

To: All staff
From: executive.communications@durham.ac.uk
Subject: Important industrial action update
Date: 19/05/22

Dear Colleagues,

I want to provide you with an update on potential industrial action at Durham University which you will be aware is continuing in respect of national disputes about pensions (USS) and pay and other local issues.

The University has received notice from UCU of a marking and assessment boycott, scheduled to start on Monday 23 May. While there is the possibility of further strike days, we do not yet have any confirmed dates.

As we detail below, the University and our campus Trade Unions have worked constructively together in recent weeks to discuss the many areas of common ground where we can take positive action around mutually agreed objectives.

The University has tabled an offer to our Trade Unions to try and end the dispute and avoid the marking and assessment boycott. Members of Durham UCU have decided that they will now vote on whether to accept the University's offer. That vote will run from Monday 16 – Friday 20 May, and if the offer is accepted, industrial action at Durham University in the current dispute will end. This will avoid the marking and assessment boycott and the threat of further strike action under the current mandate period (which runs to Oct 7 2022).

The University appreciates and understands the depth of anxiety from our students about the potential marking and assessment boycott. We also hear and acknowledge the concerns and frustration of our staff in relation to the national pension and pay disputes, as well as on a number of local issues.

Summary of the offer

We have worked hard with all the campus Trade Unions to develop an offer that comprises:

1. A joint statement on the USS pension
2. A set of proposals relating to local issues that include important agreements regarding workloads and wellbeing, diversity pay issues, as well as casualisation and employment contracts

In addition to this, the University has confirmed its commitment to award all of our employees with a one-off payment in recognition of their contributions during the last two years of the pandemic.

Taken together, this represents a significant set of proposals from the University to the local Trade Unions, one that has been developed in close working with the Trade Unions. A copy of the [agreed areas of priority action](#) and the [joint pension statement](#) is on the University's [webpages](#).

Summary and next steps

We continue to work with Durham UCU and would remind UCU members that information about the offer and how to vote can be found in the most recent Durham UCU newsletter. If UCU members haven't received their email with information about the offer and how to vote,

they should check their junk folders. For the vote to be valid, more than 50% of the Durham UCU members need to vote.

We genuinely hope that Durham UCU members will recognise the significant steps taken by DUCU and the University to address staff concerns and provide a clear plan to move forward, and that industrial action is avoided.

We ask UCU members to consider carefully the importance of each of your votes in helping determine the next steps in this dispute.

We will provide a further update as soon as we have more information, which we anticipate will be on Friday afternoon when the outcome of the vote is known.

Best wishes,

Professor Antony Long
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost