

To: All UG and PG students

From: [executive.communications@durham.ac.uk](mailto:executive.communications@durham.ac.uk) <on behalf of Professor Alan Houston>

Date: tbc w/c 7 February 2022

Title: Industrial action - important update

**\*Highlights\***

- **Ten days of strikes are planned for this term, between Monday 14 February and Wednesday 2 March.**
- **The University's priority is to ensure that you have access to learning opportunities and are able to fulfil the learning outcomes of your programme.**
- **No student will be disadvantaged in assessments and examinations as a consequence of industrial action.**
- **Student support services will remain unaffected by the strike.**

Dear Students,

It is with regret that I am writing to you with further details about industrial action at Durham, following notification from the University and College Union (UCU) that ten days of strikes are planned for this term.

We cannot resolve this dispute locally as changes to pay and pensions are negotiated at a national level. We can only seek to mitigate any impact on students, which is our primary focus.

This email addresses a number of key questions concerning how this may affect you. Additional information is available at our [industrial action webpage](#).

**Why is industrial action happening?**

As part of a national dispute over pensions and pay, UCU has called for its members to take strike action at universities throughout the UK. A detailed explanation of the issues can be found at our [industrial action webpage](#).

**When will the strikes take place?**

Ten days of strikes are planned for this term, on the following dates:

- Monday 14 February – Friday 18 February 2022
- Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 February 2022
- Monday 28 February, Tuesday 1 March and Wednesday 2 March 2022

In addition to strike action, some members will be taking part in Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) until 3 May 2022. A full definition of ASOS during this dispute can be found [here](#).

**Will my classes be cancelled?**

Many academic staff are not members of UCU, and those who are may not strike on all ten days. Many classes will proceed as usual.

Staff are not obligated to inform the University in advance of taking strike action, so it is not possible to know in advance which classes will be affected. Some staff will alert students of their intentions. Unless you hear from your teachers, we ask that you act on the assumption that classes will be held as scheduled and that assignments may be submitted as usual, on each day of the strike.

**What is the University doing to reduce the disruption to students?**

Your education is our highest priority. As indicated in the [mitigations policy](#) published last November, we seek to ensure that you have access to learning opportunities and are able to fulfil the learning outcomes of your programme.

Following strike action staff will be expected to mitigate the effects of cancelled classes. This activity should take priority over all others. While we respect the right of staff to strike, we expect that all materials relevant to cancelled classes will be posted no later than Monday 7 March. However, some staff may choose to take ASOS by removing, or not posting, materials related to classes cancelled as a result of strike action.

**Will this disruption be considered when it comes to my assessments and exams?**

No student will be disadvantaged in assessments and examinations as a consequence of industrial action. All evaluations will be fair, consistent and transparent. Students will not be tested by examination on material affected by the strike. Detailed policies concerning examinations, assessment other than examinations, and group mitigations, can be viewed [online](#).

**Where will I be able to study during the strike?**

The Bill Bryson Library, and the study spaces in the Teaching & Learning Centre, will remain open throughout this period of industrial action.

**I'm an international student. Will the strike action affect my visa?**

No. Your academic department will continue to monitor your attendance as normal. If any classes or contact points are missed because of the strike it is recorded as authorised absence.

**Why can't the University just stop strike action from happening?**

Changes to pay and pensions are negotiated at a national level. As one of over 300 institutions involved in the dispute, our influence over the outcome is limited. We do, however, have regular meetings with Universities UK, the body that represents universities across the UK, and have consistently urged that the dispute be resolved in a way that does not adversely affect students.

**Where can I get support?**

If you have specific questions or concerns not addressed in this message, please speak to your academic department or the Student Support Office within your college in the first instance.

If you need support, I urge you to reach out to the following services, which will be unaffected by the strike: [Student Support & Wellbeing](#), [Counselling & Mental Health Service](#) and [Disability Support](#).

We really regret that we are in this situation. As we approach this period of strike action, we ask that your actions reflect your understanding that these are complex national issues. Individual opinions will vary. Please show respect for all members of the community. I will provide an update closer to the first day of the strike. Information, policies, and answers to frequently asked questions are available on the University's [industrial action webpage](#).

All the best,

Alan Houston  
Vice-Provost (Education)