



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, we want you to join us. Either follow the links on-line from our blog on Staff Central, or ask us for a paper membership form.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

March 2022

As the cost of living crisis continues, we have to do what we can to ensure that our members' pay does not fall further and further behind. We've taken three days of strike action on December and at the start of this month, but we've seen no indication from UCEA, the employers' national body, that they are willing to increase our pay now that inflation is heading towards a massive 10%. Instead, they are churning out information about how little impact our strikes have had on universities and by implication, how much we're wasting our time and energy in trying to get a better deal.

This is a disgraceful attitude from a body which should recognise the efforts the university workers nationally have made, throughout the pandemic and the precarious situation we're now in, **Higher education workers will not be made fools of.** We know the money is there to pay us properly, if not in the University of Brighton's bank accounts, then in the government's magic money tree used to pay their mates for useless PPE or aircraft carriers. We can't sit back and accept a massive deterioration of our living standards. Lower paid members of staff will be evicted or pauperised if we can't turn this situation around.

With all that in mind, we'll be striking again on **Friday 1st and Monday 4th April.** University managers are making April fools of themselves if they think we'll put up with falling pay. **Please remember, we'll have strike pay available for every striking member, of up to £50 per day.**

That's how serious we're taking this.

If you're a member, please make sure you strike on those days, unless you're exempt.

If you're not a member, you can join today and play your part in campaigning for decent pay.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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Why we're striking again

Six months ago, we hadn't taken strike action for six years, when we did so in 2014. In December and the first two days of March, we struck over pay and we'll be doing it again on the first two working days of April.

This is part of an ongoing campaign for pay justice for all university workers, but particularly those who are struggling with bills and the general cost of living. Just existing in the South East of England requires pay to keep up with inflation. This clearly isn't happening and the only option we have is to fight with the only weapon we have, our ability to withdraw our labour.

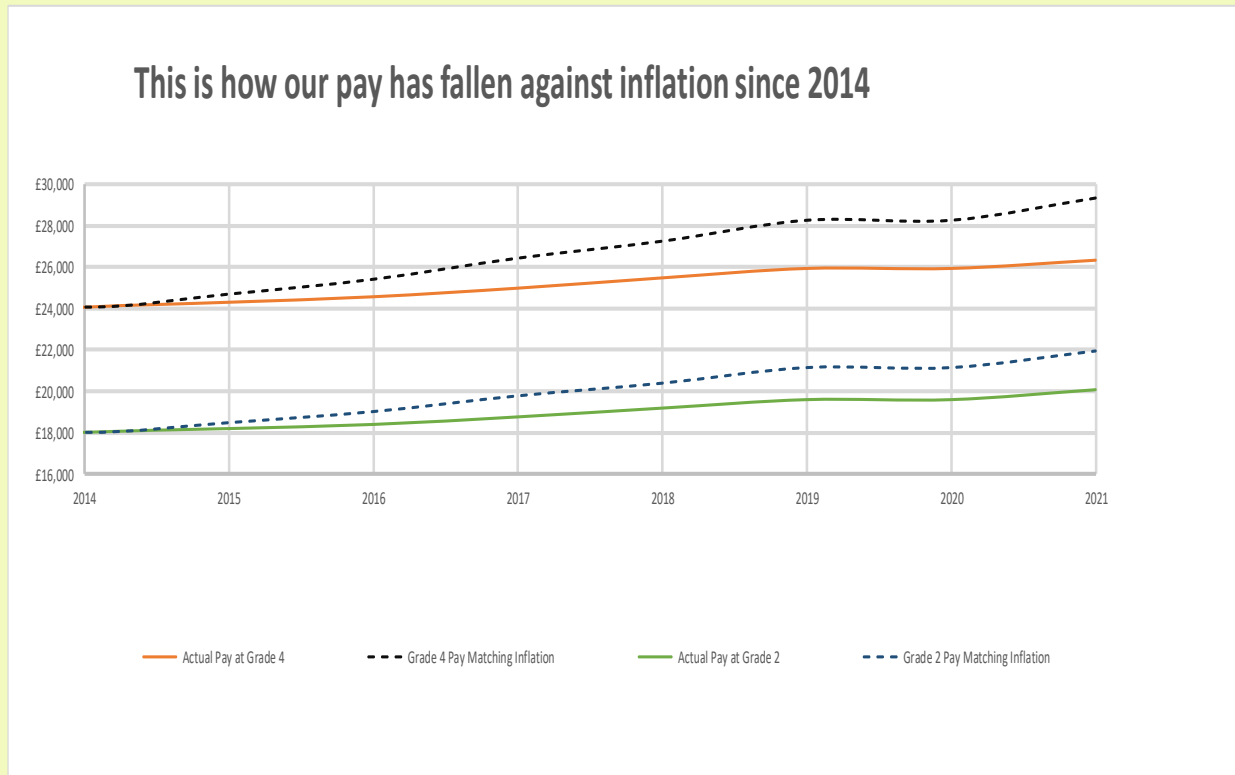
If we thought we could gain a pay rise with persuasion, we'd do that, but UCEA, the employers' body responsible for deciding collectively how much universities should pay their staff, have refused to reconsider. We've had a pay rise of only 1.5% since August 2019. Since then, the cost of living has risen dramatically, with little sign that it is going to slow down. Many of our members are struggling.

