

Kingston UCU members going back on strike: Strike action scheduled for February 21, 22, 28 and March 1, 2.

After our incredibly successful three days of strike action before Christmas, the Kingston University branch of the University and College Union has been mandated by UCU nationally to undertake more strike action in an attempt to force our employers back to the negotiating table.

These strike days will be on 21st, 22nd February (Monday and Tuesday), 28th of February and 1st and 2nd March, 2022 (Monday to Wednesday).

Apart from these designated days of all out strike we will also be continuing our Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) [more on p. 2]. Don't forget to download the template from ucu.org.uk to show your line managers how inadequate a 37 hour week is for all the activities the average academic undertakes – thereby contributing tens of thousands of hours of free labour over the lifetime of an academic career.

Universities only survive by taking advantage of your goodwill and in return what do we get? Pay cuts, damaging workloads, casualisation and the ongoing scandal of pay gaps amongst different demographics of our colleagues.

The current situation is increasingly untenable and unsustainable. Crippling workloads cause stress and

damage our wellbeing. Despite this obvious fact the university demands ever more work from us. We cannot go on. So, we urge everyone to play an active role on the picket lines in the strike days ahead.

Previous experience has shown such days to be joyous, colourful and vibrant events engendering positive emotions of empowerment and inclusivity. The picket line also gave us opportunities to talk to students who uniformly reacted very positively to our message. Such expressions of solidarity from the picket line have recently been manifest in the overwhelming vote of student support for our strike action through the referendum held by UKS. Here 82% of over a thousand students participating said they supported staff strike action [more on p. 2].

Taken together with our branch's fantastic strike vote, one of the best in the UK for our type of institution, this student vote sends a very powerful message to university managers. They need to engage with UCEA, the employers association, to tell them about the strong voice emanating from both the academic and student bodies.

This dispute needs to be resolved and they know what they need to do – the right thing, the moral thing, the decent thing.



How you can take part:

- * Sign up to a picket line slot - signup.com. We ask that members sign up to at least two slots over the 5 days of strike action.
- * Organise a teach-out session. [Contact us](#) and/or post ideas and find collaborators on the discussion list [UCUKINGSTONDISCUSSION](#)

If you can't attend on-campus:

- * Observe and support the digital picket. Assemble on Zoom each day at 10am (link on our [linktree](#)).
- * Follow, share and post on [twitter](#) and [instagram](#) @kingstonucu. Download [posters & graphics here](#) and share a photo. Submit your [Why I'm Striking story](#) anonymously here for us to share on social media.

Please remember **you are under no obligation to inform management in advance that you are taking strike action.**

Members can **claim strike pay from the UCU Fighting Fund.**

Those in particular need, e.g. HPLs, can get priority of payment.

Statement on Non-Disclosure Agreements

Kingston UCU continues to have serious concerns about the university's commitment to gender equality. In response to the national campaign to end the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in cases of gender-based violence we have made the following statement.

Kingston's Vice Chancellor should sign the [pledge](#) to end the use of NDAs to silence complainants and protect perpetrators. But that alone is not enough. Kingston University needs to commit, within an agreed timeframe, to putting resources towards developing better report and support complaints procedures, and robust policies around harassment and gender-based violence, in genuine consultation with all the campus unions and based on best practice in the sector. They should be proactively seeking input from survivors and organisations like [1752 Group](#), drawing on survivor-led and co-produced research in alignment with the Survivors' Voices Charter.

UCU's December report [Eradicating Sexual Violence In Tertiary Education](#) found sexual

violence is endemic in UK universities and disproportionately prevalent against groups marginalised by employment status or protected characteristics. .

Staff on non-permanent contracts were 1.3 times as likely to experience direct sexual violence than those in permanent roles, and sexual violence was also disproportionately prevalent against postgraduate researchers. The report also found that staff in racialised minorities as well as disabled staff, trans and nonbinary staff, and staff who have a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, are all at significantly greater risk of sexual violence. There needs to be a recognition that casualisation exacerbates gender-based violence, with much more proactive steps to minimise the use of insecure contracts, and an intersectional, survivor-centred approach taken.

UCU runs a sexual harassment helpline for members **0800 138 8724**. [Further information about support organisations](#) is also available on our website.



