

# UCU Strike

25<sup>th</sup> November – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019  
(Week 10 and part of Week 11)

# What is a trade union?

- UCU, the Universities and Colleges Union, is a British **Trade Union**
- Trade unions are groups of workers who come together to represent their interests in the workplace. Union members work collectively to:
  - Improve pay and conditions in the workplace
  - Build campaigns around big issues like right to holidays, secure contracts and the minimum wage
  - Represent and support each other when a member has a problem at work
- Unions have existed in Britain since the 1700s. It's largely because of trade unions that we have
  - Weekends
  - Equal pay for men and women



# What is a strike?

- A strike occurs when members of a trade union agree that their working conditions are unacceptable, and they collectively refuse to work – this is the last resort and occurs when negotiations break down!
  - Strikes are legal and regulated under the law.
  - Striking workers are not paid when they are on strike
- Members who are striking will gather outside their workplaces to protest – this protest is called a ‘picket line’

# What's this strike about?



We want universities to:

1. Address **precarious contracts**
2. Eliminate the **gender pay gap**
3. Address excessive **workloads**
4. Provide a **pay increase** across all grades (from cleaner to lecturer), to bring pay in line with inflation
  - There has been a fall in pay of nearly 20% in real terms over the last 10 years
5. Support affordable **good pensions for all**
  - In 2018 tens of thousands of staff were on strike to prevent the worsening of the pension scheme (USS). This would have involved individual losses of as much as £240,000. The strike ended when universities agreed to have an independent review of the pension scheme and propose a response in good faith. The review provided evidence that there is a solution, but universities have ignored this and pushed through a proposal that worsens our pensions.

# Insecurity and Casualisation

## Nationally:

- Universities are the second most casualised sector of the economy (after hospitality)
- 51% of university staff are on insecure contracts – including lecturers and support staff. This produces:
  - Increased stress
  - Difficulty with: affording rent, paying bills
- Insecurity is unequally distributed across gender, race and disability
  - Men hold 27% *more* open-ended (secure) contracts than women

## At City:

- City won't admit exactly how many staff are precariously employed
- A lot of your seminars and lectures are taught by people on hourly paid, zero-hour or short-term contracts, with no job security
- Staff on these type of contracts are sometimes not paid for months after performing work

# Inequality and Workload

- Across universities, BAME academic staff earn 12-13% less than white colleagues of the same gender and experience, and the gender pay gap is significant.
- **The gender pay gap at City is 14.7%** (as of 2018 report). This is *worse* than the national HE average.
- Many academic staff work over 50 hours per week. Compared to a 'standard' working week, that's 12 hours unpaid overtime per week.
- In a 2016 UCU national survey, 83% of academics reported the pace of work had increased over the past three years.
- Over 25% of all respondents stated that their workload was unmanageable

# What will the strike mean for you?



- Lectures, seminars, labs and classes may be cancelled, as may other appointments or meetings involving university staff.

# Why should I support the strike?

- Today's students are tomorrow's lecturers!
- You are paying £1000s, while insecure employment, intolerable workloads, unequal pay, and uncertain futures threaten the quality of the education you receive and higher education as we know it.
- The union is fighting back on behalf of students and staff alike, to build a better and fairer university for everyone.





# What do Students Reps say?



**The National Union of Students (NUS) has said that it stands shoulder to shoulder with UCU and asks students to:**

1. Call for higher education employers to recognise the seriousness of the situation, agree to reopen negotiations on casualisation, workload and pay inequality and put pressure on USS to implement all of the recommendations of the JEP
2. Write to their institution head to raise concerns about the impact such disputes will have on their learning.
3. Participate in local demonstrative solidarity action, both during the disputes and the likely strikes, in support of UCU members.

**Joint statement:** [www.ucu.org.uk/UCU-NUS-jointstatement](http://www.ucu.org.uk/UCU-NUS-jointstatement) **and video:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOQw3ishKAY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOQw3ishKAY)

# How can I show my support?

- Respect the strike and join us on the picket-lines in front of the University every morning.
- Join our rallies – every day, 12:30pm on Northampton Square
- Write to the City President to tell him that you back your lecturers and other university staff in seeking fair working conditions
  - [Paul.Curran@city.ac.uk](mailto:Paul.Curran@city.ac.uk)
- Come to our teach-outs and events (more info to follow)
- Stay informed – and inform others
  - [www.cityucu.org.uk](http://www.cityucu.org.uk)
  - @cityucu or @ucu on twitter

