Effective Strike Participation Guidance

In order to ensure impactful participation in the upcoming strike, it is helpful to organise in advance. Planning and organising effective strike days is hard work and takes strategic planning but it can be done.

These suggestions are intended to be helpful to both new and seasoned picket organisers.

1. Set up a strike committee

Step one in the run up to any strike should be to set up a local strike committee. Ordinary members should agree to send a representative from each department who can feed back information given at these meetings to colleagues to ensure maximum participation in the upcoming strike. These meetings should focus on operational planning of the strike days. Do you want to organise marches? Demos? Invite speakers? Organise placard making events? Write locally focused leaflets? Organise socials? Send speakers to local political meetings to garner support? Organise your local strike fund…

All of these things can be organised and planned during these meetings.

These meetings should convene on a weekly basis in the run up to the strike and can continue daily during the strike if necessary.

2. Send out a picketing survey

A picketing survey of members should be sent out as soon as possible. This is easy to set up locally using survey monkey or your preferred survey tool. Set the survey up using ‘time blocks’ starting at the time you want your picket lines to begin. Eg: 6am to 8am, 8am to 10am, 10am to 12pm and so on. Create these time blocks for each of the eight strike days. This allows members to let you know what times and days they can participate in picketing. It also allows people with caring duties to let you know when they can contribute without affecting their responsibilities.

The idea of a picketing survey is to allow you to have an indication of the absolute minimum picket line participation you will have over each of the strike days. Not all members will complete the survey so you will, hopefully, get far more picketers but you will have an understanding of your baseline picket capacity in advance.

Use strike committee reps to ‘Get the survey out’, ask departmental contacts who attend strike committee meetings to prompt colleagues to complete the survey. During the 2018 USS strikes we advised members to form departmental whatsapp groups so they could stay in touch with each other during the strike and make sure their assigned area was effectively covered at all times.

3. Organise an accessible picket registration point

Many universities are unlawfully inaccessible and many of our union offices are inaccessible as a result, that is if you have a union office. Look at your student unions, if they are not a university building, speak to your students and see if they will allow picket registration in an accessible area of their union building. If not, look at local accessible venues and book for each day in advance. Make sure they open early!

4. Gather local information

Speak to members to find out what’s happening locally. Are there any high profile events, meetings taking place during the strike days? When are your winter graduation dates? Are there any open days planned? Gathering this local information allows you to strategically picket or lobby events.
5. **Targeted picket lines**

Universities tend to have a multitude of entrances where picket lines could be set up. It is usually unfeasible to expect a picket line on every single entrance so we have to be strategic. Talk to your sister campus unions, find out from Unison, Unite, GMB, EIS, where they think useful pickets might be located.

Aim for buildings which house prominent senior management or where the entrance is located on a main road. Use ‘Honk for support’ placards to ensure university managers can hear the public supporting you!

6. **On the day picket organising**

Identify Central Picket Co-ordinators and Picket Registrars. These should be Branch officers or reps who have been fully briefed on organising the pickets centrally. There should also be a Picket Supervisor identified for each day of the strike. These should be senior Branch Officers where possible. The Picket Supervisor is the main point of contact for Police, the employer, Head Office etc.

Prior to your first strike day, print out a large map and a number of smaller maps (not all members know every building!) of your campus. Also, printout a spreadsheet with the name of each building/entrance you want to picket and agreed time slots (leave enough space to write a few names in. It is best to print out this spreadsheet for each of the eight days in advance of the strikes.

Identify on the spreadsheet which are your high, medium and low priority picket lines.

**Table one:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picket line</th>
<th>6am-8am</th>
<th>8am-10am</th>
<th>10am-12pm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH PRIORITY</strong> University Management Building (Front entrance)</td>
<td>Use these boxes for picketers names only – their phone numbers should be on the registration sign in sheet so you can cross ref with this to contact them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH PRIORITY</strong> Main Building (Front entrance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEDIUM PRIORITY</strong> &lt;insert name&gt; Building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW PRIORITY</strong> &lt;insert name&gt; building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As picketers turn up, register them and give them a picketing guidance sheet which must include the phone number of the registration/central picketing office. (see appendix 1 for an example picketing guidance sheet) On registering, picketers must provide their mobile phone number.

Make sure all picketers have an ‘official picket’ armband, placard etc then assign them to a picket line according to your prioritised list. Put their names next to the picket line you have allocated them to. Cover your highest profile or most impactful picket lines first. You can expand to cover more picket lines if you have capacity as the day progresses.

