

Joining the UCU

To go on strike, you have to be in UCU! But joining **takes seconds and is free**, and you can do it during the strike. Go to <https://www.ucu.org.uk/join> and select '**standard full membership**' (not student membership - if you joined UCU as a student, you need to update your membership category from 'student member' to 'standard free' member. This also doesn't take long and you can do it here: https://ucu.custhelp.com/app/membership/my_details).

Why are we striking?

- **Precarity** - 68.2% of staff at the UoM are employed on insecure contracts. The University sector is now one of the most casualised sectors in the British economy.
- **Pay** - a series of sub-inflation pay awards has meant that academics have endured a pay cut of 20% since 2009, while the number of UoM senior managers earning salaries above £100k have increased dramatically.
- **Gender Pay Gap & Ethnicity Pay Gaps** - the mean gender pay gap at the UoM increased to 18.4% while the mean ethnicity pay gap is 10.5%.
- **Workload** - full-time academics are assumed to work a 37.5-hour week, yet most academics regularly work above 45 hours/week and many work more than 50 hours/week amounting to 1-2 days of unpaid work each week.
- **Pensions** - in 2011 we agreed (reluctantly) to changes in our USS pension scheme, leading to a typical USS member losing £240,000 in retirement. Employers are demanding unnecessary further concessions and putting the whole pension scheme at risk.

What are we striking on as PhD students/GTA's?

The strike covers all duties which relate to your work as a GTA including teaching, marking, preparation (see below). Please continue your PhD duties as normal as this is not covered by the boundaries of the action. However, unless it is unavoidable, we would please ask you to avoid crossing any official picket lines (both physical and digital). In cases where this is not possible, we advise that you seek stickers from the picket line/the SU, to demonstrate your solidarity whilst crossing the picket as a UCU member/student.

How can I access the hardship fund?

If you strike and lose pay over the strike, you will be compensated by the Union. TAs will be eligible for the Fighting Funds from the first day of strike. For your first day of strike action, UCU Manchester will cover **up to £50**; after your second day of strike action, UCU UK will cover **up to £75** per day, to a **maximum of £500**. UCU members will be able to claim for the fighting fund as soon as the University deducts payment from them, but this will not happen during the strike itself. You will be asked to **provide a payslip showing your pay deduction** to the claim for the fund. UCU members who do not receive payslips with deductions (e.g. workers on zero-hour contracts or whose pay is based on timesheets) will be asked to state how much they would have been paid had they not joined the strike, and how much of their pay has been deducted. You might also be asked to provide payslips (accessed via [MyView](#)) or bank statements showing how much you have been paid previously. **If you are unable to do this, hand in your claim regardless and UCU will help sort it out.**

Only UCU members are eligible for the fund, but you can join the UCU during the strike. Make sure you are up-to-date with your membership details (if you joined as a student, **you may need to update your membership category** from 'student member' to 'standard free' member). For more information on the fund, please check the following webpage:<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10452/Fighting-fund-donations-and-claims>.

Concerns about Tier 2/4 Visas

Based on the latest immigration rules, Tier 2 and 4 migrants have the SAME rights regarding strike action as any other workers. For Tier 2 workers, absence or a loss of salary due to striking will NOT be penalized in your Indefinite Leave to Remain applications.

For Tier 4 students those who are working as TA's, they have SAME strike rights as everyone else. However, your PhD work is not a part of the strike action and should be continuing as normal.

If the students are missing classes due to striking lecturers, it is NOT counted as unauthorized absence. However, lectures by non-striking staff should not be skipped as that will count as an unauthorised absence. In short, as long as any Tier 4 student fulfils the visa requirements regarding their roles as a student, they have exactly same rights regarding strike action as everyone else.

What do I do about teaching and marking during the strike?

There will be absolutely no teaching during the strike - no lectures, no tutorials, no exams, no extra help, no office hours, and no responding to student emails. In addition to this, marking will not be carried out during the strike. **UMUCU is recommending that the marking deadline is extended** and is advising strikers to do marking at the pace you're able to do it.

Who do I need to inform that I am going on strike?

You do not need to contact management to tell them you are striking. If they send out a general email asking who is striking, you are not required to respond – you should only respond if they email you personally. It is up to you whether or not to inform your students that you are striking.

Should I add an out-of-office?

We encourage all students to not “digitally cross the picket line” regarding email. However, if you are planning on striking, do not inform that on an out-of-office email. You can, nevertheless, inform that you are standing in solidarity and thus be unable to answer during the strike. An example of such an email would read: “I am standing in solidarity with the [UCU strike action](#) currently taking place. Therefore, I might be unable to answer in a timely manner until the 5th December. Thank you for your understanding.”

How can I join-in on the picket line/in strike activities?

Picketing from 7.30/8.00am till 10.30am from Mon 25 Nov to Wed 4 Dec. Please picket your own building but if you are in a building with few members and there is no-one else on the picket line please go to the nearest large building. At 10.00am each day, please join together in a mass picket on Oxford Road at either the Old Quad or Uni Place. If you cannot picket every day please ensure that the days you picket include the first and last days, Mon 25 Nov and Wed 4 Dec. Other activities will be taking place throughout the strike, so please consult the attached timetable!