

## **Statement from Elected Senators on the Ongoing USS Dispute**

We have taken a collective decision to not attend Senate on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018 unless a material change in circumstances occurs. This meeting of Senate is taking place in a period of ongoing industrial action. While we are not all taking strike action, we all feel that it is important to express our solidarity with those colleagues taking action.

Critically, we believe that the dispute over USS pensions raises serious issues relating to academic quality and standards. We are concerned that the actions taken by City leadership and UUK in this dispute are having a negative impact on educational quality at City, University of London. It is our responsibility as elected senators to speak up about this.

### **The proposed changes**

- 1) The worsening of pensions, with losses estimated to be as high as fifty percent, alongside the negative publicity this has generated about terms of employment in British Universities, will provide an obstacle in our effort to attract the best international academics to City. Pushing through this proposal also shows a disregard for the interests of existing staff and may make it difficult to retain the best staff, especially in fields with viable private sector or post-92 alternatives.
- 2) The university and UUK have failed to engage with arguments, including those made by our actuarial department, that contest the assumptions underpinning the deficit valuation. Given that the deficit has been used to argue for a move from a Defined Benefit to a Defined Contribution scheme this suggests a disappointing lack of academic rigor, especially given the stakes involved. Other institutions have recognised that alternative credible valuations exist.

### **How City is managing the dispute**

- 3) Staff goodwill has been undermined by aggressive communication around pay deductions for participating in action short of a strike (ASOS) and refusal to reschedule teaching that has been missed and for which pay has already been deducted. Our university works best when we share a common purpose and we are concerned that threats and ill-feeling from this dispute will mar future working relations in the institution, undermining the Vision 2026 commitment to Community. It is also possible that a punitive approach to ASOS will result in negative publicity and a backlash from alumni donors, something that has already hit the Universities of Sheffield and Leeds.
- 4) Initial student-facing communication about the 'limited' impact of the action and the likelihood that everything will be rescheduled evidently irritated students who were aware that in some areas there was considerable disruption. By making promises that were unachievable, given the scale of disruption and our logistical limitations, the university failed to manage expectations. A more realistic approach to communication, developed by the institution in collaboration with teaching staff taking action, might have better retained student goodwill in the critical NSS period.
- 5) Pressure on managers to find cover for missed classes by hiring visiting lecturers or retired colleagues undermines our claim to value high-quality research-led teaching, because it assumes that all teaching is substitutable. It also supposes that colleagues responsible for

teaching would fail to provide sufficient support for students facing missed sessions. There is no evidence that this is the case.

**Signed by the following elected senators**

Arts & Soc Sciences	Professor Giulia Iori
Arts & Soc Sciences	Professor Jean Chalaby
Arts & Soc Sciences	Professor Mireia Jofre-Bonet
Arts & Soc Sciences	Dr Rachel Cohen (Senior Elected Senator)
Arts & Soc Sciences	Dr Xenia Dassiou
Business	Professor Charles Baden-Fuller
Business	Professor Anthony Neuberger
Business	Dr Elena Novelli
Health Sciences	Dr Chris Flood
Maths, Comp Sci & Eng	Dr Anton Cox
Maths, Comp Sci & Eng	Professor Abdunaser Sayma
Law	Professor Susan Blake
Law	Mr Keith Simpson
Law	Mr Sarwan Singh