

UCU industrial action scheduled this term

6 November 2019

Message from the Vice-Chancellor Professor Robert Van de Noort

Dear students,

I am writing to let you know that the University & College Union (UCU), the main trade union which represents colleagues at the University of Reading, has given formal notice that they will be encouraging their members to participate in industrial action, including both full strike action and action short of strike (ASOS).

It is important to note that out of the approximately 700 UCU members eligible to vote, just under 300 voted in favour of industrial action. To put this into context, around 4,300 people work at the University. Furthermore, it is unlikely that all UCU members will participate in this industrial action and, as we have seen in the past, impact will vary across Schools, Departments and Functions. We anticipate that the professional Functions including Support Centres, the Library, cafes and other facilities on campus will remain open.

The notified periods are:

Strike action: 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 November 2019 and 2, 3, 4 December 2019

Action short of strike: commencing from 25 November 2019 and finishing no later than 29 April 2020.

The UCU has entered into disputes with the University relating to the National Pay Bargaining process (and related issues) and the USS pension scheme. These matters affect universities across the UK, and the substantive issues on pay and pensions can only be resolved through collective negotiations at a national level. I am deeply disappointed that we face industrial action here at Reading for the second time in recent years given that the core disputes cannot be resolved locally.

While strike action is generally a full stoppage of work, the scope of action short of strike (ASOS) can vary. The UCU have indicated that this is likely to include: working to contract; not covering for absent colleagues; not rescheduling lectures or classes cancelled due to strike action; not sharing materials relating to lectures or classes cancelled as a result of strike action; not undertaking any voluntary activities; and a marking and assessment boycott.

I understand that you will be very concerned about the possible impact of strike action and ASOS on your studies and I would like to offer every reassurance that, while we acknowledge the right of staff to undertake industrial action, it is our responsibility to minimise the disruption to you. We have established reasonable and practicable mitigation measures from our experience of previous industrial action. This includes our Impact of Strike Action on Academic Performance process for you to notify us of instances where you feel you have been academically disadvantaged in an assessment as a result of industrial action.

We will do all we reasonably can to minimise the disruption and we will publish further details and frequently asked questions shortly. Please continue to check back here for the latest information.

I would like to end by reiterating that, as an institution, we will continue to work together to ensure Reading continues to be an enjoyable place to work and study.

Kind regards

Robert