

USS pension industrial action! Again?

UCU members will remember last year's hugely successful campaign, which saved defined benefits. UNISON members are being balloted for the first time. Why do we have to fight again?

Last time strike action preserved your guaranteed retirement income and set up a Joint Expert Panel (JEP). The JEP demonstrated it was possible to get the same benefits for the same or lower contributions, but USS is expecting us to pay more for the same pension. Bizarrely, the employers aren't standing by the experts they appointed to the JEP. That's why we have to fight again: because the JEP has been ignored.

- USS wanted to end defined pension benefits.
- UCU demonstrated that a fair pension is affordable using a sensible valuation approach. The JEP agreed.
- **USS rejected the JEP and wants you to pay much more now and in future.**



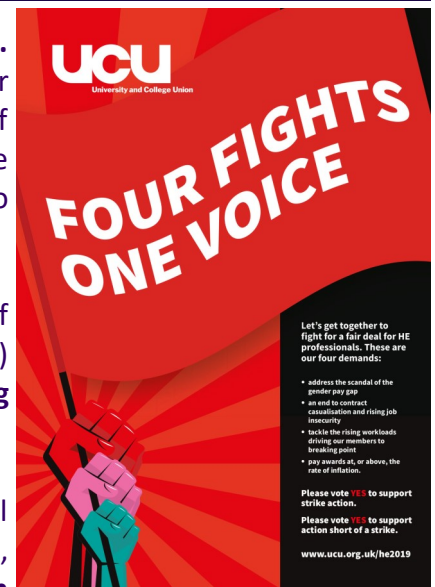
**USS PENSION
JUSTICE.
WE EARNED IT.**

Pay and Equality ballot! Again?

Since 2009, the loss to pay compared to inflation rises is over 20%. There is an average **gender pay gap of over 15%**. (At the OU, it's 9.3% for professional staff.) There are also significant pay gaps for people of colour and those with disabilities. Casualisation and workload are destroying health and careers. The unions are asking you to **vote YES** to industrial action so we can tackle these issues.

11% of the OU's staff are on fixed-term contracts across the staff categories. The UCU workload survey showed staff (not including ALs) work **116% of their contracted hours on average with 72% reporting negative effects on their physical and mental health.**

Employers must recognise the scale of our concerns and reach a national agreement on these key issues. It's not just about casualisation, workload, inequality and salary erosion: **it's the cumulative effect on wellbeing and career development.**



Vote, vote, vote! Both UCU and UNISON ballots open 9 September. The UCU ballot closes 30 October. Please vote YES to support strike action.

USS timeline of events



2017 Background

USS proposes changes that would end the USS pension scheme as we know it, leaving some staff £200,000 worse off. UCU's pensions experts strongly contest the valuation methods used by USS to justify the cuts. UCU's General Secretary calls it "the worst proposal I have received in twenty years of representing university staff."

November 2017—January 2018: Ballot

Despite anti-union legislation disallowing an electronic ballot, UCU's national ballot for action is highly successful.

February — March 2018: STRIKE ACTION!

Around 42,000 UCU members undertake 14 days of strike action over 4 weeks. Huge public attention puts pressure on employers (represented by UUK) to resolve the dispute.

March 2018: Setting up the Joint Expert Panel (JEP)

UCU members vote to accept an agreement reached with UUK to put together a Joint Expert Panel, made up of an equal number of experts appointed by UCU and employers. The JEP is charged with reporting on the valuation method and making recommendations.

13 September 2018: The Joint Expert Panel report

The JEP delivers an interim report. The report supports the UCU position on the valuation and criticises other parties, including UUK and USS. UCU endorses the report. UUK supports the recommendations.

Since then

USS ignores the recommendations of the JEP and instead uses a valuation that continues to show a deficit that just isn't there. USS's valuation requires employers and employees to make additional contributions.

USS Option 1, 2 or 3?

Don't be fooled.

THERE'S STILL NO DEFICIT

April 2019: First 'Emergency' Contribution Hikes

Using a valuation from before the JEP, USS sets out 'emergency' contributions from April 2019. Employee contributions go from 8% of salary to 8.8%. The next planned rise is 10.4% in October 2019.

Summer 2019

USS presents options to avoid the emergency rises. These ignore the main recommendations of the JEP and assume all parties must pay more.



What happens next?

The JEP proved we do not need huge contribution rises at this time. Employers must back their own experts on the JEP or agree to shoulder the full cost of any unnecessary increases.

The JEP was designed to settle the USS dispute. Instead, if the JEP is ignored, our defined benefits could be under threat again.

Save our pensions!
Support the JEP!

