

UCU, the UK's largest higher education Union, has decided to call eighteen days of UK wide strike action, taking place on the following days;

Wednesday 1 February, Thursday 9 February, Friday 10 February, Tuesday 14 February, Wednesday 15 February, Thursday 16 February, Tuesday 21 February, Wednesday 22 February, Thursday 23 February, Monday 27 February, Tuesday 28 February, Wednesday 1 March, Thursday 2 March, Thursday 16 March, Friday 17 March, Monday 20 March, Tuesday 21 March, Wednesday 22 March 2023.

This relates to pay and working conditions, and the USS Pension scheme.

The University will continue to do everything possible to ensure that any possible impact on your studies is minimised, and that your learning outcomes are delivered. You will also be able to continue to access key services, such as the Library and Student Services during these days.

Not all staff are taking strike action, and the impact is variable across the University. In addition, UCU members who do take strike action are under no obligation to inform the University that they are doing so. Several measures have been put in place to mitigate the effect of the industrial action, and to ensure that learning outcomes can be delivered. As a result, the University expects to be able to ensure that the necessary material can be delivered across its academic programmes. For this reason, and while it is unfortunate that some students may be inconvenienced, it is not anticipated that refunds will need to be made to students.

Students should submit any assessments and sit any exams as instructed. If the industrial action should affect any students' preparedness for assessment (e.g coursework and / or exams), the University will take this into account when considering extensions or special circumstances that are submitted relating to the strike action. However, special circumstances will only be applied at the individual level if students have not been given extra time to complete assessments as a result of strike action, if exam papers have not been modified as a result of strike action, or if other global measures, at the discretion of University Senate, have not been applied to mitigate for strike action. The University Senate is the Academic authority of the University and has the power to enact special regulations governing assessment, to ensure that no students are disadvantaged in circumstances such as these.

The University will not benefit financially because of this dispute and all monies withheld will be used for the benefit of students.

The University will keep the situation under review, and keep students and staff informed if the picture changes. Updates will be provided via e-mail and where there are developments, Undeb Bangor's Sabbatical Officers, will be regularly updated throughout the period of industrial action.

Further detailed information is available in the Questions & Answers that follow. If you have further questions, please speak to your Personal Tutor or Head of School, and of course the Students' Union are also available for further support, and you may wish to contact your sabbatical officer if you require further advice or clarification. In the meantime, we continue to liaise with the Students' Union and will add to the FAQs as further information becomes available.

Questions and Answers

The University will continue to do everything possible to ensure that any possible impact on your studies is minimised, and that your learning outcomes are delivered. The University is working closely with the Students' Union to monitor developments and we will provide further updates to this Questions and Answers page as the situation develops. In the meantime, unless advised otherwise, you should continue to attend your teaching sessions and submit all coursework as normal.

Who is involved in the dispute?

This dispute is a national dispute, between the national bodies who represent Higher Education Employers (UCEA and UUK) and UCU (University and College Union), which is the trades union representing many staff working in universities. The strike action is only being undertaken by staff who are members of UCU. Not all UCU staff will join the strike and staff who are members of other unions and non-union members will be working as normal. Because, by law, staff do not have to provide advanced notice of their intention to strike, the University cannot provide detailed information about the activities that will be affected. However, we have asked that staff let students know if they intend to be on strike.

What is the dispute about?

The dispute is about two things. It is about the USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme), which operates the pension scheme for many university staff in the UK, and about pay and working conditions.

Has there been any progress made towards settling the dispute?

In terms of pay and working conditions, this is negotiated nationally on an annual basis between the body that represents Universities and recognised Trade Unions. Pay increases have been implemented for this current year (effective as of August 2022), ranging from an increase of 3% to 9%. The pay offer was rejected by UCU, and agreement has therefore not been reached at national level, although the pay award has been implemented by Universities, and therefore paid to staff members.

The bodies representing Universities have continued to meet with UCU, most recently on the 25th of January, and these discussions have extended to the 2023-24 pay offer, which would be effective as of August 2023. UCEA have written to the trade unions to confirm the final offer on pay for the 2023-24 which provides for an uplift of up to 8% for staff on the lowest national pay spine points, and an uplift of 5% for staff on the higher pay points. This also includes an interim pay uplift from 1 February 2023 with the remaining proportion of the overall uplift being implemented from August 2023.

What is USS?

USS is a national pension scheme, managed by its own trustees and overseen by the Pensions Regulator. The issues under dispute relate to proposed changes in the way in which the pension scheme will operate in the future. As USS is an independent national pension scheme involving some 350 employers, individual universities have no control over the running of the scheme.

Why are some staff taking strike action?

Staff are taking strike action due to changes to the USS Pension Scheme. These changes affect many university staff across the UK as the USS scheme is an independent national pension scheme. Staff who are members of UCU have a legal entitlement to take industrial action, and this is taking place at Higher Education Institution's across the UK.

When are the strike dates?

