

## Lecturers and uni staff in first UK-wide strike over pay

Thousands of lecturers and non-academic staff will go on strike over pay on the 31st October, after members of the University and College Union, Unite and Unison each voted for joint action over the coming weeks



By [Josiah Mortimer](#)

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Photo Credit: churchofpunk

The announcement follows a ballot of academic staff in the UCU – the union representing nearly 120,000 workers in colleges and universities – which saw 62% back strike action and 77% support action short of a strike in a long-running pay row that has led to increasing tensions between higher education workers and the Universities and College Employers Association, which represents university managements. It will be first ever UK-wide joint strike by university unions.

UCU representatives called the ballot after university bosses allegedly refused to budge on a 1% pay rise offer, and the industrial action will hit nearly all UK universities, including York, unless university employers' representatives agree to urgent talks.

Speaking to *Nouse*, Joanna de Groot, President of the University of York Branch of UCU, said: 'At a time when universities have healthy financial surpluses of around £1bn, and feel able to award senior staff substantial pay rises, their offer to the staff who deliver the core activities of universities leaves us with something like a 12-13% fall in our pay over the last four years.'

"Industrial disputes in universities are always challenging for university staff who are very committed to students, to colleagues and to the work they do; having received a mandate to take action we shall work with all our members to ensure they understand how important it is to support it." She noted that locally the union has good relations with Unison and Unite.

UCU head of higher education Michael MacNeil said: "Staff have suffered year-on-year cuts in the value of their pay. Quite simply, enough is enough. We urge the employers to reflect on the fact that they are about to face their first ever strike by three unions at the same time and come to the negotiating table to resolve this dispute."

"The suppression of academic pay is one of the most sustained pay cuts since the Second World War and, while strike action is always a last resort, the fact that staff are prepared to take this step demonstrates just how angry they are."

A former member of the UCU's National Executive, Doug Rouxel, told *Nouse*: "Ultimately, this industrial action is about protecting the Higher Education sector from a dangerous gamble being made by Vice Chancellors.

"The employer representatives must start negotiating with the unions on the claim, not dismissing it out of hand, as they have done so far."

A Unite union ballot of 20,000 non-academic staff at universities, including York, saw 64% also backing strike action. The staff include technicians, laboratory assistants, administrators and facilities' management staff. Unison members, also represented at York, voted for strike action by 54%. Solidarity action from students is expected after a statement of support was launched on Wednesday by the Student Assembly Against Austerity.

Speaking before the announcement, a University of York spokesperson said: "We have contingency plans in place in the event of industrial action, and will keep staff and students informed as and when we hear of any plans for action."

The pay campaign will include action short of a strike including slow-downs and an overtime ban.



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