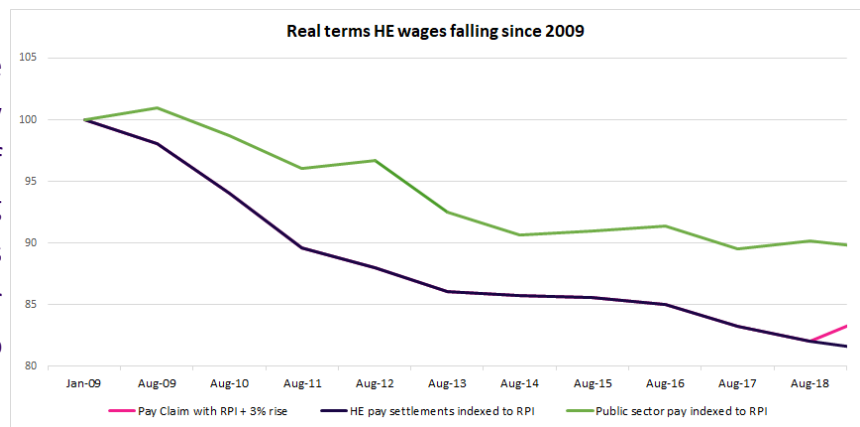


Pay and equality: 5 unions, 4 fights, 1 voice

UNISON and UCU are joining forces with the 3 other unions in Higher Education to address a decade of pay cuts, spiralling workloads, pay gaps and casualisation.

Pay: Real-terms pay has been slashed

Over the last ten years we have consistently received pay rises far below inflation. We would need a pay rise of 23% to catch up. The unions are calling for a pay increase of RPI plus 3% this year, bringing us more in line with other public sector workers. We are also calling for a £10 per hour minimum wage and all universities to become



accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. Although the union dispute is still open, OU has decided to impose a 1.8% settlement (while RPI is currently 2.8%).

Inequality: Real action on pay gaps

The pay gap for people with disabilities in HE is 8.7%. On average women are paid 15.1% less than men, while black academic staff earn c 13% less than white colleagues of the same gender and experience. Since Associate Lecturers are on one grade, the OU's headline figure for the gender pay gap looks much better than it really is. Women are underrepresented at higher salaries especially in professional services. BAME staff are also severely under-represented across the university. We need a comprehensive plan to tackle this inequality locally and nationally.

Casualisation: much further to go

Nationally over 100,000 university staff are employed on fixed-term contracts, with a further 70,000 on other casual (atypical) contracts. Job insecurity can lead to high levels of stress. It creates workload pressures on teams and difficulties in paying rent or getting a mortgage. Both UCU and UNISON see the results in our casework at the OU. Yet there always seems to be money to create new senior posts and reward those at the very top. It's time to end zero-hours contracts and outsourcing in HE.

Workload: Serious issues both locally and nationally

A recent UCU survey proved there are serious workload issues at the OU. Nationally, overload has greatly intensified in recent years. Academics in particular are working unsustainable hours because of unrealistic teaching and research targets, responsibilities to students, administration and covering for colleagues whose jobs have disappeared. At the OU, voluntary severance has left significant staffing gaps. The unions are calling for a 35-hour working week and enforcement of standards to address excessive workloads and work-related stress.

Support action on pay equality and workload by voting YES to action when UCU and UNISON ballots open on 9th September 2019.

What can you do?



1. Make sure you contact details are correct.
2. You can't vote if you don't have your ballot paper!
3. **Vote YES to strike action and, for UCU members (who have a posted paper ballot), YES to action short of a strike on 9 September. UCU ballots must be returned by 30 October.**
4. Spread the word: put up posters, circulate leaflets, chat to your colleagues, talk about these ballots on social media.
5. Join the open meeting for all staff on 5th September 12:30pm in CMR15 or via Skype for business.
6. Volunteer to help with getting out the vote: contact ucu@open.ac.uk or unison@open.ac.uk.

UNISON MEMBERS: Vote alongside UCU in the consultative ballot on USS pensions. This is an electronic ballot. Contact the office if you don't receive the email.

UCU MEMBERS: Vote YES to strike action and YES to action short of a strike on USS and Pay/Equality. Remember there are 2 ballot papers in the same envelope. Papers will be posted to you on 9 September and must be returned by 30 October.

Have your say! It's not too late to join a union and vote

There are many advantages of union membership, including advice and support, legal representation, free professional development and a say in local and national negotiations. Unions stand up for you and your employment rights. Membership for either union starts at less than £2 per month (depending on your annual salary).

Join UCU at www.ucu.org.uk/join or by phone 0333 207 0719



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At the Open University, UCU is for staff grade 7 and above: academic-related, academic, research (including Research Associates) and Associate Lecturer staff.

Join UNISON at <https://join.unison.org.uk> or by phone 08000 857857.

At the Open University, UNISON is for all staff up to grade 6: secretarial, clerical, administrative and technical staff.

For more information on USS see update: <http://ucu.open.ac.uk/news/uss-update-its-groundhog-day>