

How you can help to

Support The Strike • Get Us Back To Work!

Show your support at pickets and the Free University of Warwick

Visit our picket lines to show your support – students especially welcome. Enjoy hot drinks, food, and fun! You can also check out the programme of Free University of Warwick.

www.facebook.com/studentstaffsolidarity/

Donate to Warwick UCU's Local Hardship Fund

Members aren't paid for the time they're on strike. Our Warwick Hardship Fund helps to support strikers who are precariously employed or suffering hardship.

<http://warwickucu.org.uk/local-hardship-fund/>

Petition Parliament: make Universities UK subject to the Freedom of Information Act

UUK reached its hardline plan as the result of some deeply strange behaviour (see tinyurl.com/who-uuk). Help to get proper scrutiny by signing at tinyurl.com/PetitionUUK

Ask your MP to support pensions and the early day motion 619

We have a lot of support by MPs Matt Western and Jim Cunningham, but we need more MPs to come to our side. Check whether your MP supports the early day motion 619 and ask them to join us on our picket line.

Join the University and College Union if you can

Over 3000 new members have so far joined UCU to support the strike. Membership is open to many categories of staff. Full details at www.ucu.org.uk/join

Raise the profile of the strike on social media

Tweet about the strike with hashtag [#USSStrike](https://twitter.com/USStrike). Follow [@ucu](https://twitter.com/ucu) and [@WarwickUCU](https://twitter.com/WarwickUCU) on Twitter and find [Warwick UCU](https://www.facebook.com/WarwickUCU) on Facebook.

Email Alistair Jarvis (UUK) to express your disagreement

Personal emails are really helpful to show the scale of discontent. Key points to note:

- **Universities UK have tabled a proposal that the membership of UCU has deemed unacceptable on 13/03 (see overleaf).**
- **But UUK have come under scrutiny on many fronts**
- They have aggressively put forward proposals on dubious grounds in January (see overleaf) and have since refused to correct their stance or react to calls for transparency.
- They are still asking for an unprecedented pension cut
- **Be distinctive.** Explain how the situation is harming you personally.
- **Never be rude** or sarcastic. Politeness pays.
- At the same time, **be firm.** UUK is handling the situation disastrously.
- ➔ You can ask the UUK leadership to step down and to hand over to a new negotiation team.
- ➔ You can write to your VC Stuart Croft and ask him to make a similar request. You can also ask Stuart Croft to continue pressuring UUK to drop their attack on the USS pensions.

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(Please bcc:

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Things you should know about the strike and the rejected ACAS offer...¹

1. Universities UK is promoting hardline, life-changing cuts to staff pensions.

Analysis by independent consultants suggests that a lecturer starting work now may end up losing around £10 000 per year in retirement, or £208 000 in total.² Change on this scale will drive people away from jobs in Universities. The “compromise” proposed by UUK in the negotiations and announced on March 12th was still biased towards this extremely hardline stance and still amounted to a massive cut to staff pensions.

2. UUK’s “six-billion-pound hole in finances” is a myth.

UCU has challenged the methodology on which the pension valuation was based. UUK’s publicity has suggested a six billion pound shortfall, but independent work commissioned by UCU has shown that the existing pension scheme’s incomings and outgoings are projected to be pretty well balanced for the next 40 years.³ This misrepresentation of USS finances is driven by the desire of a new breed of university managements to cut their pension liabilities and thereby ease the financing of new buildings and campuses. Despite UCU attempts to reject this valuation, the proposal that UUK made on Monday 12th March was still based on these assumptions.

3. The decision-making that led to the hardline plan in the first place was confused.

Many major universities do not support hardline changes to defined benefit pensions. They result from a consultation last September in which, according to UUK, 42% of employers wanted changes to reduce their own risks. It’s now clear that this figure counts individual Oxford and Cambridge colleges, with tiny numbers of staff, as separate employers.⁴ Also, some of the responses included were not authorised by the relevant universities.⁵ UUK have aggressively fudged the numbers to inform the January plans and are still not ready to provide more transparency.

4. The proposal is a “defined benefits” pension in not much more than its name

The March 12th proposal maintains a defined benefit element largely in name only. The proposal shifts all the risk of high inflation rates onto members. Significantly lower accrual rates and DB eligibility threshold mean a massive real pension cut. And this for an interim agreement that contains no long term commitment to DB and will be re-negotiated and subject to new attacks three years down the line.

5. Union branches across the country unanimously rejected the proposal

Union branches across the country have held emergency branch meetings to discuss and deliberate over the proposal in the most democratic process that the Union has seen in a long time. Almost everywhere, the proposal was rejected by a unanimous or almost unanimous vote. Branch representatives and later the UCU’s executive council have equally unanimously rejected the proposals.

6. It is a scandal that UUK prioritise an inter-University rat race over decent pensions and conditions for its staff

UUK pushed for the pension cuts because they thought the new trade union law would make it impossible for the Union to defend itself. By attacking defined benefits, they wanted to completely sign off from protecting members from market volatility and future risks. The reason they want to do this is because some Universities wanted to reduce future (shared) liabilities in order to access borrowing in order to outcompete other Universities in a scramble for student numbers and research funding⁶. The proposal of this week was still heavily biased towards reducing liabilities and contributions for employers. By rejecting this proposal, we refuse to work in a higher education system in which rapid student number expansion, shiny new buildings and “competitive” management salaries take priority over meaningful education, staff satisfaction and student democracy.

7. Continuing the strike is a last resort, but we are left with no other choice.

It is for the reasons above that UCU has decided not to accept this ‘deal’, and instead continue to push for a better outcome for all of us. This might entail continued strike action, possibly including 14 further days of strike action in Term 3. It is not with a light heart that we have taken the decision to say no to this offer. We know that this means a continued negative impact on the learning of our students. However, we want to reiterate that we do not take this action lightly. The last thing we want is to hurt the interests of our students. Sadly, we have been left with no choice by UUK’s refusal to budge further. We sincerely believe that due to the refusal of UUK to take our analysis and objections seriously, it is them who perpetuate the necessity for strike action.

...with footnotes!

² Derek Benstead for First Actuarial, “Report for UCU: a comparison of TPS with USS with and without a salary threshold”, 29 November 2017, https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8916/TPS-USS-no-DB-comparison-First-Actuarial-29-Nov-17/pdf/firstactuarial_ussvtps_nodb_29nov17.pdf, p6 (case of Member M10).

³ Hilary Salt and Derek Benstead for First Actuarial, “Report for UCU: progressing the valuation of USS”, 15 September 2017, https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8705/Progressing-the-valuation-of-the-USS-First-Actuarial-Sep-17/pdf/firstactuarial_progressing-valuation-uss_sep17.pdf

⁴ See Michael Otsuka’s blog posts at <https://medium.com/@mikeotsuka> from February, particularly “Oxford’s and Cambridge’s role in the demise of USS”, “Cambridge Colleges coordinated a rejection of USS’s proposed level of risk”, and “The rotten boroughs of the Isis and the Fens”.

⁵ See responses summarised at <https://twitter.com/etymologic/status/966703675543613441>

⁶ Sean Wallis, “Made in Westminster: the source of the USS ‘crisis’ – and the solution”, 8 February 2018, <https://heconvention2.wordpress.com/2018/02/08/made-in-westminster/>.. Compare also Cambridge’s submission to the September consultation of UUK, cited in <https://medium.com/@mikeotsuka/oxfords-and-cambridge-s-role-in-the-demise-of-uss-a3034b62c033>