

# Newcastle UCU Strike FAQ

(The National Union's FAQs are here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/he-action-faqs> )

## REPORTING

1. **When do you report that you've taken part in industrial action?** This is done AFTER the action. If you are asked before the action you can reply using forms of words such as 'I have not made up my mind' or 'My union advises that I do not answer that question'. After the action you must notify your employer that you were on strike on all the days you took action. You will receive an email from People Services with a link to indicate days during which you took part in industrial action.
2. **I am on a research-council funded contract. I am concerned that my action will not be visible. Should I strike?** Yes. The strike is about casualisation, pensions, workload and pay-gaps. All of these things can and will affect you. Your strike will also be visible to the employers who are key drivers in this dispute.

## STRIKE PAY

1. **I am a part-time hourly paid member of staff. How do I manage my hours on Myapps?** If you're on the MyApps payment system, do not claim for hours of teaching that fall during strike days (as you will not be teaching). Similarly, you shouldn't claim for hours of prep if you have not done that prep because you are striking. Do, however, claim for the hours that you have worked during a strike week. For example, some Schools allocate an hour of admin/office hour per week. If that week you are striking Monday to Thursday but you spend Friday answering student emails and doing class admin, do claim that hour for the week. Some weeks will also have task-based hours allocated to them (e.g. for marking). If you are still expected to perform that task at some point (e.g. after the strike period), you should still claim for those hours in the week that they allocated, as they cannot be reallocated to the week when you will actually perform the work.
2. **How do I apply to the local hardship fund for the hours I have lost?** If you are using the app, at the end of the period of action, you can take a screenshot of the app showing the hours that you haven't claimed for each strike week, and send the screenshots along and your offer letter/email detailing your hourly pay to [nuanticas@gmail.com](mailto:nuanticas@gmail.com). Details of how to claim from the local fund are here: <http://ncl.web.ucu.org.uk/industrial-action/ucu-local-strike-support-fund/>.
3. **I am a member of staff on an open-ended contract. Can I apply for strike pay?** Yes. Please make your application to the national fund, using the payslips that show pay deduction. The union has agreed to provide strike pay as follows: members earning £30,000 or more will be able to claim up to £50 per day from the third day onwards; members earning below £30,000 will be able to claim up to £75 per day from the second day onwards. The maximum currently claimable by any one member is £500. NB: Priority will be given to those on insecure contracts, low earnings or with special circumstances. You need to ensure that your subscription rate is in the right band for your salary in order to claim from the national fund. Information on how to claim is here: [https://ucu.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/429/~/ucu-fighting-fund](https://ucu.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/429/~/ucu-fighting-fund).
4. **I am on a research council funded contract? Can I apply for strike pay?** Yes. Follow the same instructions as for members of staff on an open-ended contract.

## TEACH-OUTS

1. **What is a teach-out?** A teach-out is a session in which colleagues and students share their knowledge/expertise with others. These are usually fairly short (20-30 minutes for talks) sessions which take place after picketing in a location off-campus. Teach-outs can be about your research, they can be hands-on workshops that introduce people to something you have expertise in (e.g. pottery, language-learning; dance) or they can introduce colleagues to your job and role in the university. Teachouts can also be walking tours or visits to local sites, museums or galleries. We welcome as broad a range of topics as possible and from all colleagues working in all roles in university (PS; academic; academic-related). Please contact the Teach-out Organisers at [teachouts2020@gmail.com](mailto:teachouts2020@gmail.com) by Feb 15<sup>th</sup> with brief details of what you would like to teach or discuss if you are interested.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

1. **I am a PG student who supports the strike. What can I do?** If you are an employed PG you can join the union. It is free to join if you are a PG. Details are here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/5143/Can-students-or-postgraduates-join> We have an active local PG UCU network with branch committee representation and you can join the mailing list here: <https://lists.ncl.ac.uk/wvs/info/ucu-pg>.
2. **I am a PG student who supports the strike but I have a Tier 4 visa. What should I do?** The most important thing is not to violate the conditions of your visa. If you have to sign in to classes on campus you should do so. Let the picketers on the line know your situation. It is fine to join a picket line later or to communicate your support via other means (see below).
3. **I am a UG student who supports the strike. What can I do?** Thank you for your support! You can wear a badge or sticker (available from all picket lines); make a student ally video (please contact [strikecommittee2020@gmail.com](mailto:strikecommittee2020@gmail.com)); or come and talk to us on picket lines. In the past, students have emailed the Vice-Chancellor, talked to their parents and friends about the reasons for striking, helped out with teach-outs, brought biscuits to the picket lines, and more. Every little bit of support is appreciated. Newcastle UG students have created a group to support the strike (contact [strike.action.nu@gmail.com](mailto:strike.action.nu@gmail.com) or Strike Action for Students on Facebook (@safsnu). This is a student collective dedicated to ensuring the student voice is heard during the strikes. They support the staff strike and are taking issue with the administration.

