

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE UNION: STUDENT FAQs

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

What happens to teaching and learning during industrial action?

- The University will remain open throughout the strike action and the majority of teaching and learning will proceed as usual. More than 75% of our academic staff are not members of the University & College Union.
- 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.
- Schools will work hard to reschedule lost sessions wherever possible, provide catch-up resources through Moodle and extend deadlines where helpful. Please keep in touch with your School for information specific to your circumstances

How will I know if my seminar, lecture or other session is 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 is 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.
- Schools will reschedule lost sessions wherever possible, provide catch-up resources through Moodle and extend deadlines where helpful. Please keep in touch with your School for information specific to your circumstances.

2. EXAMS AND ASSESSMENTS

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

- For your assessments and exams, we will ensure that you are not disadvantaged if you have missed any learning due to the strikes, while of course maintaining the highest standards.
- Schools will ensure that assessments, exams, coursework and other assignments reflect only the learning that has taken place.
- In the event that an exam question or assessment task requires learning that has been disrupted by strikes, this would usually be changed or replaced with an equivalent question or task covering material which has been delivered.
- Assessment methods will be maintained in the same proportions, for example, 10% presentation, 30% coursework, 60% exam.
- Importantly, we will maintain our quality and standards at all times, with full regard to the Quality Assurance Agency and our Quality Manual, so that you can be assured that your exams assessments will be as robust as they always are.

What if the assessment cannot be changed?

- On the limited occasions where an assessment cannot be changed, then Boards of Examiners would make overall adjustments to marks in recognition of the additional difficulties faced by the students on the affected module.
- The intention would be to ensure that the cancellation of teaching has no detrimental effect on any student in terms of the marks they receive. In such circumstances you would not be required to submit a claim for extenuating circumstances.

What if my viva, oral examination or presentation is disrupted?

- The planned industrial action does not include a boycott of marking or assessment. Should oral examinations, assessments and vivas coincide with the industrial action they will be rescheduled at the earliest opportunity.

Will we be entitled to an extension for dissertations or other submission of work due to the 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 your 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?

- Yes, the mandate for industrial action does not include a marking boycott, although some delays may be experienced.

3. 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.

4. COMPLAINTS AND COMPENSATION

Can I request compensation or a refund of fees?

- Given the actions we are taking to minimise disruption, any circumstances giving rise to a right to financial compensation are unlikely to arise.
- The University will remain open throughout the strike action and the majority of teaching and learning will proceed as usual. Libraries, computer rooms, and services will be available to enable students to continue studies and independent learning.
- Student fees cover a very wide range of services, not just tuition, and our focus remains on addressing any disruption where it occurs, rather than providing financial recompense.
- Of course, if students are demonstrably affected by strike action, a complaint can be raised through the recognised [Student Complaints Policy](#) - and students can also contact the [Student Union Advice Centre](#) for advice - with evidence in support of the complaint.

Why do you deduct salary from staff who take strike action, and what will you do with it?

- It is standard employment practice not to pay staff who are on strike for the time they are not working.
- Following the 2018 industrial action, the University reinvested the money not paid to striking staff to support students who were affected by strikes, and we will do the same this time.
- We will encourage Schools to work with their students in identifying how this money might be best spent in the School at the appropriate time.

5. THE INDUSTRIAL ACTION

When is the industrial action?

- Alongside 60 universities across the country, our University will experience strike action by members of the University & College Union (UCU) from Monday 25 November to Wednesday 4 December 2019. This will be followed by a period of action short of a strike where UCU members are asked by the union to work to contract and not undertake certain tasks.
- Industrial action is proceeding on the votes of a small proportion of our University community, and a minority of USS pension scheme members. Of the 7,000 staff on our UK campuses, 1,289 are UCU members eligible to vote, and 684 votes were cast. 541 staff at Nottingham voted for industrial action on pensions and 512 on pay and conditions – on a turnout of 53%.

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 - however, these activities must be carried out peacefully at all times.
- 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.
- 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.

Why can't the University resolve the dispute?

- Above all we sincerely apologise for any disruption you are experiencing, and want to assure you we are doing all we can to ensure teaching, learning and assessment is not adversely affected.
- The dispute concerns pay rises and pension contributions that are set at a national level for all universities, so it cannot be resolved at the University of Nottingham, although we continue to encourage the union and employer associations to reach agreement.
- The University's priorities now are twofold: to encourage Universities UK/UCEA and UCU to continue to seek a resolution to the dispute; and to ensure that we can continue to provide an outstanding education for our students, minimising disruption to teaching, learning and research.
- Colleagues in the union will have thought very hard about whether to vote and how to cast their vote, and it is regrettable that a solution could not be found to avoid industrial action.

What is the University's position on the pension, pay and conditions under dispute?

- **On pensions:** the proposal under dispute retains the USS pension unchanged – it remains a valuable defined benefit scheme with no reductions to retirement benefits. Universities are paying the majority of the extra contributions required, and it avoids the higher increases proposed under Rule 76 if the 2018 valuation was not concluded.
- The University supports the work of the independent Joint Expert Panel set up by Universities UK and UCU to recommend long-term reforms to the scheme in a report expected shortly.

- **On pay:** the national 1.8% cost of living increase is combined with local increases and rewards paid by the University. This means that more than half of staff covered by the national negotiations received an average 4.8% pay increase from August – and overall the majority of University staff will have received pay rises of between 3.8% and 5.6%.
- **On conditions:** we are working to improve how we support workload and wellbeing for our staff community. We are reducing the gender pay gap by recruiting and promoting more female staff to senior roles. We have one of the UK's most detailed workload planning models and we are establishing a task group to further explore workload issues. A new set of Principles for Working with Teaching Affiliates was introduced in September.