

# WHY ARE WE ON STRIKE?

**On 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 the Open University agreed to cuts of 35% on average to pensions of all staff. Younger colleagues will lose more.**

In 2018 we were told that there was no alternative to the end of USS as a Defined Benefit scheme. We went on strike and we won.

**Inflation is nearly 8% and rising with energy bills and taxes spiraling upward.**

**Yet we're being offered 1.5% for 'cost of living' and nothing to ensure job security, decent workloads and fair conditions in the sector.**

The Open University branch of UCU has received public support from politicians across the political spectrum and the four nations. Members of the Welsh Senedd welcomed a deputation explaining the issues in our disputes and expressed public support.

The Open University is a universally loved institution. People are shocked that staff here, supporting society's most vulnerable learners, are expected to do so in the context of declining working conditions and pay/pension cuts.

## USS Pension scheme

Recently announced cuts to our pensions are based on a discredited valuation taken in March 2020. Yet Open University's leadership are about to impose changes that will reduce pension entitlements by an average of 35%. This will be ruinous for many. Staff now face the prospect of not being able to retire - or retiring into poverty.

**Even using the most pessimistic assumptions, USS's supposed 'deficit' in 2020 has already almost disappeared.**



Open University Branch of UCU email: [ucu@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@open.ac.uk)

Facebook (openuniversityucu) and Twitter @oubucu (#OneOfUsAllOfUs #UCUStrike #USSMess)

See our website for strike day activities: <http://ucu.open.ac.uk>

Donate to or apply to the Hardship Fund: <http://ucu.open.ac.uk/branch-hardship-fund>



## Four Fights

The latest figures show inflation is heading towards at least 8.5%. Energy and fuel prices are skyrocketing along with tax. The current pay offer of 1.5% represents a very dramatic pay cut after more than a decade of falling behind against inflation.

**To put it another way, everyone at the Open University has lost an entire pay grade since 2009.**

At the same time, we know workload pressures have increased dramatically and job insecurity in the HE sector is rampant.

At the OU we fought and won permanent contracts for our 5000 Associate Lecturer colleagues. However, ALs have barely received the benefits of permanent work before these are being removed by the pension losses and another year of pay cuts against inflation. We also continue to see a growth in inappropriate fixed-term contracts and the use of freelance contractors.

**This is a pivotal moment for our pensions, pay and conditions.**

Many of you will have received the email from USS and experienced the shock of seeing in black and white the reductions we're being asked to swallow. UCU presented stop-gap proposals that would have maintained benefits and allowed time to conduct another valuation – but these were rejected without even having an Equality Impact Assessment.

**After this strike we're balloting for further action. Want to help fight for better pay and conditions, and to save our pensions?**

- Join UCU: [www.ucu.org.uk/join](http://www.ucu.org.uk/join) and join the strike
- Sign our petition and circulate it on social media. <https://speakout.web.ucu.org.uk/urgent-we-call-upon-open-university-to-resolve-pension-and-pay-disputes/>
- Attend our strike rallies and teach-outs <https://www.ucu.open.ac.uk>
- **Members:** update [MyUCU](#) for the new ballot and **vote YES**
- **Members:** Continue to observe and to respect action short of a strike (ASOS). Do not work more than contracted hours or take on voluntary work. Do not cover for colleagues on strike. Do not move meetings to accommodate strike dates.



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