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Sent: 06 February 2020 15:24
Subject: USS, Pay and UCU Strike Action



6 February 2020

Message from Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Principal and Vice-Chancellor



Dear Colleagues,
I am emailing to provide an update on the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), on Pay and Conditions and on the ongoing UCU strike action.

During November and December last year, UCU took eight days of strike action in relation to a dispute regarding the 2019/20 National Pay Negotiations and a dispute with respect to USS. UCU members are now undertaking continuous action short of strike action which involves working to contract and not participating in voluntary duties.

The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)

Over the last two years, Strathclyde has been consistently clear on its views on the future of USS:

- we want the best possible pension for our staff within an appropriate resource envelope for both employers and individuals;

- we wish to retain a meaningful Defined Benefits element within USS;
- we see pension provision as a key part of our staff benefits and not purely as a cost and, accordingly, we are prepared to pay more for that if the benefits to our staff justify the additional cost;
- we are supportive of the work of the national, [Joint Expert Panel](#) (JEP), comprised of UCU and Universities UK nominees with an Independent Chair, as it considers both the Valuation and the long-term sustainability of USS.

Importantly, and this also applies to the ongoing Pay dispute, we believe that negotiations at a national level are critical to achieving solutions to these complex issues.

The University has been delighted that, following the production of the JEP's second report in December, a Tripartite Group has held a series of meetings during January to discuss that Report.

The Tripartite Group, comprised of representatives of UCU, UUK and USS, has expressed its commitment to genuine collective discussion on the recommendations of the JEP report.

We have been pleased to note the [positive statements](#) following the series of Tripartite Group meetings which report the discussions as constructive and productive.

Given these positive national discussions involving the key parties, the University is both surprised and disappointed that UCU have determined to call a further 14 days of strike action at Strathclyde and at other USS employers where a strike mandate has been achieved (see below).

Pay and Conditions

Alongside the on-going dispute regarding USS, UCU are in dispute with the employers following the conclusion of the 2019/20 National Pay Negotiations.

Again, the University has consistently confirmed its support for national discussions to resolve the dispute between UCU and the 147 Higher Education institutions who are part of the national pay negotiations.

We have, therefore, been pleased to note a series of positive discussions between UCU and the employers' representatives from UCEA (the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association).

These discussions led to UCEA making a modified offer to the Trade Unions on 27 January. The modified offer does not increase the pay element of the 2019/20 negotiations. However it does focus on the three other areas of employment raised in UCU's dispute: contractual arrangements; workload and mental health; and, gender pay gap and ethnicity pay. Full details of the UCEA's modified offer can be found [here](#). UCU's thoughts on the modified offer can be found [here](#).

Strathclyde has been supportive of UCEA making this enhanced offer and we have been developing our own plans in these important employment areas through our new People Strategy 2020-2025, which will be published

in the coming weeks.

Building on our core Values, our People Strategy sets out a *foundation commitment* for all our staff – the Strathclyde Staff Pledge – which commits the University to providing:

- Stable Contracts, which give fixed term and more casual staff as much employment certainty as possible;
- Fair and Equal Pay;
- A Safe and Secure Working Environment and to consistently ensuring that we listen to, and respond to, the views of our staff.

It also commits to the development of future focused workforce plans which identify the number and type of roles we need to deliver our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, to new reward mechanisms and to a workplace wellbeing action plan, “Thrive@Strathclyde”.

We were pleased to share the key elements of our People Strategy with the Campus Unions at a recent Joint Union meeting and look forward to partnering with our union colleagues in the implementation of our ambitious staffing plans.

Given the revised national offer from UCEA, which aligns well with our own plans, the University is again surprised and disappointed that UCU have decided to call a further 14 days of strike action.

UCU Strike Action

Strathclyde, alongside other Higher Education employers where UCU have achieved a strike mandate on pay and/or pensions, has received notification that UCU will be calling on its members to take 14 days of strike action in the weeks ahead:-

Week	Day	Date	#
Week 1	Thursday	20 Feb	Day 1
	Friday	21 Feb	Day 2
Week 2	Monday	24 Feb	Day 3
	Tuesday	25 Feb	Day 4
	Wednesday	26 Feb	Day 5
Week 3	Monday	2 March	Day 6
	Tuesday	3 March	Day 7
	Wednesday	4 March	Day 8
	Thursday	5 March	Day 9
Week 4	Monday	9 March	Day 10
	Tuesday	10 March	Day 11
	Wednesday	11 March	Day 12
	Thursday	12 March	Day 13
	Friday	13 March	Day 14

A further all staff communication, including a link to Frequently Asked Questions on the industrial action and our policies around it, will be sent out prior to the first strike day.

This will also contain information for a small number of EIS members at

Strathclyde, who are similarly being asked to take strike action on some of these dates.

We are a Values-based organisation. Being People Oriented and Collaborative is part of our DNA as an organisation and I am sure that in keeping with these Values, we will continue to work together in a courteous and respectful manner despite the forthcoming planned industrial action and any differing views that we may have as colleagues.

Best wishes

Jim



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