

'Don't Go Breaking My Heart'

Nearly all staff members at the OU are in USS, the Universities Superannuation Scheme. In 2018 USS planned to move from being a Defined Benefits plan (which provide a guaranteed pension income) to Defined Contributions (in which returns are not guaranteed, but instead at the mercy of stock-market performance).

A sustained strike by UCU in 2018 saved the Defined Benefits scheme and resulted in a Joint Expert Panel (JEP) appointed by employers (UUK) and UCU. A key issue was the valuation approach. UCU argued this was inappropriate to the unique nature of the pension scheme, and therefore wrongly showed the scheme in deficit instead of surplus. The panel's findings vindicated the view that there were significant problems with the valuation methods.



'UUK Don't Own Me'

USS undertook a valuation in March 2020 when markets were in turmoil because of Covid. At the time USS stated it had £67bn in assets and a deficit of £13bn. The assets had soon recovered and are now c£92bn.



By any reasonable measure this is a healthy and well-funded pension that can meet its obligations. However, instead of working with UCU to challenge the valuation and methods, UUK is pushing through huge cuts of c35% for a typical member of the pension.

Open University Branch of UCU email: ucu@open.ac.uk

Facebook ([openuniversityucu](https://www.facebook.com/openuniversityucu)) and Twitter [@oubucu](https://twitter.com/oubucu) (#OneOfUsAllOfUs #UCUStrike #USSMess)

See our website for strike activities: www.ucu.open.ac.uk

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



‘What Becomes of the Broken-Hearted?’

Since 2011 a series of detrimental changes have been pushed through over the objections of UCU. A report looking at the effects of all these changes found that over the course of a career, pension expectations were as much as £240k lower on average than if those changes had not taken place—while the employee would pay £40k more. https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10433/First-Actuarial-analysis-of-USS-benefits-and-contributions-30-Aug-2019/pdf/firstactuarial_uss-benefits-contributions-analysis_30aug19.pdf

Members of USS are taking the pension trustees to court over mismanagement, including high fees and the failure to divest from fossil fuels. The next court date is 28 February 2022.

[Save university pensions, and save the planet \(crowdjustice.com\)](https://www.crowdjustice.com/campaign/save-university-pensions-and-save-the-planet)

‘All UK Need Is Love’

The second JEP report provided ideas for long-term solutions that maintain Defined Benefits using a more sensible valuation and investment approach. **The cuts proposed will take £18bn-20bn out of the pockets of university staff.**

UCU has put forward a proposal to halt the current cuts and give time for a new evidence-based valuation. [UCU - UCU submits new pension proposals to avert UK wide strike action](https://www.ucu.org.uk/press-releases/2022/01/ucuc-submits-new-pension-proposals-to-avert-uk-wide-strike-action)

Sign the petition asking the university to consider the UCU proposal and a reasonable resolution to this dispute:

<https://speakout.web.ucu.org.uk/urgent-we-call-upon-open-university-to-resolve-pension-and-pay-disputes>



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