

R20-3: Motion to call on the SRC to respond to University of St Andrews staff taking strike action for 14 days between Thursday 20th February and Friday 13th March 2020.

Owner: Daniel Marshall, 160010036

Date for implementation: Immediately

Date for Review: In the case of further industrial action or other changes in the nature of the dispute

Motion type: R

This SRC Notes:

1. In October 2019, *University and College Union* (UCU) members working in 60 UK universities backed strike action in ballots over changes to the *Universities Superannuation Scheme* (USS) and over working conditions, pay and casualisation [1].
2. 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 pay and working conditions. The UCU notes that ‘the overwhelming mandate for strikes was a serious indictment on the state of higher education’ [1].
3. Those involved in the dispute include many postgraduate students who teach that are also members of the Students Association.
4. In late 2019, UCU members across the UK took strike action between Monday 25th November and Wednesday 4th December.
5. During this action, striking staff members were allowed to use limited storage space for materials within the Students Association building and were allowed to use the building as a place to meet.
6. In January 2020, the staff at 14 more Universities voted to join the industrial action [2].
7. This week, the UCU announced 14 days of escalating strike action between Thursday 20th February and Friday 13th March [3].
8. 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 [4].
9. Universities and Colleges’ Employers Association (UCEA) research shows that the pay of staff has dropped by around 17% in real terms since 2009 [5]. UCU estimates suggest this number is as high as 20.8% [6].
10. 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’ [7].

11. In 2019, a report from the Higher Education Policy Institute found a big increase in demand for mental health support among higher education staff. [8].
12. The increased use of casualised and insecure contracts disproportionately affects women and BAME staff. [9]
13. Many members of staff who decide to strike will not be paid during strike action and thus may lose potentially thousands of pounds from their pay.
14. When the UCU took strike action in 2018, a YouGov poll on the eve of the strikes found that 66% of students at universities where strike action was taking place supported the action being taken with just 2% of students blaming staff for the dispute. [10]

This SRC Believes:

1. Staff in our universities and colleges should be properly supported, as they are the backbone of our educational system.
2. That workers have the right to take industrial action including strike action when taken in accordance with the law.
3. That members of staff care about their students and providing them with the best possible educational environment. The goal of strike action is not to disadvantage students.
4. That no member of staff decides to strike light-heartedly and that it comes as a last resort.
5. That students at the University of St Andrews should strive to understand the reasons their lecturers and other members of staff are going on strike and the Students Association has an important role to play in that.
6. That the Students Association has a responsibility to represent postgraduate students and support them in improving their wellbeing.
7. That students should demonstrate solidarity with postgraduate students and staff in efforts to improve the quality of our Higher Education sector.
8. That the best resolution to this dispute for everyone is one that does not involve industrial action.
9. That whilst this is in some ways a national dispute, St Andrews is a highly regarded institution with members of senior management well placed to maintain some influence in the negotiations.
10. That staff at the University of St Andrews are among the best in the world and deserve fair pay, working conditions and security both in work and retirement.
11. That relieving pressure and stress on staff, through improved working conditions and security in retirement, would benefit students and the university by increasing the quality of teaching and research.
12. That there is a diverse range of opinion within the student body when it comes to the support of or opposition to strike action.

This SRC Resolves:

1. To recognise the desire of many students to stand in solidarity with members of staff at the University of St Andrews who are striking over changes to the USS and over casualisation, conditions and pay.
2. To work with both the UCU and the University to distribute information about the reasons the strike action is taking place and how it will affect students.
3. To invite representatives from the UCU and the University to an event to explain their points of view to students.
4. To encourage students to visit the picket lines to talk to their lecturers and other staff members to find out more about the reasons they are taking action.
5. To encourage the senior management at the University of St Andrews to work with Universities UK (UUK) and UCEA to pursue meaningful dialogue on pay, pensions, casualisation and conditions with the UCU at a national level.
6. To mandate the Association President and Directors of Wellbeing and Education to work with the local UCU branch and the University to try to find solutions to the issues that are specific to St Andrews, particularly those which involve postgraduate students.
7. To allow striking staff members and the students supporting them access to storage space for materials and venues to host events such as meetings and “teach-outs” if necessary, within the Students Association building.
8. To consult the student body to better understand student feeling towards the strike action being taken by the UCU and to present the results to the Proctor.
9. To encourage the university not to punish the absence of students from classes on days when strike action is ongoing.
10. To work with the university to ensure assessment will take strike action into consideration and thus not disadvantage particular students.

Proposer: Daniel Marshall, 160010036

Seconder: Dennis Goodtzov, 150010967

[1] <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10399/UCU-members-back-strikes-over-both-pensions-and-pay-and-conditions> [accessed 03 February 2020]

[2] <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10555/Staff-at-another-14-universities-can-join-strike-action?list=1676> [accessed 03 February 2020]

[3] <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10621/UCU-announces-14-strike-days-at-74-UK-universities-in-February-and-March> [accessed 03 February 2020]

[4] <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10269/University-staff-balloting-for-pension-strikes-240000-worse-off-as-costs-rise-and-benefits-cut>

[5] <https://www.ucea.ac.uk/library/stakeholder-briefings> [accessed 03 February 2020]

[6] <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10342/Value-of-university-staff-pay-has-plummeted-in-last-decade-employers-own-research-reveals> [accessed 03 February 2020]

[7] <https://news.st-andrews.ac.uk/archive/best-in-the-uk-for-student-satisfaction> [accessed 03 February 2020]

[8] <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2019/05/23/new-report-shows-big-increase-in-demand-for-mental-health-support-among-higher-education-staff/> [accessed 03 February 2020]

[9] https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10681/second_class_academic_citizens/pdf/secondclassacademiccitizens [accessed 03 February 2020]

[10] <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/9345/Poll-shows-students-support-pension-strikes-and-blame-universities-for-the-disruption> [accessed 03 February 2020]

	Name	Matriculation Number
1	Dan Marshall	160010036
2	Craig Wells	150010556
3	Adam Beales	150013273
4	Amy Gallacher	150017284
5	Finlay O'Neill	180017987
6	Lewis Williamson	190025728
7	Joshua Osborne	160006488
8	Peter Beckett	170016017
9	Dennis Goodtzov	150010967

10	Kate Trinkaus	160021574
11	Calum Muir	190018658
12	Megan Galloway	180005389
13	Lana Owen	180015716
14	Callum Clarke	190002584
15	Kelly Thomson	180013811
16	Indiana Lamplough	160018464
17	Abbie Donaldson	150008377
18	Lucy Penman	190014025
19	Holly Scrivener	160012749
20	Lottie Doherty	160008227
21	Elizabeth Hobbs	180021946
22	Mark Connolly	190004680
23	Caitlin Ridgway	190002686
24	Kristoffer naas	190022077
25	Kate McGregor	160008461