

To prevent harming staff morale and the institution's reputation

MPs and councillors urge University of Leicester executives to scrap lay-offs

The management's stubbornness risks students getting unfair grades and the University losing huge amounts in Employment Tribunals

"The top executives of the University view themselves as passers-by", said a Leicester UCU activist, as the Union branch is continuing its marking boycott and other Action Short Of Strike after completion of a three-day strike on 9, 10 and 11 June. "They are making moves now that will harm the University in the future, both financially and in terms of reputation. They may do the 'dirty job' and then look for another well-paid post elsewhere, as we have seen happening in the recent past. On the contrary, we, the staff, have invested in building a career and a life in Leicester. We view the University as our community, our 'home'. We are not the University."

The third day of the strike, Friday 11 June, was dedicated to academic freedom and was full of solidarity messages. Leicester MPs **Jonathan Ashworth** and **Claudia Webbe** joined the picket line and stated their unrestrained support for the just cause of the strike. Leicester councillors **Dr Sue Barton** and **Lindsay Broadwell** did likewise. **Lee Barron**, Regional Trades Union Council (TUC) Midlands Secretary, and **Justine Mercer**, UCU Vice President for Higher Education, offered wholehearted support and wished success in the fight.

Touching messages, full of hope and solidarity were also heard during the online rally jointly organised by Leicester and Liverpool UCU branches, both on strike until last Friday. At the rally, attended by some 250 attendees from over 21 universities, there were appeals for coordinated national industrial action against redundancies. "When you come for one of us, you come for all of us", said UCU President **Vicky Blake**.

University staff that attended the picket line expressed their disappointment by the stubbornness exhibited by the management, as the latter is understood to be prepared to arbitrarily interpret, or even breach, University regulations concerning student assessment. It is understood that there are plans for lowering quoracy re-

quirements in examination panels and boards, as well as for circumventing the effects of industrial action by allocating marking to staff who are not familiar with the taught material, expectations from students and set criteria for specific assignments. Thus, potentially harming students, as such 'emergency' procedures **do not guarantee the fairness of the grades** that students may be given.

Furthermore, members of staff who have appealed against their redundancies expressed strong confidence that they will win in **Employment Tribunals**, which are **expected to cost large amounts to the University**, while also **damaging the managerial reputation of its Executive Board**. These moves make many staff have serious doubts about the long-term commitment of the University's top management to the institution. It is worth noting that **the management declined repeated requests for interviews** by the media, making obvious that they don't have anything sensible and convincing to say about their questionable plans.

Given all the above, as well as understanding that the management continue to be intransigent and refuse to constructively negotiate with UCU, the Union branch has no choice but to consider what further moves can lead to promoting its rightful and reasonable aims.



Jonathan Ashworth, Leicester South MP



Claudia Webbe, Leicester East MP

ALL BLAME THE MANAGEMENT



JON ASHWORTH
MP Leicester South
JUSTICE IS ON YOUR SIDE

I'm here to express my solidarity with you and send a message to the University to back down.

We want no compulsory redundancies, we want no attacks on academic staff who are speaking out on behalf of their colleagues. We want a

University that stands for academic excellence. But this proposal is leading to the opposite.

The behaviour we have recently seen has shocked me. I was shocked to see that there was no explanation about why the institution has to make these redundancies. Is it about finances? It may well be, as we know the government has refused to step in and put the investment in Higher Education that is needed in light of the crisis caused by the pandemic. But the University refused to tell us whether it is about finances or not.

I know that justice is on your side, so I will continue to do all I can to support jobs at the University, to support academic freedom, and ensure that the students and all the staff get the best deal possible.

CLAUDIA WEBBE
MP Leicester East
STAFF HAVE BUILT THIS UNIVERSITY'S REPUTATION

You are doing the right thing against the atrocity the University has chosen to commit.

It is appalling to behave like that to staff who have actually made the reputation of this University. This University has global reputation because of the way you all have built it off into the place it is holding today.

And I do not believe that it's acceptable to enforce redundancies during such a volatile economic climate. How is that humane? How is that caring? What message does that send, not only to Leicester but across the UK and across the globe? I strongly urge the University management to listen to UCU's reasonable demand and withdraw these compulsory redundancies.

Let's put an end to the uncertainty and anxiety they have caused not only to you, the staff, but to many students too. The management has the time to change, to respect its staff, to build this institution back to where it was - as a global leader, not downgrade what is needed to let this University continue to be a giant.



COORDINATED ACTION AGAINST REDUNDANCIES

On Friday 11 June 2021 a joint virtual solidarity rally was organized by Liverpool and Leicester UCU through the UCU Solidarity Movement.

The rally was a culmination of three weeks of strikes by colleagues at the University of Liverpool who are fighting against 28 compulsory redundancies in health sciences, and three days of strike action by staff at the University of Leicester who are fighting 26 compulsory redundancies across campus.

The rally was co-chaired by both institutes and was well attended by approximately 250 attendees from over 21 universities. As well as addresses by colleagues from both universities who are threatened by redundancies, we heard addresses by local Leicester MPs Claudia Webb and Jon Ashworth and a rousing address by UCU president Vicky Blake.

We also heard about other disputes in the sector at the University of Chester, amongst the Novus prison workers and in

STRIKE SOLIDARITY RALLY



UCU LEICESTER & UCU LIVERPOOL UNI

12 noon Friday 11th June

<http://bit.ly/StrikeSolidarityRally>



the 18 FE colleges who are balloting for industrial action, including City and Islington College.

There were calls for solidarity and support throughout the sector, with generous financial support offered to fighting funds. There were also appeals for coordinated national industrial action against redundancies. As **Vicky Blake** said *"when you come for one of us, you come for all of us"* - **solidarity!**

SOLIDARITY FROM ALL OVER

Leicester City Councillor **Dr Sue Barton** (upper left), a former academic, **Lindsay Broadwell** (upper right) the youngest City Councillor, **Lee Barron** (lower left), Regional Trades Union Council (TUC) Midlands Secretary, and **Justine Mercer** (lower right), UCU Vice President for Higher Education, all spoke warmly about our struggle, expressed their support and solidarity with University staff and urged the management to behave fairly and reasonably, starting with cancelling its decision for compulsory redundancies.



STRIKING COMMUNICATIONS

An essential requirement for any protest is to be noticed. There was quite a job, then, in our strike communications. ITV made our strike the leading story in its Midlands news bulletin, while several media published information from the Press Releases we sent and this newsletter that we issued.

Here, Cara Dobbing, our Comms Officer-elect is interviewed by BBC's Tim Parker, while below you get an idea from the 'making off' or 'behind the scenes' of our latest 'UCU in 2' video, which you can watch [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=FyZUrl34B8Y):

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