It is helpful to have at least two people set up on two different desks where possible, one to register the other to allocate picketers. If lots of picketers turn up, managing both can be tricky.

The picketing survey should mean you get a constant stream of new picketers coming in at different time slots. Feedback told us that the two hour slots made picketing seem more manageable to members who had never participated before.

7. Picketer breaks

Remember, picketers need lots of breaks. Especially in cold weather. However, they must not leave their assigned picket line without cover. Set up a system where they can ring into your central picket co-ordinating office and let you know they want a break. You can then send newly registered picketers to cover or move picketers from lines which have extra capacity.

8. Sister union support

It is advisable to reach out to your closest CWU branch in advance of strike days. They have always agreed not to cross our picket lines provided an official picket line is set up at the entrance they deliver at the time they deliver. This local knowledge feeds into where your targeted picket lines should be and from what time. Stopping post getting into universities is very impactful.

It is also a good idea to send branch speakers to local political meetings where possible. Trades Council meetings give you access to a wide range of sister unions who can send support to picket lines, demos and marches, provide you with speakers and arrange donations for your local strike funds. Also look at anti-austerity groups, active pensioner organisations, Constituency Party meetings are good but unfortunately in the run up to the General Election these will not be accessible unless you have members who sit on the Exec Committees. It is also imperative that you reach out to student groups. Look at local student societies as well as your official student union. Ask can you speak at any of their meetings or send them a statement explaining the reasons for the strike and why we value their support.

Wrap up warm and happy picketing!
University of Liverpool UCU
Guidance for Picketing
USS Strike 2018

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
UCU Office telephone no: 0151 794 3246
Twitter: @UlivUCU2 use #UCUStrike #livunistrike
Facebook: @UoLUCU

Register:
• It is vitally important that all pickets are registered at the UCU branch office (20 Oxford St). You must sign in, leave your mobile number, wear an ‘Official Picket’ armband and pick up a picketing pack. Please note, we will not pass on your personal details to anyone, this is just so we have accurate information on numbers and can contact you if we need to.

Location:
• You will be allocated a picketing location in accordance with the central strategic picketing plan. If all strategic points are covered, you can choose where to picket.

Communicate:
• You must maintain communication with the UCU office at all times. If you want to leave your picket for a break, to change picket location or to go home, you must ring the UCU office (number above) and inform the Central Picket Co-ordinator so they can send relief pickets to your location. You must not leave your location until the relief pickets arrive.

Leaflet renewal:
If you run out of leaflets or experience any difficulties at all on the picket line, ring the UCU office. Leaflet runners will bring extra supplies as required.

Armbands and Placards:

You must wear the UCU "Official Picket" armband supplied whenever you are on a picket line, and ensure that an "Official Dispute" placard is displayed at each location. Ensure that your placards do not obstruct the public footpath or any disabled access.

Role of the Picketer:

Picketing provides an opportunity to leaflet staff, students and members of the public and explain the reasons for our action. Any union member, work colleague or member of the public who approaches the picket line should be spoken to, given a leaflet and the reason for the strike explained to them in a polite and courteous manner.

Crossing the line:

If any union members who are known to you cross the picket line, please give their names to an officer of the appropriate union at the UCU office at the end of the picket.

Join UCU on the picket line:

Any university staff who are not union members may join UCU at the picket line and legally take part in the strike, if a member of staff wishes to join the union, please send them to the UCU office so we can register them online on the UCU office computer.

Non-UCU members:

The University’s latest communication to the Branch has confirmed in writing that they will not discipline any non UCU staff who refuse to cross the picket lines, they will just deduct pay. Please note, no UCU members will be disciplined for taking part in this legal industrial action.

Unison and Unite members

Any Unite or Unison members who cross the picket line should be asked not to undertake any duties or responsibilities for those staff on strike where these duties don’t form part of their normal contract. They can also join us at our rally on Friday at 12.30 in The Casa.

Libraries:

We have assured the Guild that we will remove all pickets from Library front entrances at 9.30am so students can use those facilities to study.

Picket Supervisors are:

Thursday Feb 22nd – Martin Ralph
Fri Feb 23rd-Thurs March 8th – Jo McNeill
Mon March 12th to Fri March 16th – Mark O’Brien
**Central Picket Co-ordinators:**

The role holder will change throughout the strike action, the UCU Office will know who this is on a daily basis.