

Why University Staff across the UK are taking strike action

Dear KCL Students,

On **Wednesday 30th November** staff who are members of the University and College Union (UCU) will be taking part in the biggest public sector strike for a generation. You are advised to check whether classes are happening before coming into the College, to avoid a wasted journey. This leaflet explains what the dispute is about and the context in which it is occurring.

The Higher Education (HE) sector is undergoing rapid change: a major rise in tuition fees, cuts to teaching budgets, amending of regulations to allow for-profit providers to enter the education 'marketplace', and pursuit of an increasingly managerial approach guided by branding, metrics and league tables. Potential university applicants must now think very hard before committing themselves to degree programmes. They are faced with paying off a debt that is not a fair reflection of lifelong earnings. Meanwhile your staff are being devalued by their university employers. They have suffered what is effectively a pay freeze, with recent annual pay awards of 0.4%, 0.4% and £150 and now their pensions are being raided. A fellow student, who becomes an academic member of staff in the near future, will see their University Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension pot diminish by a third, with inflationary caps on deferred and retirement pensions that far are worse than those proposed by Lord Hutton in his review of pensions. The imposed new USS rule changes, which were forced through on the Chair's decision following threats to take UCU representatives to court if they failed to attend the final meeting, are draconian and not in spirit of the Hutton review.

UCU campaigned with NUS against higher fees. We are now campaigning together against White Paper for HE proposals. Opposition to Government spending cuts and austerity measures continue to grow across the public sector. Students, lecturers and other university staff need to work together to resist cuts and privatisation. The students have been at the forefront of demonstrations, occupations nationwide and pressure groups (e.g. Education Activists Network, Anti-Cuts UK). They boldly lead as they always have done. The greater the support you can give to your student representatives the more they will be able to influence those in power, particularly those at the head of our institution, to bring about change to the current HE proposals and a better deal for students and staff.

Thank you for reading this leaflet. Please feel welcome to join us on the pickets and offer us all the support you can – all our futures are at stake.

KCL UCU executive committee