



University of Birmingham UCU Branch strike FAQ sheet

When are we striking and what does this mean?

UCU are taking strike action from the **25th Nov to 4th Dec 2019**. The strike includes time before 9am and after 5pm and includes any activity which is part of your work such as teaching, administration, meetings, work emails, marking, research, events, or conferences where you are directly or indirectly representing your employer. On each day of the strikes there will be pickets at entrances to each major workplace from 8:30am, a strike rally on the Green Heart at 12pm, and events through the afternoon. You can join and follow the event on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/785828295190204/>

Why are we striking?

We are taking strike over the national Pay and Equality claim and to protect our guaranteed pension in retirement. Our Pay and Equality claim calls for action on the widespread abuse of staff on short term casual contracts, the unacceptable gender and ethnicity pay gaps, and fair and sustainable workloads. The full claim can be found here:

<https://birminghamucu.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/ucubanhe54.pdf>

We are also taking action to protect our pension so that every member of staff can look forward to a career average pension in retirement. Our scheme is called the USS and you can find out more about why we need to protect it here:

<https://medium.com/ussbriefs>

UCU are calling on employers representatives in UCEA (Universities and Colleges Employers Association) and in UUK (Universities UK, a committee of University Vice Chancellors and Principals) to enter into meaningful negotiations with us for fairer pay and conditions and to help protect the USS scheme. The specific priorities set out to employers can be found here:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10313/Nobody-wants-to-have-to-ballot-every-year>

Can non-members also take part in the strike?

Everyone has the right not to cross the picket line of a legal and legitimate strike action organised by any union at their workplace. If you are not a member of the union that is calling its members out, you can join the pickets (and refuse to go into work) based on your individual conscience, and the university has confirmed that they will not treat non-union members (or members of a different union that is not on strike) differently from members of the union that



University of Birmingham UCU Branch strike FAQ sheet

calls the action. We strongly encourage you to join us (or any other union, depending on the type of role you have at the university), so you have even more protection if needed:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

Should I tell my manager/supervisor I'm going on strike?

You do not need to inform your manager ahead of time that you are striking. If you are asked whether you have been on strike *after* strike days then you should inform your line manager. You should *not* notify HR or input this information onto New Core.

What does the call for Action Short of Strike (ASOS) mean?

The national call for Action Short of a Strike includes the following:

- Working to contract.
- Not covering for absent colleagues or rescheduling classes cancelled due to strike action.
- Not sharing materials relating to lectures or classes cancelled as a result of strike action.
- Not undertaking any voluntary activities such as lecture capture.

Universities, and many other organizations operate on goodwill, rather than contractual obligation, and the point of ASOS is to draw attention to this fact. The following tips should also be kept in mind:

- It is management's job to be specific in terms of both the task you do and the order which they are undertaken.
- If you are unsure about what your priorities ought to be you should refer your query to your line manager or HoD.

In general, while engaging in ASOS, if you are asked to do a specific task, seek clarification as to why it is being asked, what it involves and what you should deprioritise instead. This is not breach of contract or partial performance. Nationally UCU has produced the following guidance: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/working-to-contract>

BUCU has also passed the following motion calling for a **boycott of Panopto** throughout the dispute period. Staff are asked to remove all existing recordings relating to the dispute period while making unique links available to students with disabilities or special circumstances:

<https://birminghamucu.org/2019/11/11/action-short-of-strike-action-motion-12-11-19/>



University of Birmingham UCU Branch strike FAQ sheet

What will the pickets be like and should I go along?

The pickets will be friendly and approachable and we encourage all union members to attend. Picket lines help the university community to see the strength of feeling amongst staff and give crucial visibility to our dispute. They also provide an opportunity to ask other staff to join the action, and help us talk to staff and students about why we are taking action. A well-supported, approachable and knowledgeable picket can greatly help others to understand our position.

I normally work from home. What should I do on the strike days?