## PICKETING

1. **What is the point of picketing?** Picketing is a crucial part of striking. It makes the action visible and helps communicate the issues behind the strike to audiences inside and outside the institution. The UCU's picketing guidance is here: [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1132/Branch-picket-guidance/pdf/ucu\\_picketing-guidance1.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1132/Branch-picket-guidance/pdf/ucu_picketing-guidance1.pdf).
2. **I am unable to be on the picket line for a length of time/at all. How can I support the strike?** Maintaining the digital picket line (see Pickets FAQ 9 below) performs a crucial contribution. Other colleagues have expressed support through placard-making or leaflet-design; offering a teach-out; baking or bringing coffee/tea to picketers; providing transport or collecting printing; helping to organise fundraising events; organising donations (either to the strike fund or to the local branch's charity collection); creating film or images for

social media such as providing an 'I am on strike' photo; writing blogposts; creating crafts or art. All offers of support gratefully received. Please email: [strikecommittee2020@gmail.com](mailto:strikecommittee2020@gmail.com).

3. **I find striking physically challenging. Is there any support?** The branch provides some practical measures to support colleagues (e.g. providing folding chairs on each line for colleagues with mobility or joint issues). The branch wants to learn what actions can better support all colleagues on strike: please tell us on [strikecommittee2020@gmail.com](mailto:strikecommittee2020@gmail.com).

## PICKETING FAQs

**1. How do I picket?** Go to the UCU branch office, sign-in for a picketing site (there are several sites on campus – and some may have lots of people and you may be asked to move to a different one), **get your armband**, a placard and some leaflets and head to the site. An armband designates you as an official picketer. If you don't have an armband then you can join the picket line as a 'demonstrator' or 'supporter'. You can leave bags and coats in the office until the end of picketing. Once on the picket line, aim to distribute your leaflets to the public and passers-by and answer their questions about the strike and the reasons behind it. **Be friendly and positive.** Many people find pickets intimidating and it is important to remember the strike is not with students or members of the general public.

**2. How long does the picket last?** Newcastle pickets from 8am-11am. You do **not** need to be there for the whole or for every day.

**3. What do I wear on the picket line?** Warm clothes! A heavy and/or waterproof jacket, hat and gloves are very important but good boots and socks are absolutely essential. Please feel free to dress for effect. This need not go as far as your own shark costume (@SolidarityShark) but aim for visibility.

**4. If I need help or advice who should I ask?** Check in with Mavis at the UCU office or ask a Branch Committee member (they will be wearing high-vis vests and pink UCU hats). Members of the committee will be in the office and/or at King's Gate and Haymarket picket lines every day 8am-12pm, at the teachouts, and monitoring the [strikecommittee2020@gmail.com](mailto:strikecommittee2020@gmail.com) account and the @NewcastleUCU Twitter account. Please contact them via any of these routes. We recommend that each School/Unit sets up an off-NCL email or WhatsApp group as a way of communicating with one another quickly during strike action.

**5. Where should I stand when I am on the picket?** Pickets need to be conducted off university property: your picket will be at a crossing point onto the university campus but you should stay on public ground.

**6. Do I have to sign in every day?** Ideally you will sign in every day that you picket. If you can't make it to the UCU Office (you are always welcome to pick up more leaflets and/or a snack) then email Mavis ([ucu.office@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:ucu.office@ncl.ac.uk)) to be noted on the official list (we don't keep track of names – just numbers). **DO NOTE: the branch has new leaflets and material every day so you may want to update your materials by coming into the UCU Office.**

**7. Who can cross the picket line?** Anyone can cross the picket line, although we encourage positive and friendly engagement with those crossing to let them know why we are striking. 'Hard' picketing (preventing access) is illegal. **Members of the union should**

**not under any circumstances cross a picket line.** Crossing a picket line includes the act of going into work but also any work-related activity on- or off-campus. Exceptions are made for negotiations with employers directly related to strike aims.

**8. Do I have to picket every day?** Many colleagues do picket every day but we know not everyone is able to do this. The most important thing is to show solidarity. Picketing even for a small amount of time (even 20 minutes! Or showing up with hot coffee for picketers) has an impact and the demonstration of commitment counts for a great deal.

**9. What is the digital picket line?** The digital picket line refers to colleagues' interactions on social media. Maintaining the digital picket line means refraining from sharing information about employers' events, projects, news, publicising your own work, etc. It can mean sharing news about strike action, information about the issues behind it, publicising that you are not working, and offering mutual support as we do on the 'real' picket line. **The digital picket line is a vital expression of solidarity and protest.** A good way of keeping in touch is via the @NewcastleUniUCU Twitter/FB feeds. There are also other helpful Twitter feeds: @UCU/@SolidarityShark and more.