

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What am I expected to do during a strike?**

Your union will only take strike action once every other avenue of influence has been exhausted and when your branch officers think there is no other way to make members' views clear. It is very serious sanction and that's why we ask that every member observes the strike. Every member who does not observe the strike is directly undermining the union's bargaining power and making it harder for the union to protect all its members. When we call a strike we ask that members do not come into work and do not reschedule their classes. The best possible thing you can do is contact your local rep and volunteer to help out on the picket lines. It isn't illegal, it isn't dangerous and it can be fun.

### **Do I have to tell my employer that I am taking strike action?**

In order to fulfill legal requirements, employers have been provided with statistical information about UCU members taking industrial action, but not individual names. You are under no obligation to inform management in advance as to whether you will be taking part in strike action or action short of a strike. However, if your manager asks you after the strike whether you took action, you should answer truthfully.

### **What about my students?**

We are a union of professionals and we know that our members don't like taking any action that affects students. It is the same for many public services. However, when we take action, we are generally making a case for greater investment in or defence of the quality of the service we provide. In the case of job cuts, for example, we argue that our students will be hurt far more by management's actions than by our own. Observing the strike is defending the interests of staff and students alike. Undermining the strike might feel like the right thing in the short term but will only serve to encourage management and we will all suffer more in the longer term. Formally, it is management's responsibility to explain to students if classes are to be cancelled on strike days. However, you may wish to talk to your students before the strikes explaining why the union is taking this action. We will have a leaflet available explaining to students why we feel it is necessary to take action.

### **Am I breaking my contract by taking strike action?**

All effective industrial action may be a breach of your contract of employment. But because UCU has carried out a statutory ballot and the action has been formally called, the law protects workers from dismissal whilst taking part in lawful industrial action or at any time within 12 weeks of the start of the action and, depending on the circumstances, dismissal may also be unfair if it takes place later.

## **How much money will I lose?**

You should expect to have a day's salary deducted for taking part in the strike. King's "Code of Practice on Industrial Action" states 1/260th of your annual salary will be deducted for each day of action. If you have lost more please contact the union.

King's "Code of Practice on Industrial Action" is available at:  
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/about/structure/admin/pertra/internal/azindex/industrialaction.html>

## **What if I am part time?**

UCU believe that any deduction must be pro-rata for part time staff. The deduction must only be for your contracted hours. Please contact UCU for support in challenging any greater loss.

## **How will it affect my pension?**

In previous one-day strikes it has been the experience of UCU that most university employers do not withhold superannuation contributions and therefore participation in strike action has not generally affected pensions. Also, institutions that do choose to withhold contributions often make provision for members to make up pension and AVC deficits from their pay. If you are concerned about any effect, contact Geraldine Egan at UCU ([gegan@ucu.org.uk](mailto:gegan@ucu.org.uk)).

## **What is the law on picketing?**

Peaceful picketing is entirely legal. Picketing should be carried out at or near an entrance or exit from a site at which the pickets work. When others who are not in dispute come into work or use these entrances or exits, pickets must not interfere with them. The legal categories of people permitted to picket are: UCU members in dispute, former employees who have lost their jobs for reasons connected to the dispute, UCU officials and NEC members supporting members in dispute, providing they are accompanying union members who work at the location. Further detailed advice on the picket lines should be issued separately.

## **I am not a UCU member. Can I take part in the strike?**

We would like everyone to respect the picket lines and not go into work, but if you are not a UCU member we will not be able to support you if the college decides to take disciplinary action against you. However, it is your general support that counts—if you can get permission from your line manager to take annual leave or work from home, this would be support.

## **I am a Research Fellow fully funded by external bodies but I don't want to cross the picket line.**

If you are a UCU member please join the picket line! If you are not, try to arrange to work from home.

**I am a clinician and a UCU member, and I have clinical commitments on strike day. What can I do?**

We fully understand that clinical staff including medics and psychologists have professional commitments to provide clinical cover. Clinicians are advised not to withdraw from any commitment to direct clinical care and activities in support of such. Any clinician concerned about the definition of these terms is advised to contact their own professional defence organisation, and ask them to contact the relevant professional body (eg the GMC) on their behalf. The UCU will therefore respect this. A clinician who intends to strike should be aware that this will only count as lawful action as part of the UCU strike and if s/he is a UCU member.