

Strike FAQ for Aberdeen students

This is information for all Aberdeen students who would like to know more about why lecturers, librarians, IT and other professional service staff at the University of Aberdeen are taking industrial action.

What is the strike about?

There are two reasons why we are striking:

- First, to protect staff pensions, which are under renewed attack after last year's dispute.
- Second, to fight for the rights of casualised, female and ethnic minority staff; get employers to address excessive workloads; get a decent pay rise that at least keeps us in line with inflation. Growing numbers of staff are working on short-term or precarious contracts that don't pay them enough to make ends meet. There is also a persistent gender and racial pay gap.

What is it we want? What would constitute a win?

Our demands are simple:

- Protect staff pensions so that we can retire without facing poverty;
- Pay a reasonable minimum rate for directly employed staff, and commit to the Living Wage Foundation's pay rates for the lowest paid on campus;
- Agree to develop a programme to close the gender and ethnic minority pay gap;
- Agree to create a framework to eliminate precarious employment and to tackle rising workloads;
- Ensure that staff pay keeps up with inflation (salaries have fallen 20% on average over the past decade)

These demands are easy to meet. We're asking UUK (Universities UK, the collective bargaining association of university employers) to work with us to end the rampant levels of inequality in our workplaces and to make sure that people can afford to live on the pay for the jobs they do.

Why should students care?

We know that you have incurred a large debt to attend university. Many of us fought hard against the meteoric rise of tuition fees. **But the high fees you pay are not used to pay more to those who teach you.** The pay gap, casualisation of staff and erosion of staff pensions are part of a decade-long assault on the integrity of universities as public institutions. As a result, we've seen the tripling of student fees, a trend toward short-term or sessional contracts at the expense of secure employment, the greater use of outsourcing models and the ballooning of managerial pay – and with these developments, the persistence of racist and sexist cultures at our university.

If we want an environment committed to fairness and transparency, where teaching, learning and research – not profit – are at the heart of what we do, then we must collectively take a stand.

How does industrial action affect you?

We love teaching and working with students, and we do not take strike action lightly, any more than nurses or doctors do. The UCU has called for eight days of strike action from November 25th to December 4th. On these days:

- UCU members won't be teaching, holding office hours, marking or answering emails
- Any work missed, including teaching, will not be rescheduled
- After December 4th, UCU members will be observing action short of a strike (ASOS): this means working to contract, or working only the hours stipulated in our contracts (most academics work 55+ hours, including evenings and weekends, and most are unable to take all of their annual leave which impacts on their family and personal lives to a huge extent)

How can Aberdeen students help?

In partnership with Aberdeen University Students' Association, we will be holding a series of teach-outs during the strike period – these will be open to all staff and students. Topics will be wide and varied! We want you to be part of these activities. Join us!

If you want to help us stop hugely damaging changes to higher education, here are some ideas:

- Talk to your lecturers about the strike (and if they're not in the UCU, suggest they join!)
- Discuss it with your family and friends (more info: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/campaigns>)
- Contact Vice-Chancellor George Boyne at principal-office@abdn.ac.uk and ask him to lobby Universities UK to meaningfully negotiate
- Contact your local MP and MSP to voice your concerns: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/> and <https://www.parliament.scot/msps/current-msps.aspx>
- Volunteer to help with the campaign by contacting AUSA

Remember: the more people support the strike, and the more unified that support, the sooner it's likely to end.

With that in mind, please:

- **Boycott lectures and seminars on strike days – do not cross the picket line!**
- **Join us as sympathetic onlookers/active supporters**
- **Help organise alternative student-led events**
- **Get in touch with any questions**

Solidarity for all – together we can win this!