

# THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

## Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Week 4

### What is this?

The University Worker is a rank-and-file bulletin produced by academic workers. This strike is the biggest in the history of HE - we need to win.

### Help us distribute!

There will be 61 picket lines across the country. We want to be on all of them. Download the PDF from [notesfrombelow.org](http://notesfrombelow.org) and print some out.

### Open Letter to UCU Leadership

An open letter calling upon the UCU to continue strike action was disseminated in advance of last week's talks and was signed by over 600 academics- this can be found here: [bit.ly/2FNbVa3](http://bit.ly/2FNbVa3).

### Sample Branch Motion

*This specific motion was passed by Goldsmiths, but lots of branches are passing similar motions: Leicester, Newcastle, UCL etc.*

*"This meeting notes the strength and unity of the strikes and resolves to stay out until the employers commit to retaining the existing pension scheme."*



### Victory is Within Sight!

We are now entering the fourth week of the strike. This week is a full five days. The strike up until now has been a resounding success, with mass demonstrations, strong picket lines, and student occupations.

Last week, the University of Oxford reversed its position on the USS scheme. In a survey by UUK, many universities voted for de-risking of USS, which has led in part to the proposed move from defined benefit. Oxford, like Cambridge, was disproportionately overrepresented due to colleges being counted individually.

### The increasing numbers of vice-chancellors coming out against the changes show the employers are breaking.

Victory is within sight. This is due to the success of the strikes so far. These have been led by rank and file academic workers, including many on precarious contracts.

Those workers who are furthest from their pensions have put themselves at greatest risk in this dispute.

The question at the start of this week is what is going to happen next? The UCU announced last week:

*"The union's higher education committee (HEC) has sanctioned another 14 days of strikes, if necessary, designed to hit the exam and assessment periods between April and June. UCU said it would now gather information on when the 14 days of action would be most effective at different universities."*

## **CUPE 3903 Start Indefinite Strike at York University**

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CUPE Local 3903 - the graduate teachers union at Toronto's York University - began an indefinite strike today. The union's 3,600 members will now stay out until they negotiate a victory: in their own words, they 'strike to win'.

And they have a history of winning. CUPE 3903 have struck successfully before in 2001, 2008-9 and 2015. This time they have 20 demands, ranging from the return of 800 graduate assistant jobs, the bringing of PhD students on the fellowship scheme into collective bargaining, stronger routes for contracted teaching staff to reach tenure, and the establishment of a union-administered fund for victims of sexual violence.

York University has, in the face of a successful and militant coalition of campus staff unions begun a union-busting strategy. At stake in this strike is not only the working conditions of staff, but also the future of collective bargaining. At its core, this struggle is over who has the right to control university as a whole.

Their picket lines are inspiring. On all 8 entrances to York campuses, precarious workers are seriously impeding all traffic and deliveries to shut campus down. **They show that if you want to shut down campus you need to get serious. Disruption means disruption!**

If you want to share some solidarity from the picket lines, hit them up on Twitter @cupe3903comms

We welcome more strike action, but we need to continue the momentum of this wave of strikes. Local branches and rank and file workers need to focus on getting the strikes called for the most effective days. This means planning seriously how we can shutdown universities across the country. The new strike days need to be announced as soon as possible.

The next set of strikes are "designed to hit the exam and assessment periods." This is not officially a marking boycott (which we would likely get 100% pay deduction anyway), but is an even greater escalation that would stop exams. For many of us, not marking (and assigning grades) provides powerful leverage over the employers. This means building solidarity with students now.

Action Short Of a Strike (ASOS) has to continue, formally or informally, when the week of strikes end. This means planning with other academic workers how ASOS can be most effectively carried out, continuing to keep the pressure up until the next strike.

### **What happens next?**

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This week, we need to build for the strongest picket lines so far. This means taking picketing seriously: stopping deliveries, disrupting the university, and winning workers and students to join the dispute. **We need hard pickets.**

There are (at least) three large demonstrations this week:

**Finding Stephen! All Out to End the Strike.** Cambridge Defend Education. Tuesday 12.30 @ Kings Parade, Willesden Green.

**Defend Education - March for Pensions and Pay.** UCU London Region. Wednesday 12.00 @ Malet Street.

**Break UUK - End the Strike!** National Campaign Against Fees & Cuts + others. Thursday 1pm @ University of Sussex

