

## **Policy Proposal: Students Support the UCU Strike**

To be discussed at: Education Zone

### **What would you like the Union to do?**

- To use their communication and social media channels to encourage postgraduate members of the students' union to join UCU.
- To produce and distribute a short guide to students explaining the pensions and pay and equality disputes and industrial action in general, so that they are prepared and more informed for future industrial disputes at UCL.
- To use their communication channels to encourage students and Students' Union staff to support any industrial action that does take place, and encourage students not to cross the picket lines if they're able to.
- To support and assist any UCL student groups who are partaking in action to support the strike.
- To provide reasonable financial support to any UCL student groups who are partaking in action to support the strike.
- To provide a comprehensive guide to how international students, particularly students on tier 4 visas, can support the strike, and on their rights during the dispute.

### **Why would you like to do this?**

- Wages for the majority of staff at UCL and other UK universities have stagnated in recent years
- There is a gender pay gap for staff at UCL and other UK universities
- Those entering into academia right now are in a far more precarious situation than they have been historically
- Many PGAs are not paid for the hours they work and many postgraduate students are forced to do unpaid work as part of their postgraduate education
- UCL has recently begun to transfer contracts to UniTemps, a company which engages in outsourced labour and will put many low-paid UCL employees on more precarious contracts
- A large section of UCL's low-paid workforce are already outsourced
- Staff at UCL have voted 83.6% for strike action over cut pensions, and 80.8% for strike action over low pay.
- Staff at 60 universities nationwide have also voted for strike action over these issues, to commence at the same time as UCL.
- During the strike action undertaken by UCU in 2018, 66% of students at HE institutions on strike supported the strike action
- There is currently an attack on higher education which involves the marketisation and privatisation of universities, to the benefit of a small number of individuals and at the detriment of students and staff
- More and more staff are beginning to be outsourced at UCL

- Academia is becoming a far less attractive career path for many graduating students because of this
- UCL management will not substantially increase staff pay without intervention from staff and students
- Generally staff do not want to partake in strike action, but are forced to do so to fight back against the poor material circumstances their employers put them in
- Staff, in particular staff who are also postgraduate students, are being exploited by the university management at UCL and other UK universities
- These issues will not go away without wider industry change
- Ultimately what is good for the academics and workers at UCL is also good for the students
- Student-worker solidarity plays an important role in winning industrial disputes
- During industrial action by UCU over the same pension cuts in 2018, UCL students voted overwhelmingly in a general assembly to support the strikes.

### **How will this affect students?**

- If the strike wins, students teaching conditions will improve.
- If the strike wins, students will have more favourable conditions if they choose to work in academia.
- The stronger the strike, and the more support it has from students, the sooner it will win, and the sooner students classes will return to normal.