UKS Referendum:

Kingston students vote 82% to support UCU strike

An overwhelming majority of students who participated in the [Union of Kingston Students referendum](#) on whether to support our strike have voted yes. While a minimum turnout of 500 was to be valid, a whopping 1,286 students participated, making this a historic vote.

This was achieved through the hard work of the Vote Yes campaign run by students, including our new Postgraduate Rep Nicola Field, as well as several PhD students including Daisy du Toit and Sophie Pousette - putting together a motion, making posters and flyers, and canvassing support on campus and on social media.

Kingston UCU are proud to stand in solidarity with students fighting for better working and learning conditions. We welcome them to our pickets, to join and run teachouts - together we can make a fairer, more inclusive education system.

Action Short of a Strike (ASOS)

Alongside strike action, we are still undertaking ASOS. Currently, this includes: working to contract, not covering for absent colleagues, not rescheduling classes cancelled due to strike action, and not undertaking voluntary duties. For information about how to manage ASOS see the [ASOS FAQs](#) on our website.

Some universities like Queen Mary, Bristol, Newcastle, Birmingham and Durham have stated that actions like not rescheduling classes cancelled due to strikes and not sharing materials related to those classes constitute partial performance and are threatening 25% - 100% pay deductions. While some aspects of our ASOS can be interpreted as breach of contract, the [legality of this scale of deduction is questionable](#). 100% deductions would be effectively forcing a lock-out. With this antagonistic approach employers are escalating the dispute - UCU branches affected are considering increasing the number of days they go on strike in response.

Kingston University has reserved its right to make up to 100% pay deductions for partial performance but has said nothing further - we will keep members updated. N.B. You are not required to notify your employer in advance what action short of a strike you are taking.

LECTURE CAPTURE: KU policy in the pipeline.

The university has produced a new draft policy on the capture of video and audio for learning and teaching which is under discussion with UCU. This follows a [petition by the Union of Kingston Students](#) calling for mandatory recording and live streaming of lectures. The policy currently only covers recording of live classes. We welcome some aspects, such as that recordings would not be used in performance review or disciplinary procedures without consent, wouldn't be used to cover for staff on strike, and that recording will be optional.

However, there are clear troubling guidelines in the document which require close attention and discussion, and we are willing to hear from members what your concerns are. At the moment, this is not a document that can be circulated, but we can indicate that reasonable concerns include: a lack of clarity regarding ownership of recorded material; the length of time materials of staff who leave Kingston University will be retained and processes for deletion; a seeming lack of training and investment in recording software and tech support, and an apparent lack of

robust guidance on misuse of recordings. A major concern is the workload implications of this policy in terms of staff time needed to review and edit audio and video files for upload, and check and amend transcripts.

We will request the university time for us to provide formal feedback regarding the planned policies. We recommend members discuss the implications of lecture capture in their departments and courses and feed this back to the [branch committee](#). [Contact Us](#).

**Kingston
University**
London



Kingston University and St George's split: Still awaiting consultation

Kingston University and St George's University of London are parting ways, and the current partnership arrangement that jointly runs the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education will come to an end. The aim is to dissolve the Faculty and reconfigure academic structures and operations in both institutions by August 2022. According to Kingston, consultation about the proposals is expected February 2022.

Among other decisions, the proposal includes a new Faculty at KU, comprising the School of Nursing, School of Education, Midwifery and Social Work, School of Life Sciences, Pharmacy and Chemistry; changes to the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Computing, which will be made up of two schools, engineering and computing; the Centre for Allied Health becoming part of St George's Institute of Medical and Biomedical Education (IMBE).

We see these changes as possibly having a serious impact on academic staff and support services in the various areas affected by these plans. While the university claims that feedback from staff in all areas directly impacted, together with trade union colleagues and our wider Kingston and St George's university communities, will be welcome for the success of the project, and UCU reassured of no job losses (actually, the prospect of more job opportunities was relayed to us by HR in a recent meeting), we feel that these plans will have a serious impact in the working environment and job performance of our colleagues in these areas. If you are concerned about these changes, do not hesitate to [get in touch](#).

