

UCU Ballot on Pay and Equality: 32% of KU UCU members participate in the vote.

UCU National Strike Action

A total of 55 post- and pre-1992 Higher Education Institutions voted for industrial action in the recent national ballot on pay and conditions.

Overall turnout was 49% with a “yes” vote of 74%. Strike action will begin on Monday 25th November until Wednesday 4th December.

Support our colleagues by sending messages of solidarity and support to the affected branches.

Re-assessment Timetable moving?

Colleagues may be aware that the university is currently investigating moving the re-assessment period for students in the summer. Apparently a firm decision has not yet been made but the proposals are well advanced.

The possible options (there are 4) involve the re-assessment period starting as early as 5th – 16th July in 2021 to as late as 2nd – 13th August. The current re-assessment period is scheduled for 16th – 27th August in 2021.

UCU fear that, as usual, such a change will be imposed on staff without proper consultation.

UCU firmly believe that this change will have major impact on academic and administrative staff and on students. We are insistent that any proposal should

be sent out to all staff and students for consultation before any final decision is taken.

There are many implications of the proposed new dates, but our greatest concerns are sustained workload pressure and the impact on the ability of staff to use their full annual leave entitlement. For example, those with school age children may find their window for family holiday time severely restricted. Non UK national colleagues may find themselves unable to achieve a reasonable period to visit family and friends overseas. Members may find themselves having to negotiate with line managers to be absent for periods when formal university business is ongoing. UCU has no confidence that all line managers will respect the need for members to take holiday at a time that suits their individual circumstances.

We are also concerned about the impact on students’ ability to use the summer period to work, as many of our students find this period is their only way to financially sustain their studies. The changes may have a negative impact on students’ ability to balance work, study and holiday during the summer break.

Contact us with your views on these changes. We will represent our members’ views to management.

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Academic Domains

UCU representatives have entered into much discussion with the university around the topic of Academic Domains project. We have consistently expressed the view that while the processes look fine on paper, implementation by individual line managers will always be a problem. To no-one's surprise murmurs of discontent have begun to emanate from individual departments. In some parts of the university colleagues are being asked to present themselves with their CVs at a meeting with School Directors of T&L, despite these individuals having no line management responsibilities. The fear is that at these meetings colleagues will be interrogated about their Academic Domain inputs into Unified. The reasoning behind these meetings and what might flow from them is currently not clear. Additionally, a worrying announcement has appeared recently on Staffspace

https://kingstonuniversity.sharepoint.com/sites/staffspace/news/Pages/Staff-profile-web-pages.aspx?utm_source=Kingston%20University&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11059300_12%20November%20round-up%20-%20academics&dm_i=47U,6L1ES,PE4PTK,Q6ZNB,1

This suggests that domains will be linked to other procedures including appraisals – this was NOT what UCU signed up to!

If you are affected by these developments we would urge you to clarify the nature and purpose of such a meeting via your line managers and ask for an explanation of the possible outcomes arising

Compulsory Redundancies in KSA?

At time of publication of this newsletter the Sword of Damocles, in the form of compulsory redundancies, is still poised above colleagues in a number of KSA areas (Schools of ArCC & CSCI). After a round of Voluntary Severance (VS) less than half of the savings stated as being necessary have been achieved. At the moment a Portfolio Review is being conducted across the whole of KSA with several courses currently suspended. Colleagues are understandably fearful that a number of further redundancies will be announced in the near future. Quite apart from the stress levels being experienced by the affected colleagues, the process of VS and now possibly compulsory redundancies

has been prolonged and highly unsatisfactory due to poor communication from senior management. The experience of Kingston UCU representatives of previous rounds of compulsory redundancy (in Politics for example) makes us very nervous about possible developments in KSA.

UCU strongly opposes compulsory redundancies.

Your UCU Branch Committee will be fighting on your behalf to minimise any job losses arising from the maladministration of the university over a number of years by members of SLT and inaction by the Board of Governors.

Lecture Capture

Official audio recording of lectures is being piloted in Psychology, despite the opposition of staff in that Department. Concerns have been raised about copyright protection, safeguarding of students and staff, privacy, extra workload, and the lack of training - but there has been no opportunity to consult on these issues prior to the pilot being launched. The union recognises that individual students with disabilities and specific learning differences may need to record lectures. However, this is very different from recordings of lectures being held and administered by the University.

Recording would be processing personal data and this must be done fairly, by consent, and in accordance with data protection legislation. In line with best teaching practice many lectures at Kingston involve active student participation, and the impact of lecture recording on students' willingness to interact need to be considered (and their permission to being recorded would be required). For staff who are also practitioners, what are the copyright implications where they use their own work in lectures? What assurances do we have this will not be used for performance evaluation? How do we know recordings won't end up publically accessible online? All these questions need to be addressed, and at least staff involvement in the pilot should be on a voluntary basis. Contact us with your opinion.

Departmental Rep ? –Interested ? Contact your branch representatives.

YOU are the Union. We are stronger when we all work together.