



UCU at Queen's to join biggest ever UK university strikes (January 30th, 2023)

UCU (University College Union) members from Queen's University Belfast will participate in the first of 18 days of strike action this week. This is after national UCU negotiators rejected two pay offers that were well below the current inflation rate. The offers were made by the employers' representative, UCEA (University and Colleges Employers Association).

The strike will be the biggest ever higher education sector strikes and follows UCU's successful national aggregated ballot. This means that on Wednesday February 1st, 150 UCU branches UK-wide will strike. In numerous campuses, other unions, representing other staff categories, will also take part. At Queen's, UCU will be joined on the picket lines by colleagues from UNITE.

Staff pay in UK universities has fallen by an average 25% since 2010, and staff retirement income was cut by an average 35% in 2022. In addition to demands on pay and pensions, UCU is also striking over workloads, casualisation of the university sector, and gender, race, and disability pay gaps.

Sean O'Connell, President of the Queen's UCU branch, said: "Years of real terms cuts to staff pay combined with the current cost-of-living crisis are a serious problem for our members. Employers have also yet to offer anything to resolve the sector-wide crisis in staff working conditions, precarious employment practices, and pay gaps, all of which directly affect the student experience. Staff working conditions are students' learning conditions, and staff are striking as a last resort. This strike is about much more than current grievances: we are striking for future generations of staff and students. UCU at QUB hopes that strike action will lead to a real improvement in staff pay and conditions, including for casualised student workers. We have over 100 members who work on casual teaching contracts for the university while pursuing their PhD research. QUB Student Council passed a motion last week supporting the UCU strike action, and UCU at QUB is grateful for student support."

The Queen's University Belfast branch of the University and College Union (UCU) represents 1,100 members from a wide range of university staff, including postgraduate teaching assistants, demonstrators, professional services and academic-related staff, along with lecturers.

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