



Dear student

I am writing to you as a member of the University and College Union (UCU) – the trade union for lecturers and other staff at the university - to explain why I am taking strike action and what it means for you, and why we need your support. But first, please know that we do not want to go on strike. We love our jobs, and we hate the idea that the quality of your education could be affected in any way.

**Q:** Why are you striking?

**A:** Because our pensions are under attack. Like many workers, we accept lower pay in return for our employer helping fund our retirement. The University has asked the fund that they use to manage this (called USS) to switch from paying retirees an agreed amount of money each year, to simply paying out a slice of whatever money is (or isn't) left over, based on recent returns from the financial markets. Our best projections are that a typical lecturer stands to lose £10,000 a year in retirement, but it could be a lot more if the stock markets happen to do poorly in the wrong years. They would like us to **keep doing the same work, but in return for a lot less money and security.**

**Q:** Why can't you compromise with the University instead?

**A:** We are trying! Less than two years ago we agreed to dramatic cuts in the amount we would be paid in retirement, by replacing "final salary" pensions with "average salary" pensions. Even now we are looking hard for compromises, but the red line for both sides appears to be over whether our retirements are turned into a casino or not. We won't accept a proposition that will do this, and the University (through USS) will not accept a proposition that will not.

**Q:** How do you decide to go on strike?

**A:** We held a legally required vote of UCU members. 88% of us voted to strike. It was clear to us we had no other choice.

**Q:** How does this affect me?

**A:** Some of your classes will be cancelled, with no replacement lectures. Again, we hate doing this, but going on strike means withholding labour from our employer, not doing one's work a few days late, or for free (we will not be paid for the days we strike – on no level is this a decision we take lightly).

**Q:** If classes are cancelled, will this affect my exams?

**A:** Excellent question. We believe that the University has a positive obligation to provide you with it's agreed education services, and that this involves assessing you in a fair and transparent manner. This obligation does not go away, even if they disrupt their own supply of labour by suddenly slashing their employee's compensation.

At present we are not aware of what their plan is to provide you with the protections that you need (and deserve!) on this front. Good people to ask include:

President and Vice Chancellor, Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell: e-mail, [president@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:president@manchester.ac.uk)

Chancellor Lemn Sissay: e-mail, [chancellor@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:chancellor@manchester.ac.uk)

The head of your faculty: as appropriate

The head of your school/division: as appropriate

You can also contact the University directly via it's Twitter handle@ @OfficalUoM

**Q:** How else does this affect me?

**A:** Keep in mind that many members of staff accept less pay than the market might offer for their skills, partly because of the security that working at a university provides. If this is removed, then some colleagues may leave the profession, and that will not be good for the quality of teaching you experience.

**Q:** What else can I do?

**A:** here are some suggestions:

1. Tell all your lecturers you support our fight
2. Complain to the President and Vice-Chancellor
3. Join the student demonstrations on strike days
4. Don't attend lectures on strike days – come and join our picket lines instead

Postgraduates who are paid to teach can join UCU for free [www.ucu.org.uk/free](http://www.ucu.org.uk/free)

More here: [www.ucu.org.uk/strikeforuss](http://www.ucu.org.uk/strikeforuss)

Thank you.