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The University Worker

A rank-and-file
strike bulletin

Nefarious Bosses and Unfair Deductions

We're now entering the second week of strikes in the dispute. This time we get to strike for two days in a row. If the first strike day was a warm up, now we need to turn up the heat. In this bulletin, we republish part of a piece on how to deal with deductions, as well as reports from the demo in London and the joint IWGB-UCU UCL picket lines.

As we start to increase the strike days over the next two months, it is vital that we find ways to apply pressure and build confidence. The first day didn't have the same energy of previous strikes. It's up to us to find ways to bring this to the picket lines and to rekindle our fighting spirit.

As our anonymous contributor argues, one way to do this is frustrating the employers over strike deductions. If our managers don't know what work goes on in the university, we shouldn't make it easy for them to pull our pay. The longer we can stay out, the more leverage we have.

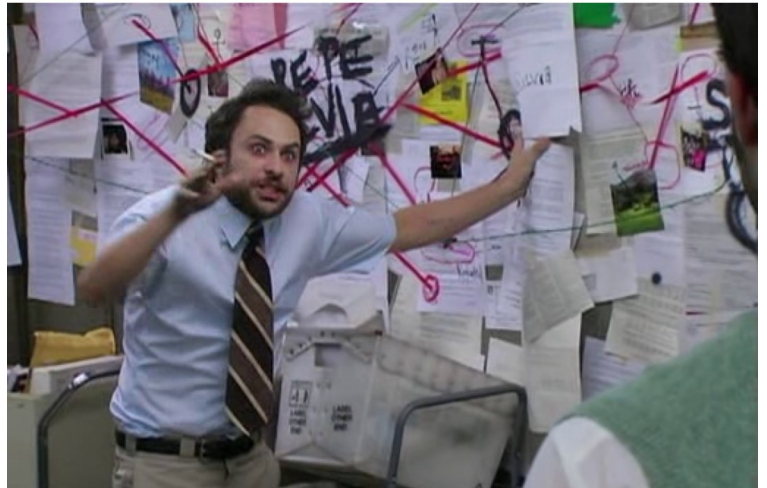
At Leeds and Queen Mary, the employer is now threatening 100% deductions for not rescheduling teaching. While at UEA, Surrey, Cardiff, Worcester, Plymouth, Plymouth Marjon, Gloucester, Harper Adams, Coventry, and Senate House, management are threatening to do the same for ASOS too. At Goldsmiths, SOAS, Warwick, Winchester, Manchester, Greenwich, Wolverhampton, Sunderland, Dundee, and Birkbeck, an 'opt-out' system has been introduced for deducting strike pay. This is all a direct attack on our right to strike.

We've been here before in previous disputes. This time we need to make sure that no university fights alone against an employer testing out harsher responses to the strike. If any employer goes ahead with this, local indefinite action should be the start. We need to turn out strikers from other universities on their picket lines. From mass pickets, targeting senior managers and vice chancellors, we need to find our own ways to respond.

Let's make these next strike days count!

- The University Worker editorial collective

**University HR trying to calculate
strike deductions without us self-
reporting:**



How to strike and still get paid!

As we embark on a new round of strikes in HE, debates have broken out in several UCU branches over reporting action to employers so that they can deduct our pay. UCU provides no central guidance on this, leaving branches to take their own approach. University bosses appear to have coalesced around the use of online "strike reporting forms" which they insist are mandatory, with some HR departments even setting weekly reporting deadlines during action. Branch responses have ranged from advising members to simply comply with HR directives, to negotiating split deductions (e.g. spreading 18 days' deductions over several months) in exchange for advising members to complete the forms as requested.

My own branch advises members to refuse to complete the employer's form, which regularly results in many members simply not being deducted, even when said members have been very visible on the picket lines. This piece encourages members in other UCU branches to push for the same position, detailing how that can be done.

Why refuse?

If we can cause maximum disruption by striking and still get paid, there is no good reason why we shouldn't. Two things are key to winning this dispute: hitting as many pressure points as possible in creative ways; and sustaining action for as long as necessary. Refusing the forms supports both of these.

