



Our newsletter is free to all members.

If you're not a member, we want you to join us. Scan this QR code, or ask a steward for a paper form.



Get organised, join a union!

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

November 2022

WE'RE WORTH MORE
WE CAN'T AFFORD LESS

HIGHER EDUCATION PAY 2022/23

VOTE YES to strike for a better pay offer

We can't accept massive real-terms pay cuts!
We can't do work more for less money!
It's time for proper pay rises that match inflation!
We're demanding a better deal!

That's why we're striking on
**Thursday 24th, Friday 25th and
Wednesday 30th November**

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November 2022 pay strike

Our branch committee have decided to call our members working directly for the University out on strike again, on Thursday 24th, Friday 25th and Wednesday 30th November. This means, not working, either on site or at home, and not making up for the work you've missed on another day.

We don't want to strike, but the pay increase that's been imposed (3%, rising to 8% for the lowest paid), is really a massive pay cut when inflation is taken into account. With the cost of living going up at 12%, this is really a 9% cut in pay, or a 4% cut. Either way, our pay is falling rapidly and we have to do something about it.

This is a national campaign by UNISON to put pressure on UCEA, the employers' organisation who decide on pay, so that they come back with a better offer. But it's also about campaigning for proper funding for universities so that they can afford to pay decent wages. If the Vice-Chancellor says the University of Brighton can't pay us properly, then she's welcome to join our campaign, but striking is ultimately the only weapon working people have if their employers won't listen.



UCU at Brighton and nationally will also be striking on those days.

Our position has always been that we're willing to consider better offers from UCEA, but we can only try to force that by putting pressure on our own university's leaders to ask for it to happen.

We know it's not easy to strike, especially if it feels as if you're letting down other workers or the students, but we don't feel as if we have any other option available to us.

This is not about wanting more money than we deserve. It's about resisting a cut in wages so that our pay keeps up. Without a proper rise in wages, many of our members will be plunged further into in-work poverty - having to choose between eating or heating.

The three days will see close to a national higher education strike with around 20 UNISON branches and UCU branches at all universities taking action at the same time.

So, if you were due to work on any of those days, please join our strike!

The more people striking the more effect we can have, so please encourage others to join UNISON and join the strike.

We're repeating last month's FAQs, but please feel free to get in touch if you have any questions.



November pay strike FAQs

Why are we striking?

For August 2022, we demanded a pay rise that kept up with inflation, plus a bit more given the years of real-terms pay cuts we've had. They imposed a rise of between 3% and 8%, but in reality that's a pay cut of roughly between 9% or 4%. 3% or even 8% might sound okay, but when the cost of everything has been going up by 12% on average, it's not enough. (See back page for more.)

We can campaign for better pay by having meetings and asking for more, but ultimately, we have to strike if that's the only argument they'll listen to.

Our members voted in a ballot during July and August, and 82% voted in favour of taking strike action with a 61% turnout.

Are you expecting all members to strike?

Yes, all members who are directly employed by the University.

Our union is based on democracy, so if the majority vote to strike then we have to accept the majority decision. (Just as we'd all have accepted the pay cut if our members voted to.)

There are some exceptions - if you're likely to retire in the next year, or if striking could affect your maternity pay. Please contact us if you have any questions.

The more our members stick with the majority decision and take action the more likely we are to get a result.

Is it against the law to strike?

Although there is no positive legal right to strike in the UK, strike action organised by a trade union is legal provided some tough conditions are met. We've had a ballot and secured a legal mandate to strike over pay with a positive vote in favour of striking and a turnout in excess of 50%. Provided members strike on the days we've notified the University, then there's no need to worry about being disciplined. Members should not face any unfair treatment for exercising their right to strike. You shouldn't be singled out for sticking up for yourself and other union members.

What does striking involve?

Not going to work, or doing any work at home on that day. We know that many people do jobs that are flexible, but the principle should be that any work due to be done on a strike day should not be. Members will need to exercise their judgement about what to do when returning to work on 18th October, but working harder to catch up defeats the point of the strike. The reason for striking is to make the employers tell UCEA that they need to make us a better offer. Ultimately, we need to show that the University can't function properly without the workforce i.e. those of us who do all the work, but the University will try to show that it can by relying on people who will work that day. The more members we have and the more people we have taking strike action, the more likely we are to be successful.

November pay strike FAQs

What's the picket line for?

Picket lines are made up of striking workers who are there to ask others to join the strike. For our strike to be successful, we need as many people as possible to take strike action, and there's an expectation that members would join the strike because we've had a democratic vote over it. Depending on the nature of the strike and the type of workplace, many picket lines are to show that we're serious. We want to be able to ask all University workers to not cross the picket line, that is, join the union and join the strike. Obviously we have to accept that some people will want to work, either because they don't understand what's going on or they don't agree with us, but every one that does is undermining the strike and making our job harder. We have to respect their right to work, if that's what they choose to do, but there's no reason we can't patiently and peacefully explain to them why we want them to join us. If we do get better pay as a result of this, we'll all benefit, members and non-members.

