

# ★ Why We're On Strike ★

*Equal Pay \* Job Security \* Sensible Workloads \* Fair Pensions*

Universities are now run on unpaid overtime and precarious work.

The average working week in Higher Education is 50+ hours.

Wages have fallen behind inflation (by c 20%) over the last 10 years.

***The proposed pay offer of 1.8% has been nearly cancelled out by the 1.6% rise in USS***

***contributions.*** At the OU all staff are eligible for USS.

More than half the academics in UK HE are now on fixed-term or casual contracts.

***Overload is standard and stress-related illness is soaring.***

The Gender Pay Gap in HE is 15.1%. The Ethnicity Pay Gap is estimated at 12-13% but in the Russell Group it was 26% in 2018.

**This is why the OU is one of 74 Universities on strike. We want:**

- A new national framework, like the HE Pay & Grading Framework, for phasing out precarious and insecure contracts
- A sector-wide approach to tackling workload problems
- Equal pay audits to close the gender and ethnicity pay gaps
- Pay rise above RPI to start catching up against inflation
- Implementation of joint expert panel report on USS and help with the cost of unnecessary contribution rises.



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Open University Branch of UCU

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University and College Union

# \*PENSIONS UPDATE\*

In 2018 it took 14 days of strike action to prevent the loss of Defined Benefits. A Joint Expert Panel (JEP) on USS was established to make short-term recommendations relating to the 2017 valuation and long-term suggestions on securing the scheme's future. The panel agreed with UCU criticisms of the valuation scheme and proposed a plan for avoiding short-term hikes.

Most of the recommendations from the first report were ignored and a Trustee appointed by UCU was sacked from the board, leaving UCU members with little confidence in the management of USS.

**The rises recently imposed by USS on both employers and employees were not necessary which is why UCU members are so angry about paying them.** This scheme is becoming unaffordable for all sides and employees are leaving at a high rate. It doesn't have to be this way, however. The second JEP report, published in December, offers some long-term solutions around governance, valuation and investment.

But USS largely ignored the first report. The crucial question is: will UUK insist the main recommendations of the new report are adopted?

After previous experience, **members need concrete proposals and goodwill on the table** as there is very little trust in either USS or UUK.



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