

**Imperial College Union
Union Stance on UCU Industrial Action
Union Council / 22 November 2022**

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Union Notes

1. The University and College Union (UCU) represents “academics, lecturers, trainers, researchers and academic-related staff working in further and higher education throughout the UK”.¹
2. UCU commenced industrial action in February 2018, and industrial action was suspended in April 2018 following a ballot of UCU members to accept the Universities UK (UUK) proposal on pensions.
3. The February 2018 industrial action was supported by Imperial College Union following a vote by Union Council.²³
4. Imperial UCU commenced strike action in February 2020, which ceased in March 2020.
5. The February 2020 industrial action was supported by the Union following a vote by Union Council.⁴⁵
6. Imperial UCU commenced strike action in December 2021. This was accompanied by Action Short of Strike which lasted “from 1 December until no later than 3 May 2022”.⁶
7. A referendum was called by the 2021-22 Union President on the question “Should Imperial College Union support the strike action due to be carried out by the UCU during the 2021/22 academic year?”.⁷
8. 73.4% of the 2502 students who voted were in favour of strike action, and therefore the Union supported the UCU strikes.
9. UCU will be striking at 150 universities on Thursday 24 November, Friday 25 November, and Wednesday 30 November.⁸
10. Action Short of Strike (ASOS) will begin from Wednesday 23 November. This will include working to rule, refusing to make up work lost due to strike action, refusing to cover for absent colleagues, and the removal of teaching materials related to lectures cancelled due to strike action. This does not yet include a marking boycott.
11. UCU General Secretary, Jo Grady, has indicated that there will be a marking boycott from January, and escalated action from February if a settlement is not negotiated by

¹ <https://ucu.imperial.ac.uk/about-imperial-college-ucu>

² https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4499

³ https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4227

⁴ https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/19-20/Union_Council/file/5891

⁵ https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/19-20/Union_Council/file/5925

⁶ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/pay-and-pensions/pensions/uss/industrial-action-staff/>

⁷ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/blogs/president/union-president-referendum>

⁸ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/12609/Biggest-ever-university-strikes-set-to-hit-UK-campuses-over-pay-conditions--pensions>

12. The Unite and Unison unions represent professional, technical, and operational staff at the College, and together with Imperial UCU negotiate with the College as the Joint Trade Unions (JTU).
13. Imperial Unite has also achieved a mandate to take industrial action on the College's Annual Pay Award and will be striking on Wednesday 30 November.
14. Imperial Unison has taken steps to ballot their members on whether to take industrial action regarding the College's Annual Pay Award. The closing date for this ballot will be Wednesday 30 November. The Officer Trustee team and the College believe that this will likely result in a mandate to take industrial action.
15. Imperial College Union support for UCU on the USS dispute has previously involved:⁹
 - The Union President writing to the Provost to encourage the College to support the UCU position and exert pressure nationally in favour of the position.
 - Elected representatives mandated to support the UCU position in College meetings if the issue is raised.
 - Union officers encouraged to distribute materials regarding the strike, UCU's position, and visibly support the UCU.
 - Union representatives mandated to call on faculties and departments to ensure that disruption to coursework and exams taking place during industrial action is minimised.
 - Providing space in the Union building for striking staff to meet, hold events, and store materials.
16. The College has indicated that its position on pensions is unlikely to change, and "strongly advocate for reforms to USS to secure a fairer, more sustainable and affordable scheme for all members".
17. The College has committed to delivering all learning outcomes. Any untaught content will not be assessed; however, this does rely on staff checking that any assessments that have already been written have untaught content removed.
18. The College will likely not be withholding pay from staff who undertake ASOS.
19. A marking boycott would likely result in pay being withheld from staff. This is due to the level of disruption and impact, particularly during a cost-of-living crisis, that this would have on the progression and completion of students.
20. The College is proposing that any pay which is withheld from staff due to industrial action will go directly into the Student Hardship Fund unless a department requests for to retain this money. In previous years, any withheld funds have gone directly to supporting the student experience.
21. Membership of the UCU varies across different departments; hence, the impact of industrial action will not be the same across each department. Furthermore, not all UCU members will go on strike.

Union Believes

1. Students will have a better university experience if staff feel they are fairly compensated.
2. All College employees deserve a fair salary and fair pensions.
3. The USS pension scheme is one of the most generous pension schemes in the UK, however the pensions value has been eroded over time. In recent years, pensions for teachers, local government, and the NHS have become more generous in comparison. The UCU claims that the average union member will lose 35% of their

⁹ https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/21-22/Union_Council/file/6899

future retirement income.¹⁰

4. People have the right to undertake industrial action.
5. Industrial action will likely be detrimental to students, as this means they may not be taught all module content. The College's mitigations for the last set of strikes may be found here:
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:dKKAe4_hAJEJ:https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/human-resources/pay-and-pensions/pensions/uss/industrial-action-students/&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk
6. The College may not be able to deliver all its learning outcomes due to industrial action.
7. Should a marking boycott take place, this may affect the ability of students to progress or graduate, and therefore could be significantly detrimental to students.

Union Resolves

1. To support/not support Imperial UCU's strike action this November.
2. To support/not support Imperial Unite's strike action this November.
3. To not support a marking boycott, should this take place from January.

¹⁰ <https://inews.co.uk/news/education/university-strike-dates-when-ucu-strikes-planned-november-2022-how-many-universities-1959621>