It is possible to take part in the strike action remotely if you are withdrawing all of your labour. This could include putting an out of office reply on your emails, cancelling scheduled meetings, and withdrawing from all work related duties. If you're unsure whether your actions constitute 'strike action' please contact the branch and we'll be happy to advise. If you are taking strike action and can make any of the strike days on campus we have some local fund available to help cover costs (see below).

Whether or not you are on strike, you can support the action on social media. We will be tweeting images and videos from the picket lines and we want these to reach as many people as possible. Our local social media accounts are: Twitter: @BirminghamUCU. Facebook: Birmingham UCU.

What pay deduction will I face and is there any strike fund available?

The University has stated that they will make a pay deduction of 1/365th for each day of strike action for member of staff. This pay deduction will depend on whether or not the University can identify and process the deduction via New Core. A national UCU scheme has been set up that will pay out £50 per day for full time staff on £30,000 pa or above from the third day of action onwards, or £75 per day from the second day of action for staff on less than £30,000 pa. You apply for this by completing an online form which will be circulated by the branch: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10333/Strike-fund-support>



University of Birmingham UCU Branch strike FAQ sheet

Locally we have a hardship fund of £5,000 of branch funds set aside for those attending and volunteering at the pickets. This fund will pay out £50 for the first strike days not covered by the by the national scheme where members have registered on a picket and need all or part of the £50 to cover hardship or other costs. We hope to raise more money for this scheme during the action which will give us additional flexibility in covering members costs not already covered by the national scheme. See the full local hardship fund motion here:

<https://birminghamucu.org/2019/11/15/resolution-on-the-creation-of-a-local-hardship-fund/>

How will going on strike affect my migration status?

We know that it can be hard for migrant members who face the hostile environment to join industrial action. The Home Office has recently updated its guidelines to specify that striking doesn't count as unauthorised absence for visa (Tier 2) purposes, via an exception to the rule on absences from employment without pay. Your union will support migrant members in every way we can and the University have also given us assurances they they will not seek to unfairly target migrant staff taking part in action. Please get in touch with us if you would like to discuss your particular circumstances with a member of the committee or casework team. You can find more information here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-9-grounds-for-refusal#pt9variation>

Can the University sack or discipline me for taking strike action?

In a legal and properly organised strike action it is your right to take part without fear of persecution. Any targeted disciplinary action against individuals or unfair treatment of any kind will be illegal and the University have confirmed on the record that they will not seek any form of disciplinary action against individuals for simply taking part. If you are facing any difficulties or implied threats from a line manager please get in touch with the branch as soon as possible.

I am due to be working abroad during the strike? Can I still take part in the strike?

While the legal position varies, UCU's advice is that if you are working outside the UK on a strike day you should work normally and donate to the strike fund. We note particularly the hostile anti-trade union laws in many countries in which our University operates. If you are due to travel abroad as part of your work on a strike day you should not do so.



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How can I get more involved or help organise?

We need as many members as possible to get involved and there is a huge amount of work we need to do to make this action a success. If you'd like to get more involved or are interested in joining the branch committee please contact admin@birminghamucu.org or drop us a message on Facebook or on Twitter. We are holding regular organising meetings on Monday lunchtimes at 12pm and would welcome more volunteers!

I am a student, where can I find out more about how this will affect me?

We will be producing a separate FAQs for students but in the meantime please join the following Facebook event for full details of the strikes:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/785828295190204/>

And you can join the UoB students supporting the staff strikes group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/565505877532818/>

How can I keep up with the latest news on the strikes?

Follow University of Birmingham UCU and UNISON branches on social media using the following tags:

UoB UCU branch details

BirminghamUCU.org

Twitter @BirminghamUCU

Facebook BirminghamUCU

Email admin@birminghamucu.org

UoB UNISON branch details

UoBUNISON.org.uk

Twitter @BhamUniUNISON

Facebook UNISON Birmingham Uni Branch

Email UNISONbham@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Hashtags: #HelloBrum #UoBStrike

Where can I find out more information on the national campaign?

UCU has also produced a detail set of national FAQs that you can access here:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/he-action-faqs>

They also post all the latest national developments here:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/he2019>