



Pay matters in higher education

HE Pay Matters 2013 - Activist Bulletin 17

Branch Guidance on Picketing (3)

Standing on a picket line alongside colleagues can be really uplifting and builds a sense of camaraderie. However, it can be daunting trying to engage with people that want to cross the picket line. The first day of action was well supported and we need to have strong support again to make the employers change their minds. It is vital that you try to discuss the issues with those who want to cross the line, or who are required to work on the day of the strike and to build support for the issue.

The following list provides some ideas of how to engage with colleagues on the day.

It is vital to be courteous and calm at all times.

Peacefully ask the worker to stop and talk to you. Do not assume that they are a member or that they are covered by the pay dispute – in some universities employees have been outsourced to other companies.

Explain to them why **you** are going on strike. Provide information about the dispute and have handouts and campaign materials to hand. Remember the employer may have issued misinformation about the strike - you have an opportunity to correct this.

Common responses:

Members seeking to cross the picket line

Explain that going into work means supporting the employer. Ask them whether they feel that they are worth more. Point out that by breaking the strike they are undermine their colleagues and won't improve their pay. Explain that the union can support strikers using its Industrial Action fund, and have details of when deductions from salary will be made. Have details of "There for You" available: email address thereforeyou@unison.co.uk phone number 020 7121 5620.

"But I Voted No"

As member of a democratic union, we are pleased that you took part in the vote, but collective responsibility means sticking by majority decisions even ones you didn't agree with. Taking strike action is a last resort, and the decision to take a 2nd day of action has not been taken lightly. If we don't stick together the employers will think us weak - and we will never win a decent pay rise

29 November 2013

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“But I Didn’t Vote”

The union spent a lot of time and effort on reaching members and urging them to vote. Choosing not to vote doesn’t change the fact that the vote was for strike action. We work as a collective.

“I’m Not a Member”

Explain the pay dispute and highlight other issues of concern at the university. Some staff will be eligible to take part in the strike if they sign up before or during any action, including on the day of the strike. Have application available and get them to fill in a form on the picket line or to join online at <https://join.unison.org.uk/joinus.php>

“I’m a Member of UNISON But Was Not Balloted”

Are they in areas not covered by the ballot? UNISON members not covered by the current dispute could still show their support by contributing to Industrial Action Funds, signing the online petition, attending rallies organised across the UK in non work time.

“I’m in a Union that isn’t Striking”

We cannot ask these trade unionists to come out on strike, but you can seek their support in other ways. Ask them to donate to the hardship fund, attend a rally etc.

“What is the strike about?” “Why should staff be paid more?”

Use the “10 Good Reasons” campaign leaflet or the “United for Education” materials. Note that the NUS supports the HE unions’ stance that staff should be fairly paid. Show them the messages of support from NUS and other UK and International unions. Check social media #fairpayinHE for updates and photos of action across the UK.

University staff have asked for a modest pay rise that begins to tackle the problems of falling pay and offers a living wage for the lowest paid. The employers have offered a below inflation deal for the fifth year. Note that you and colleagues have lost over 13% in real terms. Point out the salary of your Vice Chancellor and other senior managers.

“Why Do You Have To Strike Again?”

We have been left with no option. We have been talking, negotiating and campaigning with the HE employers since March and talks with ACAS have seen no movement on pay. The employers won’t dig into their cash surpluses to pay staff what they are worth.

We apologise for any disruption but we ask for understanding and support, because if we can’t get a fair deal from our universities, everyone will suffer.

And finally..... By standing with your colleagues on the picket line on 3 December, you will be supporting a historic day of action. If you have any problems or difficulties on the picket lines have contact details for your UNISON Regional Organiser or UNISON centre to hand.

Not a member? Join UNISON!

Become a member instantly by calling 0800 171 2193
or join online at <https://join.unison.org.uk>