

★ 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.



Open University Branch of UCU

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UCU
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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