

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Special Issue 14th March

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank-and-file bulletin produced by academic workers.

Help us distribute!

There are 64 picket lines across the country. We want to be on all of them. Download the PDF from notesfrombelow.org and print some out.

Demonstrations/ meetings this week

Defend Education -
March for Pensions and
Pay, Wednesday, Malet
Street, Midday.

Break UUK- End the
Strike! University of
Sussex, Thursday, 1pm.

National rank and file
activist meeting (for all
branches), Friday,
Goldsmiths, the Venue,
the Student Union,
Dixon Road, 2pm.

Student-Worker
Solidarity Summit,
Sunday, UCL Institute of
Education, 11-6pm.



We Beat the Deal! #NoCapitulation

Today we go back to the picket lines following **the most impressive rank and file mobilisation in academic workers' history**. Together, we defeated a leadership sell out deal in less than 24 hours.

It was a victory made possible by the following self-organisation tactics: Demonstration at UCU HQ, overwhelming anti-deal votes at branch level, a huge (7k+) open letter against the deal, emails to HEC members and social media pressure.

By the time UCU was meeting yesterday morning to start discussing the deal, **50+ out of 64 striking branches had declared themselves unanimously or overwhelmingly against the deal**. National wildcat action was being discussed as a very serious possibility if UCU decided to suspend the strikes. Hundreds were outside UCU HQ expressing their anger and disbelief at the actions of the union (and being threatened by union officials with the police being called for their efforts).

The fact that the UCU leadership even thought there was a chance in hell of us quietly accepting a deal which some pensions experts said was actually worse than the initial UUK offer shows how out of touch they are with the experience of academic workers. Fortunately, this disconnection has coincided with a period of immense rank and file power. **We can, for the moment, set the direction of the union from the bottom up**. From now on, we have to hold the bureaucracy's feet to the fire every time they give the slightest indication of backing down.

Students, Keep up the Pressure!

At Sussex, the threat of a national demo has led to management calling a 100% shutdown of all planned teaching and the closure of all campus academic buildings on Thursday. This morning in Sheffield, students have managed to occupy the entire hi-rise arts tower. This shows students can have power in this dispute too.

UUK HQ has been shut a few times over the strike by sit-ins and hard pickets. This doesn't need to stop when the strikes stop! We need to regularly mobilise in Bloomsbury to maintain a disruptive picket.

Admin departments and buildings can be disrupted in order to further develop leverage against university managements. Keep up the occupations! Target high-leverage sites, where you cost the university a lot of money and hassle. We need VCs to be begging UUK to end the strike and allow campuses to return to normal.

Now We Strike to Win

Branch delegates voted for four weeks of further strike action starting immediately, but the UCU HEC only recommended 14 days more of Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) before the 14 days of strikes already approved for some point between April and June. The final decision will come next week. **Following an attempted sell out, the rank and file have shown we are in control. Now, we are only willing to negotiate a genuine victory.**

That means more action. **ASOS should continue every single day until we begin a second period of strikes.** Rather than just a vague April-June date range for 14 more strike days, **we need to push for an official announcement of a single date for the start of a indefinite strike, starting at the point of convergence of final exam periods.** It won't be nice to block our students' assessments, but our working conditions are their learning conditions, and this is the best leverage we've got.

As well as formal action, **we need to organise what we can ourselves.** The end of official strikes on Friday will give us an opening to do some deeper organising ahead of the second round of strikes. Staff-student assemblies with all on-campus workers and conversations with key off-campus people like Royal Mail, transport and delivery workers can begin to **develop the links that will be vital for the second round.** Raising wider demands as and when they fit also makes sense - for free education, against the TEF and REF, against Home Office monitoring and PREVENT, and so on..

Our Strength

The last four weeks have been a revelation. **We never knew how strong we were until we we started fighting.** This struggle has always been about more than pensions - since the start we've talked about this fight determining the future of collective bargaining and the balance of power in higher education. But we can now see that it's about even more than that. Lots of tears have been shed discussing how it has felt to see **the university transformed from an alienating, surveilled, divided workplace into a collective source of genuine class power.** Now we need to use that power to win - la lucha continua!