

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

A RANK AND FILE STRIKE BULLETIN WEEK 1

WHAT TIME IS IT? IT'S STRIKING TIME!

UCU members in **over 70 universities** across the UK are about to go on strike to improve issues related to **pay, workload, equality and casualisation** across the sector, as well as **protect our pensions**.

It is the first time that the union is taking on all the main issues that continue to make our work hell, and it is doing so with considerable strength.

FROM 20 FEBRUARY, WE WILL BE OUT FOR 14 DAYS, SPREAD OVER 4 WEEKS.

WEEK 1

Thursday 20 and Friday 21 February

WEEK 2

Monday 24, Tuesday 25 and
Wednesday 26 February

WEEK 3

Monday 2, Tuesday 3, Wednesday 4
and Thursday 5 March

WEEK 4

Monday 9, Tuesday 10, Wednesday 11,
Thursday 12 and Friday 13 March

GIVEN THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION IN OUR WORKPLACES, THIS LEVEL OF ACTION IS URGENTLY REQUIRED.

Over 30% of contracts in higher education are casual, and over 50% are 'non-traditional.' Institutional racism and sexism means that women and people of colour continue to be paid less, promoted less often, and are disproportionately affected by new disciplining mechanisms such as audit through student feedback.

Student numbers grow, inflation climbs while our pay stagnates, both teaching and research expectations multiply, and the administrative work we are expected to do seems to accumulate endlessly.

WE ARE AT BREAKING POINT.

14 days of collective action to say **enough** is a great start. But it is the least that we can do.

Yet, there are some who have started, both within the leadership of our union and in individual branches, to actively undermine the action.

Some think we should strike for different issues separately. This is effectively a call to focus on senior staff's pensions and leaving the rest of the industry to fight for ourselves.

Others warn that 14 days is too much. Too much pay lost, too much disruption for students, or even an overreaction, if one is to trust the pension experts at London School of Economics or the comrades taking to the pages of Times Higher Education to criticise the action and encouraging scab labour.

While strike pay will need to be arranged in every branch for all members who need it, the idea that now is a good time to divide our broad coalition, allowing us to be picked off separately by the employers, or worse – to decrease the pressure – should be **rejected altogether**.



OUR INDUSTRY IS BREAKING AT THE SEAMS.

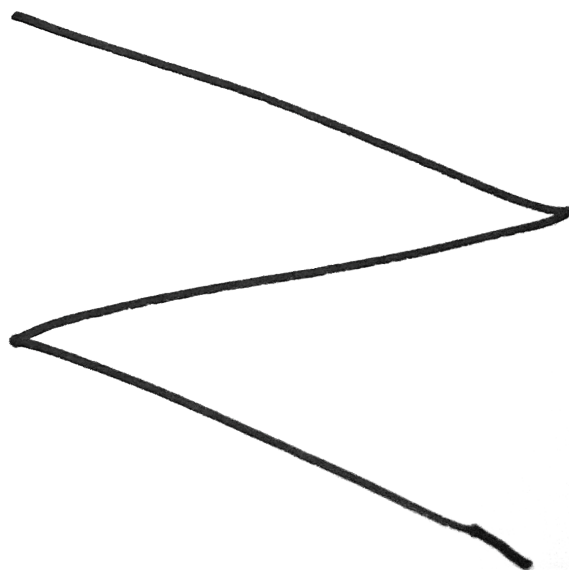
Several universities are at risk of closing down. Not a week goes by in which job cuts, austerity measures, and other managerial tricks are announced in one institution or another.

We should learn from our French counterparts. They are not only shutting down the higher education sector and organising mobilisations with students in mass assemblies, they are also **building active connections with other labour struggles and social movements**. Broadening out the coalition and increasing the pressure on employers and government. Not the opposite.

The political situation in the UK is not that of France. The same traditions have not been built up through years of action. But if we want to be able to be happy at work, to provide students with the education they deserve, and undertake research that matters, then we need to do it together. And we need to fight for it like we mean it.

IT IS TIME FOR ACTION. COLLECTIVE ACTION. SUSTAINED ACTION.

See you on the picket lines.



PARTICIPATE IN THE BULLETINS!

You might remember that during the last two national strikes a group of us published this bulletin throughout.

It gave reports of local strikes around the country and allowed rank and file union members to write short articles about strategy, ways forward etc. It was also through that network that we got the 11k petition going against the sell out in 2018.

We are trying to get it going again and we would love you to be involved. **Would you be interested in participating in the coming strike?** Or do you know others who would? Please get in touch at:

editors@notesfrombelow.org

Participating would mean sending short reports about the strike (150 words max), or any other pieces you would want published. You can send these as regularly as possible, without any expectations that you have to do it continuously throughout the strike.

It's a great way to **share information and build networks at the grassroots**, which unfortunately neither the union nor the different factions within it provide. It is also important to be able to react to potential national developments and share local information rapidly.