

STUDENT Q&A

THE INDUSTRIAL ACTION

When is the industrial action?

- The University and College Union (UCU) has announced a series of day-long strikes at Nottingham and some 60 other universities across **22-23 and 26-28 February, and 5-8 and 12-16 March**.
- Action short of a strike will run from 22 February to 19 June 2018, where UCU members are asked by the union to work to contract and not to undertake specific duties.

What will happen during industrial action?

- The University will remain fully open throughout the industrial action. The majority of teaching and assessment should take place as planned. More than 75% of our academic staff are not members of the University & College Union.
- Even so, where a member of staff takes industrial action on one day, it should not be assumed that they will continue to do so on other days.
- Please assume that teaching and learning activities are going ahead, including the supervision of projects and dissertations, and that you attend as planned unless you hear otherwise from your lecturer or School. Similarly, you should continue to submit assignments to existing deadlines.
- We are working with Schools to ensure that they communicate with you effectively, and make plans to recover disrupted learning activities, maintain assessment deadlines and look at where revised deadlines might be helpful. As further information becomes available, your School will advise you

How will I know if my seminar, lecture or other sessions are disrupted by industrial action?

- Where sessions are likely to experience disruption, your School will endeavour to give you advance notice where at all possible. However, staff do not have to inform the University in advance that they intend to take industrial action, so this might not be possible in every case.
- Should a member of staff not arrive for a teaching session at its planned start time, you should wait for a few minutes to be sure that your lecturer is not late before leaving the room.
- Please note that unless a class has been disrupted, normal attendance monitoring will take place. It worth remembering that the student [Attendance Policy](#) means you must attend all activities to pursue your studies required by your School.

What should I do if my session is disrupted by industrial action?

- Please accept our apologies if this does occur. Our libraries, computer rooms, and other learning environments and services will be available throughout the period to enable you to continue your studies and independent learning.

Can I request compensation or a refund of fees?

- Our priority as a University is to ensure that the industrial action does not adversely affect our students. The University will be open as usual, and vast majority of lectures and classes will proceed as planned.

- Schools will make plans to recover disrupted learning activities. Libraries, computer rooms, and other learning environments and services will be available to enable students to continue their studies and independent learning.
- Given the actions we are taking to minimise disruption, circumstances giving rise to a right to financial compensation are unlikely to arise.
- Of course, students can raise complaints through the recognised [Student Complaints Policy](#), and can also contact the Students' Union for advice. Usually this will be when a student has evidence in support of the complaint.
- Tuition fees themselves cover an extremely wide range of services and facilities provided by the University year-round, including teaching but also the buildings, equipment, library services, careers, sports facilities and funding for your Students' Union.

Why do you dock pay from strikers, and what will you do with it?

- It is common employment practice not to pay staff for the time they are not at work when on strike.
- We will use this money specifically to support our students during the industrial action, and ensure their studies are not adversely affected by the strikes.

How might picket lines affect me?

- Picketing is where staff taking part in industrial action gather outside their place of work in order to seek to persuade others not to work. Picketing is only allowed at or near entrances to and exits from the picket's own place of work.
- Pickets can request permission to explain their dispute to those entering or leaving the workplace (including students). These activities must be carried out peacefully at all times.
- However pickets do not have the right stop any person crossing the picket line; force a person to listen to them; stop any vehicle; assault, threaten, intimidate, abuse, harass or defame anyone; cause alarm or distress; or obstruct any path, road, entrance or exit.

EXAMS AND ASSESSMENTS

If my sessions are disrupted and not rescheduled, how can I be assessed on those topics in examinations or assessments?

- This situation is some way off at this stage - please try not to worry. Ultimately, the University has contingency regulations and procedures that apply in the event of industrial action affecting assessments or exams.
- Each course has different requirements, set both by the University and in some cases from professional bodies, so there are numerous potential scenarios of how a School might need to respond if assessments are affected.
- When setting assessments and exams Schools are always mindful that the questions will need to reflect the teaching which has occurred
- Where a School determines that there has been a genuine, significant impact on a certain module resulting from industrial action, it will consider the effects when work is marked. As further information becomes available, your School will advise you.
- If this becomes relevant, we will publish further information about the assessment implications of the industrial action.

Will we be provided with more information or handouts on topics if they are disrupted by industrial action?

- We are working with Schools to ensure that they communicate with you effectively, and make plans to recover disrupted learning activities. As further information becomes available, your School will advise you.

Will we be entitled to an extension for dissertations or other submission of work if the deadline falls within the period of industrial action?

- You should assume that any deadlines set for submitting work, including dissertations, still apply as normal. Your Schools will aim to maintain assessment deadlines, but also look at where revised deadlines might be helpful for you.
- Unless you have been told of a change to a specific submission date, the stated deadline will stand, and you will not be automatically entitled to an extension if the submission or dissertation deadline falls within the period of industrial action.
- If the industrial action has a specific detrimental impact on you personally, you might be able to make a request for [Extenuating Circumstances](#), which supports students with exceptional, unforeseeable, short-term circumstances which affect their ability to study or take assessments.

Will my work be marked if lecturers are on strike? Do I still need to submit my work for marking?

- You should complete and submit your work assignments as normal. The industrial action does not include a marking boycott.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

How will the strikes affect my Visa in terms of my attendance record?

- Your Tier 4 visa conditions are not affected by the industrial action. Unless you are specifically advised that a session has been disrupted, you should attend as normal, and the normal processes for attendance monitoring will apply to sessions which are not disrupted.
- If a session is disrupted due to industrial action, this will be recorded by the University as a cancelled session, and this will not have a detrimental impact on your attendance record for the purposes of your Tier 4 visa.

As an international student, do I still need to ask for permission if I want to return to my home country during the period of industrial action? What are the implications for my visa?

- The industrial action does not change the normal requirements for compliance in terms of your Tier 4 study visa. You should continue to request permission for absences in the normal way.

THE DISPUTE

What is the background to the dispute?

- The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is a national pension scheme with some 400,000 members. There is a £6.1 billion deficit between the value of the scheme's assets, ie what is available in the pension pot, and its liabilities, ie what it will need to pay in pensions.

- To close this gap in the scheme as it is currently constituted would be unaffordable for both employers and employees. For our University alone, it would mean an extra £22 million each year in pension payments made by both the University and our staff.
- To put that into context, £22 million is more than the entire amount the University will generate this year for additional investment in our staff, our students, our research, and our teaching.
- National representatives of universities (UUK) and staff (UCU) have negotiated for many months, holding more than 30 meetings to agree a solution.
- In March, all pension scheme members will be consulted on a proposal to modify it a **defined contribution** scheme to address the deficit and ensure it is stable, secure and continues to provide attractive benefits and affordability for scheme members and universities alike.
- The USS is currently a **defined benefit** scheme (for earnings up to £55,550) where staff pension pots are built using payments made by staff and their employer. These pay a specific income on retirement, depending on how many years staff have worked for their employer and the salary they've earned. For earnings over £55,550, the USS uses a **defined contribution** scheme.
- A **defined contribution** scheme is where the pension pot is built using payments made by staff and their employer, then invested in stocks and shares, and the income at retirement depends on how well that investment has performed over time.
- UUK is proposing to move the scheme fully to a **defined contribution** scheme as this would reduce the current deficit and make the scheme more affordable for staff and employers. UCU argues that this would remove the guaranteed retirement income, and reliant on the performance of the stock market.
- You can find out more online about the respective positions of both [UUK](#) and [UCU](#).