

## Employers buckling, UCU calls further action...

# UUK ON THE EDGE AS MORE STRIKES CALLED

**T**HIS IS A BIG WEEK IN THE fight to defend USS pensions. UCU has two crucial meetings this Tuesday to discuss the outcome of talks with UUK. Both the union's Higher Education Committee (HEC) and delegates from pre-92 universities will meet.

Rightly, last week's HEC voted for a further 14 days of strike action next term, to follow the present round of 14 days. That means the employers know that if, due to their intransigence no deal is reached, they face a further term of disruption.

We know the employers are increasingly weak and divided. The debacle at Oxford University and the UUK "twitter meltdown" over talks are signs that they have simply lost the argument.

The "big stick" of punitive deductions for partial performance has been driven back at Sheffield University and elsewhere.

And despite weeks of snow and rain, every report shows picket lines getting bigger, more people joining UCU and an ever-growing wave of teach-outs and protests.

International Women's Day 2018 last Thursday was marked by one of the biggest strikes by women workers for years. It made real the slogan "a women's place is in the union"!

### March for Education

London Region of UCU has called the "March for Education #2" for Wednesday 14 March. Every UCU branch should send a delegation along if they can.

Our action forced UUK to come to the table. Everyone knows "Defined Contribution" (DC) is dead in the water.

But the "devil will be in the detail" of any offer from the employers.

The postal workers' union CWU recently ran a successful campaign

following an attack on their scheme and received a huge mandate for action from members.

But unlike UCU, the union stopped short of fighting to defend the DB scheme, arguing only for a "pension scheme for all" and didn't act on its mandate for strikes. Eventually it signed up to a "halfway house" deal called 'WinRS'.

### Compromise deal

According to a joint Royal Mail and CWU statement, under the new scheme, pension payments "represent targets not hard promises, and can be varied (upwards and downwards) to maintain the cost of the scheme at a fixed level".

In other words despite the backing of the vast majority of members for action the union signed up to a worse pension scheme.

Perhaps UUK will stick with a DB scheme but ask UCU members to pay more. But we've proved the scheme is not in crisis—unless it is self-inflicted. Once USS abandons the present apocalyptic valuation, no changes are needed.

They can accept a greater risk under the current model. But by far the quickest way to no deficit is for the Government to indemnify the Trustees against default.

This is to guarantee that if USS were forced to close and then if the scheme ended up in deficit, the Government would pay the difference. The USS Board and UUK would have an offer they could not refuse.

We don't need to pay more and get less, as we did in 2011 and 2014. Why should we pay for a non-existent crisis?

Already UCL, Ruskin, and Dundee have backed this position. Other branches have debated whether UCU was right to enter negotiations which make unnecessary concessions.

Any compromise deal will have to be

signed off by the USS Board and Trustees. It is essential that while this is happening that UCU does not move to suspend action.

We don't know yet what UUK will offer. But we face a choice. Whether it's higher contributions, a lower threshold or an uncertain future with a new scheme, we are in an amazingly strong position right now.

### Look very carefully

We should look very carefully at any offer, and debate it throughout the union. UCU members are mobilised in their tens of thousands. The union has won its case.

UUK forced this strike on us. But now we're out in such numbers, we should stay out and fight to keep the status quo. That would be a victory, not just for UCU members, but for our students and for the future of education.

### What you can do...

- Every branch must debate whether the status quo is something we should stay out to achieve.
- Make Wednesday's march as big as possible.
- Sign the "status quo" letter to the Guardian: [tinyurl.com/deficit18](http://tinyurl.com/deficit18)

## MARCH FOR EDUCATION #2 BACK PENSION & PAY STRIKES

Wednesday 14 March,  
12 noon, Assemble:  
Malet Street,  
London WC1E 7HY  
Called by London region UCU