

# Q & A

## FOR STUDENTS: INDUSTRIAL ACTION

### WHAT'S GOING ON ?

Difficult economic conditions mean the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension scheme must address significant funding challenges: there's a £6.1 billion deficit, which coupled with a one-third increase in the cost of future pension benefits means it would cost an additional £1 billion annually to afford the current benefits. Without changes, universities could struggle to pay staff pensions in the future without diverting money from teaching towards pensions, putting jobs at risk and damaging the quality of education.

To avoid this, universities have proposed changes to make the scheme secure and sustainable. Staff pensions would remain attractive. Employers will be paying in 18% of salaries into pensions – double the private sector average.

Employers and the University and College Union (UCU) have been discussing the issue for the past year, but a legal deadline (30 June) means reform proposals must be put in place. UCU is unhappy with the proposed reforms but has been unable to offer a viable alternative to deal with the significant funding challenges facing USS, and has a mandate for strike action in 61 institutions.

VISIT [UUK'S WEBSITE](#)  
FOR MORE  
INFORMATION

### WHEN WILL THE STRIKES HAPPEN AND HOW LONG FOR ?

Strikes are due to begin on Thursday 22 February over the course of 4 weeks:

- WEEK 1: THURSDAY 22 – FRIDAY 23 FEBRUARY (2 DAYS)
- WEEK 2: MONDAY 26 – WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY (3 DAYS)
- WEEK 3: MONDAY 5 – THURSDAY 8 MARCH (4 DAYS)
- WEEK 4: MONDAY 12 – FRIDAY 16 MARCH (5 DAYS)

PLEASE CHECK YOUR  
UNIVERSITY AND FACULTY  
WEBSITE FOR  
SPECIFIC DETAILS ON HOW  
THIS ACTION MIGHT AFFECT  
YOUR TIMETABLE

The exceptions to this timetable are:

- King's College London
- Queen Mary University of London
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Stirling

These universities will start their action in week 2, and will strike for a further 2 days on Monday 19 to Tuesday 20 March.

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**I MAY BE MISSING KEY PARTS OF MY COURSE DUE TO THE STRIKES, WILL THIS AFFECT HOW I AM ASSESSED ?**

Institutions are proactively seeking to minimise the risk to students over the strikes, however due to the size and nature of the industrial action, it is difficult to give advice to all students on the issue. We recommend checking your university and faculty website to better understand what their policy is. Although you may be worried over how the strikes will affect how you are assessed, institutions have policies and procedures in place to mitigate any risk to your performance and achievement from this industrial action.

**I'M AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT, WILL THIS STRIKE ACTION IMPACT ON MY VISA STATUS ?**

The strike action should not negatively impact your visa status. The strike action may result in the cancellation of some of the expected contact points your university uses to check your attendance. If expected contacts such as lectures do not happen due to the strike action, then this is through no fault of your own. Your institution will log this so it doesn't count against you. You should contact your institution to confirm that they will be recording the strike action and attendance appropriately.

**CAN I JOIN THE STRIKE ACTION ?**

No, a union can only call on its own members to withdraw their labour and only at a university where they have achieved a lawful result in a statutory ballot. This is currently the case in 61 universities.