UCU has implemented a [global boycott of Goldsmiths University](#) over plans to sack 52 staff using 'rank and yank' tactics as part of a deal with Lloyds and Natwest. Members should not participate in events or conferences with or involving Goldsmiths, or any new non-research based partnership, write for any journals edited there or accept contracts as external examiners. Goldsmiths UCU have been out on strike - [donate](#) to local hardship fund.

Kingston UCU bite-size

CASUALISATION - HPL conversion

Following continual efforts to push for the 'moratorium' to be lifted on HPL conversions, we have had feedback that a small number of staff have recently received invitations to apply for fractional permanent contracts. However, given the widespread use of casualised contracts across the University, many may still not have been contacted or had their working hours fairly reviewed for eligibility. HPLs who think they meet the criteria for conversion but have yet to receive word should raise a query with HR as soon as possible. Kingston UCU continues to press for the lifting of the moratorium to be officially announced and the existing HPL agreement updated to reflect this.

If you are on an hourly-paid or fixed term contract, the branch is here for you. [Contact](#) Anti-casualisation Rep Eliza Tan and join the private Slack chat group to help campaign on your rights, terms and conditions.

EQUALITIES Fighting racism in the workplace

Join a [panel discussion](#), with keynote Jason Arday, on identifying and challenging racism in the workplace 5pm Tuesday 22nd Feb as part of UCU's annual week of action.

Teacher's Pension Scheme (TPS)

Changes are being made to the TPS to remove the age discriminatory impact of the schemes' transitional protection arrangements. See [UCU update](#) and [TPS website](#) for further info.

PTS scheme workload issues

We have concerns about the workload implications of the Personal Tutor Scheme (PTS). Members are encouraged to let us know their experiences of the PTS and its impact on workload. [Contact Us](#).

New starters asked to complete dodgy health questionnaire

Have you ever had any illness?
Have you ever had suicidal thoughts?

These are just two of the immensely intrusive questions posed by the new Occupational Health questionnaire which has become a condition of employment for new starters at Kingston. Have you completed this questionnaire, how did it make you feel? UCU think that this mandatory questionnaire oversteps the boundaries of acceptability.

Please share your thoughts.
[Contact Us](#)

Academic Promotion

UCU are gravely concerned about the exploitation of staff under the Senior Academic promotions process at KU. In order to achieve promotion, staff must prove that they have already fulfilled the requirements of the role profile at a higher grade. This is wrong! Members should be paid fairly for the work they do. We want to hear your views and opinions on the promotion applications and progression procedures.

EQUALITIES LGBT+ History Month

Events [here](#) and resources [here](#). Union of Kingston Students also has a great programme lined up. On StaffSpace are Teams backgrounds, most featuring a washed-out pride flag like last year. Awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues should be a continuous action. It would be excellent to fly the Progress Pride Flag on Teams all year round and to have more than a bland click-through page to support student and staff events this month & every month.

Academic Related Staff

We are looking for someone to join the branch committee as Academic-Related Staff Rep to make sure the voices of members who are administrative, technical, and support staff are heard. [Contact us](#) if you are interested!



Your branch, your union!

In view of all these challenges it is crucial for Kingston UCU members to get involved. The branch is only as strong as the number of active members.. There are many ways to participate, and even small-scale actions make a difference:

- Come to branch meetings
- Sign up to the branch [discussion list](#) (personal email recommended)
- Be a departmental contact (see notice right)
- Become a [KU UCU Rep](#) ([training](#) and work time allocation available)
- Share your skills and time! Your help is needed with publicity, research, events organisation, education, design...
- Talk to colleagues in your department about branch activity, and encourage them to [join the union](#).

Departmental Contacts Needed!

To fight back together against attacks on jobs and conditions we need to ensure all members know what's going on across the university and can make their voices heard. Kingston UCU are looking for departmental contacts to: share branch publicity, feed local issues to the wider branch; and invite new staff to join. If interested, email kingstonucu@gmail.com and/or Comms Officer Maggie Gray.

Staying in touch

Email: kingstonucu@gmail.com
Website: kingston.web.ucu.org.uk
Twitter: [@kingstonucu](https://twitter.com/kingstonucu)
Instagram: [@kingstonucu](https://www.instagram.com/kingstonucu)

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