‘WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON?’

THE UCU ASOS - A GUIDE FOR COURSE REPS

Why is there disruption?

UCU members are taking action short of a strike. Around 450 staff voted for action – this doesn’t mean this many will be taking action short of a strike, it could be more and it could be less. It’s therefore hard to predict how significant the disruption will be.

Which staff are taking action short of a strike?

UCU represents lecturers, professional support services staff, librarians, and some students who teach. It is not likely that student services and the Library will be affected adversely, although there may be some disruption to services. It is the University’s responsibility to ensure that student services are operational throughout the action.

Is this the same as a strike?

No. Staff will be working, but they will only be working the exact amount of hours as detailed in their contracts. They will also only be carrying out tasks that are explicitly mentioned in their contracts, so they may not reply to your emails as quickly as they may have done, or cover ill colleagues’ lectures and/or seminars. They have agreed to prioritise work like marking of summatives during this period, but they may be unable to provide the same level of detailed guidance they usually give to individual queries.

How will ASOS affect my studies?

The University, working with the Students’ Union, has produced a mitigations policy. [This version](https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/notices/Strikemitigationspolicy15112019.pdf) has been sent to staff and might be handy for interested students. Students worried about individual academic issues should use our [Advice Service](https://www.durhamsu.com/advice-and-support) pages online, and can also contact our advisor using the form [here](https://durhamsu.ml/advice/eforms/advice-centre-intake-form/2/).

What’s the dispute about?

Treatment, [pay](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10409/Four-fights-one-voice-HE-strike-leaflet/pdf/he_four-fights-strike_flyer_nov19.pdf) and [pensions](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10368/USS-pensions-justice-strike-leaflet/pdf/ucu_he_uss-strike-flyer_nov19.pdf) of university staff. Many university staff perform duties outside those that they are contractually obliged to do, with no extra recognition or pay. By only fulfilling their contracted responsibilities in their contracted hours, staff want to show the university how much extra work they do to support the smooth operating of the university.

Who should students contact for more info?

Are you unclear on whether deadlines are still set or if you’re expected to cover missed material yourself?

Contact your Head of Department for more information about academic matters.

Are you concerned about disruptions to your work and deadlines, struggling to access university services, and need advice on an individual matter?

The SU [Advice Service](https://durhamsu.ml/advice/eforms/advice-centre-intake-form/2/) can support students impartially and independently. Our Advice Service can also signpost to loads of other services, so is a good place to start if you don’t know what support is available!

Are you unclear what services, like the Library, student support, you will be able to use?

It is the University’s responsibility to minimise disruption and make sure that vital services stay operational. They’ll be issuing guidance this week, and from then on, in relation to University services and teaching. We have asked that it is made clear what will remain open despite reduced service. In the first instance, check the [University webpages](https://www.dur.ac.uk/notices/strikeaction/students/), and then enquire through a member of college staff. Crucially, if you can’t get that information anywhere, let Kate, SU President, (su.president@durham.ac.uk) know.

Are you interested in supporting staff and learning more?

Contact the SU Officer team – if you want to find out more about supporting strike action: su.president@durham.ac.uk.

**We will also be sharing a video soon in which Sam, your Undergraduate Academic Officer, asks UCU students’ questions about Action Short of a Strike.**