If senior management and their HR apparatuses are so de-

tached from the day-to-day running of universities that they can't tell exactly which activities are being disrupted, that's their problem. We should turn their own organisational incompetence against them. Relatedly, strike reporting forms are another attempt by employers to outsource yet more administrative work to non-admin staff. We should refuse this as part of broader resistance to such efforts.

Our employers often struggle to pay staff correctly in any case, particularly casualised staff. In my experience, these are the staff who are most likely to get away without deductions by not reporting, as well as being particularly effective strikers in the case of Teaching Assistants who often run many tutorials. If we can ensure that our lowest-paid colleagues avoid deductions while still taking action, then we should. This will mean less pressure on our strike funds and more money to sustain future action.

How to refuse:

There are multiple grounds on which to refuse to use strike reporting forms:

- The most basic is that they have no grounds in legislation. There is no obligation to report strike action in any particular way. Any deadlines that employers set are entirely arbitrary and penalties for missing these cannot be imposed legally.
- Data management: Where is the data stored? For how long? When and how will it be destroyed? Is it going to be used for anything else? If any of this isn't made clear, refuse to use the forms on data protection grounds.
- Completing these forms is, in effect, providing management with a list of trade union members, which they should not have access to. Trade union detriment should be a serious concern for all of us, and is illegal under Schedule 2 of the Employment Relations Act 1999.
- Are there any ambiguous questions in the form? Jump on any details as a reason to refuse. For example, does it mention ASOS? There is no obligation to report ASOS and no questions should ask whether a member is participating in ASOS.
- Mismanagement of the forms: At some universities, several staff who completed strike reporting forms have reported being deducted twice - that is, losing six days' pay for the three days of action taken before Christmas. Do you trust your HR department enough to avoid such mistakes, particularly in the case of more financially vulnerable colleagues?

When bringing this to our branches, we should be clear that colleagues may still face deductions. Sadly, it is not safe to lie when a line manager asks directly if you took action, but obfuscation through creative reporting should be encouraged to cause further disruption. Why not report through a series of handwritten postcards to your line manager, for example? This strategy depends on employer incompetence. Colleagues who avoid deductions should be careful not to declare this too loudly or publicly, at risk of the employers getting their act together. **Until then, let the bosses pay for us to spend the day picketing.**

The full piece written by an anonymous UCU member can be read here: <https://tinyurl.com/strike-deductions>

Feb 1st Demo Report

Demonstrations can get a bit boring: marching from A to B along the same routes over and over again, listening to the same speakers, reading the same placards... But in London, the last strike day saw something a bit different. Half a million workers were on strike, and the union called a joint demonstration with the NEU and PCS in central London. Tens of thousands of workers came out, and the vibe was good. The teachers in particular were excited and loud in making their demands for a pay rise and proper school funding. There was a sound system from SOAS playing jungle and an MC chanting "*tout le monde deteste la police*" [everyone hates the police]. It was a chance to show that we're not striking on our own - we're part of a movement. But when we articulate our demands together it becomes clear that our demands aren't just about specific economic changes. Yes, we want a pay rise, an end to precarity, our pensions back, and all the rest - but more than that, we want a different kind of society.



UCU-IWGB UCL Joint Strike Report

Wednesday morning 1st of Feb was a particularly early start for security guards at UCL. Their on-going campaign to be brought in house once again coincided with the UCU disputes, culminating in a shared day of strike action at the university. UCU and IWGB members stood together across the spine points and pay grades. There was a strong showing of security guards populating the picket lines, as IWGB members showed their determination to win their demands. The strikers are demanding to be brought in house and be directly employed by UCL, to receive fair pay in light of inflation, and for their union the IWGB to be recognised. Outsourcing is a predatory tactic of new public management that finds ways to seep into all aspects of the workplace. The use of Uni-temps at UCL is a clear example of the leap from facilities to academic work. These local disputes against outsourcing should be seen as inspiration. The IWGB is known for its fighting spirit and direct action, and this strike day showed that, with marches around the campus, loud music and public stunts. The strikers also showed ingenuity in their actions, bringing a demonstration to the offices of a magazine the provost edits, as well as his grace-and-favour address. These offer some inspiration for UCU. Let's find the pressure points of decision makers, and let's think about how to use our leverage.