



STRIKE FOR FAIR PENSIONS

What's happening?

We are SOAS support staff and members of UNISON trade union and we are taking strike action on 20, 21 and 24 February over changes to our pension, the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).

Our academic colleagues in the UCU trade union are also striking for 14 days across February and March against these USS pension changes, pay cuts, BAME and gender pay gaps, casualisation and workloads. We are striking together for a fairer future for everyone at SOAS.

Why are you striking?

University employers are ignoring pension experts and want us to pay more based on a flawed assessment of the value of the USS pension pot. Changes to our pension since 2011 mean a typical USS scheme member is around £240,000 worse off in retirement than they would have been without the changes.

Over the past few months, further changes have been pushed through by employers to increase our pension contributions (9.6% rather than 8.8% of our salary) and we expect that this will be raised further in 2021. These increases will price lower-paid staff out of the pension scheme altogether, meaning some of us face poverty in our retirement. We believe staff have given enough and want our employers to agree a fairer long-term solution.

What is a trade union? What is a strike?

A trade union is an organisation of workers at a workplace. We collectively negotiate with our employer and look after each other in times of need. UNISON represents support staff at SOAS.

A strike is a period of time where members of a trade union agree to not come into work in protest about a problem they face. By refusing to work we are trying to disrupt the normal running of the university to put pressure on SOAS to find a fairer solution to the dispute. When staff go on strike we forfeit our pay. This is a hugely difficult decision for us to make but our fears about our retirement and the employers' refusal to genuinely negotiate has led us to strike as a last resort.

Why are you outside the buildings?

We are organising a picket line. This is a boundary established by workers on strike which others are asked not to cross. We are trying to persuade other workers and students not to go into work or use the facilities in the SOAS buildings. By doing so, we are hoping to put pressure on SOAS to act on our legitimate concerns over the unfair changes to our pensions.

How can I support you?

If you are a student

- **Do not cross our picket line to enter the SOAS buildings.** Many classes will be cancelled and services disrupted. The Students' Union supports our strike and is providing advice on local places where you can study, pray, or access support (www.soasunion.org/campaigns/ucustrikes2020). The JCR will be closed. SOAS agrees that attendance is not being recorded on strike days for students on Tier 4 Visas.
- **Visit us on our picket line.** Join the teach-out events organised by the striking trade unions (www.ucusoas.wixsite.com/strike2020).
- **Write to the SOAS Director** asking that she acts on striking staff's concerns (www.ucu.org.uk/studentvoice)

If you are a staff member not on strike

- **We are asking people not to go into work.** Please show as much respect to our picket line as you can. SOAS agrees that 'employees who do not attend work as a result of a refusal to cross a picket line will be treated as employees taking strike action' (SOAS *Industrial Action Policy*, p. 3), *ie* pay will be deducted but you'll not face further sanction.
- If you do go into work on a strike day then **do not under any circumstances cover the work we would normally be doing** or undermine the impact of our strike action in any way.
- **Join the lunchtime rallies and teach-out events.**
Circulate our leaflets. Hot drinks and food are always welcome!
- **Donate to our local UNISON Strike Fund.**
s/c 60-83-01 acc 49022162 ref: IAF-20.