

**Motion to call on the SRC to offer support to University of St Andrews staff taking strike action for 8 days from November 25<sup>th</sup>.**

Date for implementation: 19/11/2019

Date for Review: 26/11/2019

Motion type: J

Proposer: Peter Beckett, 170016017

Seconder: Ashab Ahmad, 170012831

This SRC Notes:

1. In October 2019, *University and College Union (UCU)* members working in UK universities backed strike action in ballots over changes to the *Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)* and over working conditions and pay.
2. In November 2019, strikes were announced to take place Monday 25, Tuesday 26, Wednesday 27, Thursday 28, Friday 29 November, Monday 2, Tuesday 3 and Wednesday 4 December.
3. 83.49% of UCU members at the University of St Andrews who voted backed strike action over changes to the USS. 82.55% of those who voted backed strike action over working conditions and pay. The UCU notes that ‘the overwhelming mandate for strikes was a serious indictment on the state of higher education’.<sup>i</sup>
4. The University’s most recent financial statement reported total income increasing by 9.1%, following a consistent trend of financial growth in UK universities.<sup>ii</sup>
5. An analysis by *First Actuarial* suggests that the changes to the USS would see a typical academic paying around £40,000 more into their pension whilst receiving £200,000 less – a net loss of £240,000 in retirement.<sup>iii</sup>
6. Employers’ own research shows that the pay of staff has dropped by around 17% in real terms since 2009.<sup>iv</sup> UCU estimates suggest this number is as high as 20.8%.<sup>v</sup>
7. Occupational Health referrals for academic staff at the University of St Andrews increased from 1150 to 1589 between 2013 and 2016.<sup>vi</sup>
8. The University of St Andrews once again ranked first this year in the *National Student Survey* for student satisfaction, attesting to the value of our staff and prompting the Proctor, Professor Clare Peddie, to remark that ‘What really makes St Andrews special is the staff... whose outstanding contributions make us bigger and more meaningful than our size suggests.’<sup>vii</sup>
9. The right to strike is recognised as a human right
10. The management of the University of St Andrews has suggested that this is a national dispute which can only be resolved at a national level. However, the Principal of the University of St Andrews, Professor Sally Mapstone, is an elected member of the *Universities UK (UUK)* board, to 31 July 2022.<sup>viii</sup>
11. The Joint Councils unanimously passed a similar motion in February 2018.<sup>ix</sup>

This SRC Believes:

1. That students at the University of St Andrews should show understanding towards and demonstrate solidarity with university staff who assert their right to strike.

2. That the penny-pinching demonstrated by UUK is making academia an increasingly unattractive prospect for current students and is thus imperilling the future of higher education.
3. That assuaging the pressure and stress on staff, through improved working conditions and security in retirement, will benefit students and the university by increasing the quality of teaching and research.
4. That increasing levels of counselling and occupational health referrals amongst academic staff are a consequence of structural problems within the workplace.
5. That absence of support for the UCU by the SRC would be a position of antagonism towards the UCU rather than one of neutrality.

This SRC Resolves:

1. To stand in solidarity with members of staff at the University of St Andrews who are striking over changes to the USS and over working conditions and pay.
2. To encourage the university not to punish the absence of students from classes in week eleven of this semester.
3. To disseminate information about the strikes and how to support them.
4. To encourage the senior management at the University of St Andrews to urge the UUK and UCEA to respectively abandon the changes to the USS and pursue meaningful dialogue on pay and working conditions.
5. To work with the university to ensure assessment will take strike action into consideration and thus not disadvantage particular students.
6. To provide access to the Students' Association building and resources to striking members of staff and the students who are cooperating with them, for example, as a place to store strike materials.