Should I expect to have my wages deducted?

Yes, you won't be paid for being on strike, at least not by the University. All those striking should declare, afterwards, that they took strike action on the relevant day. The University will deduct 1/365th of the annual salary for each strike day. For example, a grade 2 caretaker with a 10% shift allowance should expect to lose £63.88 for each strike day. A grade 4 administrator, working part time 18.5 hours a week would lose £37.17. The University will assume that people work the same hours every day, so part time staff working disproportionately fewer hours than average on a strike day would potentially be deducted more than they should have been. In this case, it's worth contacting HR and asking them to adjust this. They can't deduct more than they would have paid you!

Obviously, if you're not due to work on a strike day then there's no need to declare it because you're not on strike, but you can still come and join us on the day. The good news is that UNISON will pay strike pay to all those taking action of up to £50 per day. It's "up to" because we can't pay you more in strike pay than you've had deducted.

How do we claim strike pay?

After the strikes, we'll make sure all members know how to claim using the Form, or you can fill in a paper form if that's easier. We'll want to see some evidence that you took action i.e. wage slips with deductions. The idea of strike pay is that we can alleviate some of the difficulties people have in not be able to take action because of the worry of not affording to. We understand the irony of not being able to strike over pay, because you don't have enough pay. The reality is that if we don't take strike action, we're never going to be able to get our pay anywhere near to where it should be.

Are all UNISON members expected to strike?

Not quite. Only those working directly for the University should take strike action, so not those working for the Students' Union or other organisations. If you are within a year of retiring, you are exempt, because striking will have a small effect on your final pension.

November pay strike FAQs

Also, if you're pregnant and have notified the University of the expected date of the birth, striking could affect your maternity pay, so you are also exempt. For that reason, we don't expect you to take part, but you could try to take annual leave instead.

As a democratic union, we would expect all members to respect the decision made by the ballot and join the strike. We appreciate that not everyone will agree with this and equally, we have to respect that point of view. In trying to patiently explain how we see this, our union is based on members collectively sticking together to make working life better for all of us. Taking big decisions by having a democratic ballot of all members is the best way of involving members in what our union does. If we vote to accept a pay offer, then we all have to accept that, and not try to strike over it (!), but if we decide to do something about it by striking then we would hope that all members follow that decision, even if they voted against it. Obviously we can't force members to strike, but we want to be able to persuade most that in this case, they should do.

Do I need to tell my manager that I'm striking?

No, but you might want to. Some managers will be expected to try to minimise the disruption caused by the strike. Please don't help them any more than you feel you should do. The point is to cause disruption. We want the strike to be as successful as possible. Given managers advance warning is probably going to make the strike less effective.

What about non-members?

This is a great time to ask people to join the union. If people join on the day, they can join the strike and claim strike pay, so please encourage everyone to consider joining. The more members we have the more powerful we are, today and into the future.

What about the students?

Many students will recognise that it's in all our interests to have a university run by happy, well paid employees, whether that's lecturers, technicians, librarians or cleaners. We should ask students to support us and encourage them to get involved in what we're doing. We want them to join a union as well if they're working. The best students will come and join our picket lines so please make them feel welcome and thank them for supporting us.

Is it all going to be worth it?

We genuinely don't know, but we know that if we do nothing, our wages will fall and fall because the employers will know that we won't do anything about it other than grumble. There's no guarantee that strike action will win, but from the employers' point of view, they will be thinking what it would take for us to not strike and the more determined we are, the more they will want to reach a settlement. They don't want staff on strike any more than we want to have to do it.

Any more questions? If we've not answered your questions, please feel free to get in touch.

Why we think you need to join a trade union



If you're reading this, the chances are you're already a member of UNISON, but whether you are or not, it's in all our interests that we strengthen our branch and our union by recruiting more members.

Trade unions are not groups of people who moan about everything, or clubs for lazy workers. We're organised workers who see the need for workplace organisation that's based around mass membership and collective interest.

We support all members with their individual problems at work, but the main reason we're all members is that we can do so much more when we have the weight of hundreds of members with us.

Many people working at the University will be concerned about what's round the corner. Universities like ours are facing all kinds of uncertainty. Public services in general are being cut, sold off and privatised. Workers' terms and conditions are being attacked, as those in charge are forced to run things as "efficiently" as possible. In short, we're all expected to work harder for longer and less money.

The entire system means we have to fight back. Trade unions are about working people seeing that we're much stronger together. You can fight and win on your own, but you're much more likely to win if you're fighting alongside hundreds and thousands of other people like you.



Please make sure you join a trade union and stick up for your rights at work.

If you're already a member, please ask those working alongside you to join as well.

You can join UNISON on-line, here:
or ask a steward for a paper membership form.