The University of Brighton does not have vast sums of cash available to pay us properly, but that is not a reason for us to accept worsening living conditions. Money can be found when this government wants to. There's always money for wars and tax cuts for the rich and powerful. We're demanding proper pay for all university workers and proper funding of universities.

UCEA is made up of board of about 20 individuals. They are all professors, vice chancellors or board members of universities. It's a fair bet that none of them have the slightest clue what it's like to survive on a wage of £9.90/hour. They are responsible for making "tough decisions" and limiting what universities spend, by keeping pay rises to what's "affordable". The current cost of living crisis shows their real motivation- making sure university staff are forced to see wages collapse, because the government will not find money to fund universities properly.

One UCEA member is our very own Mark Burch, (unelected) chair of our Board of Governors. Mark is a managing partner at a private equity investment firm. We'd be interested to know his views on trying to force us all to accept a massive reduction on real-terms pay, but it's no good the University saying that the decisions of UCEA are out of their hands when the chair of the Board is contributing to those decisions. Presumably Mark stands by the UCEA claim that 1.5% against a backdrop of inflation approaching 10% is "fair and sustainable." We think it's a disgrace and it's unfortunate that those with power at the University would sooner attack their own workforce than look after our interests.

This is why we need to campaign for better wages



Since 2014, grade 2 members of staff are now paid £1,879 less than they should be. Grade 4 members of staff are paid £2,973 less than if wages had kept up with the cost of living.

Employers will always try to reduce wages in real terms and say it's what's affordable, or a fair settlement, but a genuinely fair settlement, to get wages levels back to where they should be in real terms since 2014, would be about 11%, and that's before the recently and ongoing spike in inflation we're seeing.



The employers are taking us for granted, saying how wonderful we all are, but then expecting us to work for more, for less.

This pay dispute is not about greedy workers wanting more. It's about many of our members being able to eat properly and pay their bills. The University is in danger of having staff members evicted for failing to keep up with the rent or mortgage payments.

We have no other choice than to strike.

Strike Pay - what it is and how to get it

How it works

UNISON has a national industrial disputes fund, which can be used to pay our members when on strike. It has been agreed by the new National Executive Council, that this dispute qualifies for strike pay and the rules have been changed to allow every member taking action to claim up to £50 for each day of action.

What we can't do though is pay members more than they've lost after tax and national insurance, and so we'll have to work out, roughly what has been lost and give you that, up to a maximum of £50.

For example, if you've been deducted £40.00 for one day, we calculate that this will have cost you £30.54, because you will have not paid tax or NI on the £40.00, so £30.54 is what we will pay you.

If you've had £72.17 deducted, which is equivalent to a full time member of staff at the top of grade 4, you will have lost £50.87, so we'll pay you the maximum of £50.00 for each day.

As a rough guide, we should be able to give you upwards of 70% of what's been lost in gross terms, and this will increase for the lower waged, who will pay less tax and NI.

For most members, you'll get back what you have lost, provided you're below grade 4 (full time) and below grade 9 (part time, at 18.5 hours/week).

How to claim

We can't make payments without seeing the deduction on your wages slip, so for 1st/2nd March, you can apply as soon as you can access your payslip for March via MyView. This will probably be around the 28th.

Then you can apply in two ways:

1. By using the link to the form, which will be emailed to all members and available on our blog, or
2. By paper copy, which we can supply you, or you can access it from the blog.

Strike pay is available for everyone taking action and so everyone should claim.

It's going to take some time to sort out hundreds of claims, but we'll try to make sure payments are made as soon as possible after the claim has been processed.