Eighteen days of strike action are as follows;

Wednesday 1 February, Thursday 9 February, Friday 10 February, Tuesday 14 February, Wednesday 15 February, Thursday 16 February, Tuesday 21 February, Wednesday 22 February, Thursday 23 February, Monday 27 February, Tuesday 28 February, Wednesday 1 March, Thursday 2 March, Thursday 16 March, Friday 17 March, Monday 20 March, Tuesday 21 March, Wednesday 22 March 2023.

On these days, some members of staff may be taking part in the strike action, and there may be some disruption to some teaching activities. However, as not all University staff are members of UCU, the impact of the strike will vary from one part of the University to the other.

What is the University doing to ensure that students at Bangor are not disadvantaged?

Not all of our staff here are members of UCU, so the impact of any actions taken may vary across the University. When strike action took place in November and December of last year, less than 20% of Academic staff members at Bangor took part in Strike Action, and of those that did the majority did not strike for all of the days.

The University will therefore remain open on the dates that have been selected by UCU for industrial action, and this includes key services such as the Library and Student Services. As soon as your School is aware of the extent to which classes may be affected, you will be informed of any changes that they will put in place. Legally, staff do not have to provide advanced notice of their intention to take industrial action, but our experience at Bangor University is that staff will often inform students of their intentions.

A number of measures have also been put in place to mitigate the effect of the industrial action and to ensure that learning outcomes can be delivered. As a result, the University expects to be able to ensure that the necessary material can be delivered across its academic programmes.

Will the action affect any assessment work that students submit?

Students should submit assessments and sit any exams as instructed. If the industrial action should affect any students' preparedness for assessment (e.g coursework and/or exams), the University will take this into account when considering extensions or special circumstances that are submitted relating to the strike action. However, special circumstances will only be applied at the individual level if students have not been given extra time to complete assessments as a result of strike action, if exam papers have not been modified as a result of strike action, or if other global measures, at the discretion of University Senate, have not been applied to mitigate for strike action. The University Senate is the Academic authority of the University and has the power to enact special regulations governing assessments, to ensure that no students are disadvantaged in circumstances such as these.

Where can I get further information about my personal circumstances?

If you have further questions, please speak to your Personal Tutor or Head of School, and of course the Students' Union are also available for further support. Reports of special circumstances should be made through myBangor Request Centre, where the request will be dealt with accordingly.

Will the University be open on strike days?

Yes, the University will remain open during the strike action and staff who are not members of the

University and College Union will continue to work as normal. As a result, there will be minimal impact in some areas, whilst in other areas teaching activity could be affected. Places such as the Library, learning spaces, computer labs, and sports facilities will be available as usual. If you are carrying out project work in a laboratory, this is likely still to be possible, but you should ensure that you take local advice to ensure that there is an appropriate level of support available from a health and safety perspective.

How will I know if my lecture, seminar, laboratory or other teaching session is cancelled?

We are expecting that many teaching sessions will go ahead as normal. However, it is possible that some of your sessions will be cancelled. As staff do not have to provide advanced notice of their intention to take industrial action and there is no obligation to do this, there is a possibility that you may turn up for a session that is cancelled. Our experience at Bangor University however is that staff will often inform students of their intentions as a courtesy to their students. Members of staff may inform you either directly, by email or through Blackboard so please do look out for the latest information. You should attend classes as normal unless you have been informed otherwise.

Will teaching sessions be rescheduled if they are cancelled?

We are not currently able to give an answer to this question because it is too early to say how many staff will take strike action. We will, however, be seeking to ensure that no student will be disadvantaged because of this action and we will try to rearrange as many cancelled events as possible in order to limit, as far as practical, the impact on your studies. However striking staff are not obliged to reschedule classes cancelled due to strike action.

Will I be assessed on topics which were not covered because of the strike action?

If the industrial action should affect any students' preparedness for assessment, the University will take this into account when considering extensions or special circumstances to ensure that no one is disadvantaged. The University will be requesting that assessments are reviewed in light of any content that was missed due to the strike. In addition, the University Senate has the power to enact special regulations governing assessment, to ensure that no students are disadvantaged in circumstances such as these.

Will I receive financial compensation for any missed lectures?

The University continues to do everything possible to ensure that any impact on your studies is minimised, and therefore we do not expect the need for refunds to students or compensation. Measures have been put in place to mitigate the effect of the industrial action and to ensure that learning outcomes can be delivered. As a result, the University expects to be able to ensure that the necessary material can be delivered across its academic programmes. For this reason, it is not anticipated that compensation or refunds will be necessary. Once the industrial action concludes and the nature and scale of the disruption is clearer, we will consider how to respond to any requests for compensation.

Will my coursework deadlines be altered?

You should assume that any deadlines which have been set remain in place and work to the deadline accordingly. If there is an assessment deadline on a strike day, you should submit your work in the normal way.

What can the University do to resolve this?

Resolving this dispute requires agreement at a national level, which means that Bangor University is not in a position to come to a local resolution. However we are hopeful of a resolution to this

dispute, and in the meantime, we will do everything we can to reduce any possible impact the strike could have on you as students, and the University will remain open during the strike period.