

## **Sent to all Leicester UCU members and supporters [Friday 2 March]**

### **AS NEGOTIATIONS RECOMMENCE, MAKE MONDAY MEMORABLE**

Each day there have been between 100 and 200 members picketing. This Monday we need to redouble our efforts to send a clear message to UUK that we are not just maintaining the pressure but increasing it. Let's make Monday another memorable day of protest. We urge all members to join our pickets anytime between 7.30 and 11.00. If you don't have a prearranged picketing location, then come to Entrance 2 (Mayor's Walk). Plus, join our march to rally outside Fielding Johnson at 11.00. Assemble from 10.45 at Entrance 2 (Mayor's Walk)

### **Shakespeare on the picket line**

There have been two quotes from Shakespeare on our picket banner and both, naturally, are from Richard III. These are, 'Strike, I say, strike!' and 'This is the winter of our discontent'. For this week, we suggest a slight detour to borrow a line from Henry V, 'Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more!' #shakespearsolidarity

### **ACTION SHORT OF A STRIKE GUIDANCE**

#### **How to refuse (nicely!) to volunteer**

If you are asked to undertake a voluntary duty we suggest using the following standard worded reply (copying in [ucu@uculeicester.org.uk](mailto:ucu@uculeicester.org.uk)) to decline:

Thank you for your email. As a member of UCU I am currently working to contract as part of action short of a strike (ASOS) and following UCU advice. As xxxxxxxx is an additional voluntary activity that is not part of my usual contractual duties I will not be performing it. Please be advised that in line with UCU's action short of a strike, I am continuing to undertake my normal contractual duties.

If you are unsure whether a duty is voluntary, please contact us at [ucu@uculeicester.org.uk](mailto:ucu@uculeicester.org.uk) for advice. The answer will depend on the role/s you hold; plus, custom and practice in your dept. For example, attendance at an open or visit day is a voluntary activity for most of us but for those whose role/s covers admissions, careers or widening participation this may not be the case. However, as a general guide those activities that are can be deemed as voluntary for most members are as follows:

- Invigilation
- Open days and visit days (especially on Saturdays!)
- Attending university organised ad hoc meetings and events
- Ad hoc meeting attendance
- Requests from university and other sections to help, offer advice, etc.
- Covering for absent colleagues
- Graduation ceremonies
- Organising and participating in anything extra that the university asks of you

## **What to do if you cannot meet a deadline in normal contractual working hours**

As ASOS means working no more than our contracted 37.5 hours per week and from 9.00 till 5.30 per day (incl. one-hour lunch) you will need to inform your line manager and/or professional services colleagues that you are unlikely to be able to meet usual deadlines, such as for marking. This is especially so during the current short periods of work-days between blocks of strike-days. We therefore recommend that you write using the following form of wording if you are unable to meet a marking deadline:

Thank you for your email. As a member of UCU I am currently working to contract as part of action short of a strike (ASOS) and following UCU advice. This means that I am only working my contractual 37.5 hours per week and from 9.00 to 5.30 each day (incl. of one-hour lunch). Therefore, I will mark what assignments I can within those hours and then stop

If you have conflicting deadlines, where you only be able to meet one or some within your working-day then you should write your line manager as follows, asking them to advise on which duties you should prioritise:

Thank you for your email. As a member of UCU I am currently working to contract as part of action short of a strike (ASOS) and following UCU advice. This means that I am only working my contractual 37.5 hours per week and from 9.00 to 5.30 each day (incl. of one-hour lunch). Consequently, I am unable to complete the following duties within my working hours xxxxxx Please advise on which of these you wish me to prioritise.

## **Don't mitigate the impact of strikes on assessment and teaching**

Not 'rescheduling' classes also means we should not make local departmental and school arrangements to mitigate the impact of the strikes on assessment content and types (e.g. don't rewrite exam papers or other assessments to mitigate what has not been taught). Any consequences of this kind should be passed on to our line managers and/or the higher echelons of the university responsible for learning, teaching and quality issues who will have to dig deep to apply their aegrotat powers for student progression and award.

## **UCU FAQs on ASOS**

### **What does working to contract mean?**

Working to contract means abiding strictly by the terms of your contract of employment such as where they or other formal documents relating to your employment specify your hours of work; breaks; workload; or other matters.

### **What does refusing to provide cover for absent colleagues mean?**

This means that unless your job is wholly or predominantly about covering for other staff, you should refuse to provide cover. An example of this might be where a colleague is unwell and you are asked to take on their teaching or other work.

## **What does refusing to reschedule lectures or classes cancelled due to strike action mean?**

This includes any scheduled teaching activity which would have taken place on one of UCU's strike days and applies to all UCU members not just those directly responsible for the relevant lecture or class. You should refuse to reschedule this activity when asked stating in response that you are supporting UCU's action short of a strike. You should also not share materials that would have been covered in a lecture or class cancelled due to the strike.

## **What should I do if I have already rescheduled strike hit classes or if someone else such as my head of department has already rescheduled them?**

Once the action has started you should not teach rescheduled classes whoever has rescheduled them.

## **What does refusing to undertake any voluntary activity mean?**

Not undertaking any voluntary activity means that where you have a choice as to whether you undertake some work, you should not do it. Contracts differ but, for example, weekend working is voluntary for some staff. In some departments, certain roles are also voluntary.

If you are in any doubt about what you are required to do under your contract, check your contractual documents which may include your offer letter, statement of main terms and conditions and any staff handbook and talk to your UCU representative.

## **Does participating in action short of a strike mean I can do what I like?**

Taking action short of a strike does not mean that you can refuse a reasonable request from your employer to undertake something, except those matters (working to contract, not covering absent colleagues, not rescheduling classes lost to the strikes, and not undertaking voluntary duties) which are specified parts of the action. How reasonable any request is will depend on the terms of your contract and custom and practice. If in doubt or if your actions are challenged by someone senior to you, temporarily suspend your action and contact your branch who will seek further advice.