the University of _____ to call on you to use your power to end the dispute with the University and College Union. Please make a public statement that you will call on UUK to resolve this dispute before my studies and those of thousands of other students are further disrupted.

Yours _____

6 If you have any trouble contacting or working with your local UCU branch, please contact Justine at

jstephens@ucu.org.uk

*UUK – Universities UK is the employers' (vice-chancellors and principals) representative body