Signed,

Peter Beckett, 170016017  
Ashab Ahmad, 170012831  
Gareth Williams, 170012489  
Finlay O'Neill, 180017987  
Daniel Muir, 180013421  
Ellie Archibald, 180006466  
Indy Lamplough, 160018464  
Joshua Osborne, 160006488  
Eleanor Day, 170001360  
Anthony Hickling, 160000615  
Geraint Morgan, 170013420  
Euan Dolan, 17004343  
Colm Tan, 170015702  
Luke Monks, 160010830  
Elise Lenzi, 170018290  
Isabelle Bakam, 170012092  
Luis Roberto Garcia Martinez, 190007613  
Melissa Wright, 170018653  
Elliott Cawtheray, 160014792  
Charmaine Au-Yeung, 170002034

Chloe Smith, 170008979  
Samantha Bowers, 170010206  
Maisie McDavid, 170008505  
Lucy Ashley, 180014883  
Dan Vinton, 150012543  
Corrie McGregor, 160012340  
Calum Stewart, 170014838  
Stellamaris Ezech, 170008506  
Maeve Slack-Watkins, 190008873  
Joseph John Ickowski, 160023665  
Freya Ward, 180013959  
Eilidh Garden, 180019637  
Felix Oscar Edmund Langley, 160007063  
Ennio Pecaver, 180018484  
Henry Thompson, 170005146  
Rachel Lawson, 150001874  
Orla Emberson, 170002801  
Luke Ryan, 180014477  
Ru McClure, 180005039  
Alusha Romaniszyn, 160013602  
Freya Upton, 160011127  
Connor Hampson, 180001236  
Áron Kecskés, 17001221  
Benjamin Kao, 170006886  
Patrick Walters, 180019418  
Lewis Williamson, 190025728  
Maya Marie, 180001823  
Cailean Gallagher, 170016061  
Miranda Wilson, 160010897  
Lottie Doherty, 160008227  
Paul Thompson, 160008644  
Samuel Jeffries, 180005110  
Pema l'Anson, 160011917  
Dominic Liam King, 190011825  
Alcira Silva Hava, 170003937  
Daniel Marshall, 160010036  
Adam Polánek, 170019080  
Catherine Elizabeth Bentley, 160002302  
Michael Williams, 140016721  
Laura Conroy, 160014864  
Moshe Dixon, 190003414  
Yeonjoo Choi, 150018195  
Emily Helen Baxter, 180014600  
Eve Taggart, 170004498  
Samuel Wykes, 180004823  
Thea Schiet, 170004965

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- <sup>i</sup> 'UCU members back strikes over both pensions and pay and conditions', <<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10399/UCU-members-back-strikes-over-both-pensions-and-pay-and-conditions>> [accessed 18 November 2019].
- <sup>ii</sup> University of St Andrews, *Reports and Financial Statements of the University Court for the year to 31 July 2018*, p. 13.
- <sup>iii</sup> 'University staff balloting for pension strikes £240,000 worse off as costs rise and benefits cut', <<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10269/University-staff-balloting-for-pension-strikes-240000-worse-off-as-costs-rise-and-benefits-cut>> [accessed 18 November 2019].
- <sup>iv</sup> 'Stakeholder Briefings', <<https://www.ucea.ac.uk/library/stakeholder-briefings/>> [accessed 18 November 2019].
- <sup>v</sup> 'Value of university staff pay has plummeted in last decade, employers' own research reveals', <<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10342/Value-of-university-staff-pay-has-plummeted-in-last-decade-employers-own-research-reveals>> [accessed 18 November 2019].
- <sup>vi</sup> Liz Morrish, *Pressure Vessels: The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff*, p. 61.
- <sup>vii</sup> 'Top for student satisfaction', <<https://news.st-andrews.ac.uk/archive/best-in-the-uk-for-student-satisfaction/>> [accessed 18 November 2019]
- <sup>viii</sup> 'Universities UK Board', <<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/about/Pages/universities-uk-board.aspx>> [accessed 18 November 2019].
- <sup>ix</sup> 'BREAKING NEWS: Students' Association Supports Strikes', <<http://www.thesaint-online.com/2018/02/breaking-news-students-association-supports-strikes/>> [accessed 18 November 2019].