

## York academics and lecturers to stage two day walk-out over pay dispute

Union calls proposed terms “an insult” as Vice Chancellor’s salary is revealed to be over 5 times higher than the average York wage

By Chris Owen and James Hall

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Image: Josiah Mortimer. University staff took part in industrial action after rejecting a 1% pay offer in February 2014

YUSU’s Academic Officer has urged that the concerns of striking academics be “taken seriously” as York lecturers schedule a two-day walk out over pay next week.

The University and College Union (UCU) is leading a national walk-out on the 25 and 26 May over the “insulting” pay rise of 1.1% offered by the higher education employer body UCEA (Universities and Colleges Employers’ Association). According to the Union, the average Vice Chancellor pay rise this year was 3%.

York’s UCU President Geoffrey Wall has issued a statement detailing that if university employment bosses refuse to get around the table and negotiate an agreement, further strikes may come, and academics may even boycott the marking of students’ work in the Autumn.

“If no agreement is reached in the coming weeks, members have agreed to target further strike action in June and July, and are considering additional action in August to coincide with the release of A-level results,” Wall stated.

“The union is also beginning preparations for a boycott of the setting and marking of students’ work, to begin in the autumn if an acceptable offer has still not been made.”

University management has urged striking staff to prioritise “essential work” such as marking and assessment to ensure that “commitments are met within expected timescales” and the impact on students kept to a minimum.

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The news of the strike co-incides with the publication of a [TES report](#) on Vice-Chancellor salaries, which shows that York's VC Koen Lamberts' salary of £270,920 is roughly 5.5 times more than the average University of York yearly wage of £49,611.

Nationally, Vice Chancellors earn on average 5.1 times more than their institution's average salary. General Secretary of the UCU Sally Hunt commented that the gap between staff and vice-chancellor salaries is growing annually and is now “embarrassingly large”.

“Members in higher education have sent a clear message to employers that, after six years of real-terms pay cuts amounting to 14.5%, they will not tolerate a continued squeeze on their income,” Hunt commented. “Industrial action which impacts on students is never taken lightly, but staff feel that they have been left with no alternative.”

Academic Officer Thomas Ron told Nouse it was “vital” that the concerns of academics were taken seriously. “I hope that the university and UCU return to the table and aim to sort out a solution that will be acceptable with minimal disruption to student life,” he commented.

David Duncan, Registrar & Secretary issued the following statement: “The University and College Union (UCU) has announced that its members have voted in favour of industrial action over pay (a two-day strike on 25 and 26 May and Action Short of a Strike in the form of ‘working to contract’, commencing on 25 May).

“The University would like both sides to return to the negotiating table to try to reach a settlement which avoids industrial action.

“We are committed to ensuring the impact on our students is kept to a minimum. We have advised staff that, if they are participating in industrial action, they should prioritise essential work such as marking and assessment, to ensure that commitments are met within expected timescales.

“We have also asked staff to let us know as early as possible if they are participating in industrial action.

“We will keep staff and students informed of developments as and when further information becomes available.”



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