

WHY WE ARE STRIKING

Imagine you are in the final year of your degree. You've worked hard, you've passed all your coursework and exams, and you are confident you'll receive a good qualification. Then you learn the marking criteria have been changed. You have now failed all your modules. Instead of graduating, your studies are terminated.

Lecturers in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences are facing a similar situation. In February 47 members of staff were notified that they faced the possibility of being made redundant based on criteria they had no idea they would ever be assessed against. Staff and students in the Faculty and the union stood up for their colleagues. The number now under threat has been reduced to 32. But the process of selection is still unfair and hundreds of hours of teaching, as well as numerous other collaborative activities will be left in tatters if these lecturers go.

The ramifications of this are far-reaching. Lecturers are losing their jobs. Students are losing their teachers. For now, the consequences are being felt most strongly in Health and Life Sciences. But this process puts every member of staff, every department and every degree programme at future risk.

Your teachers and your fellow students need your help. Does this situation sound fair? What would you do?

Please read on to find out a bit more about the situation, and what you can do to help.

Flawed and unjustified proposals

Senior management intend to make 32 academic staff members in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences redundant as part of a restructure titled 'Project SHAPE'.

Teaching and research staff now face the bleak prospect of being made unemployed in a job market that has been ravaged by the pandemic. They are being disposed of using crude metrics. We believe these redundancies are unlawful. There is no economic necessity for these job cuts.

This brutal attack on jobs has destroyed any trust that staff have in management. At a time when UCU is seeking to address casualisation and precarious employment, including tackling 37% of teaching staff being on fixed term contracts, these proposals have the potential to make all lecturers precarious and liable to being fired at any moment. This lack of job security has a detrimental impact on your student experience.

What would the redundancies mean for your education?

There would be profound and widespread impacts on many undergraduate and postgraduate courses as well as postgraduate research students. Remaining staff will be extremely overstretched and struggle to patch together some courses to teach you in September or take over supervision of ongoing Master's and PhD projects at the end of July. Staff members with substantial teaching responsibilities have been disproportionately targeted. This is because staff were primarily chosen for redundancy based on the monetary value of research grants they have won in the last 5 years, not counting the funding for PhD students, or the actual value of their research for science and society.

Students deserve better from those who are supposed to keep the University running smoothly. Based on the numbers affected, and the individuals that have bravely spoken out about being targeted it is likely that:

- Some of the modules you are currently registering for will not be available in September
- As an emergency measure, staff may be moved to teach the modules that are most vital for your progression, but they won't have adequate time to prepare for this unfamiliar teaching, and many not be an expert in the new area
- Class sizes will be larger
- Fewer teachers per student also means teachers will have less time for each student
- You may not be able to do your final year research project in the area you prefer
- Within a year or two, some degree programmes may have to close
- Potentially dozens of Postgraduate Research students will lose a specialist academic supervisor
- At least one department (Psychology) will fall below the minimum staff-student ratio required for the professional accreditation of their degrees, devaluing the degrees of over 1000 current students

These consequences will be felt most strongly and immediately by Health and Life Sciences students. But if the University succeeds in pushing through its redundancy scheme, this could be your future reality, whatever department you are in.

What can you do to help?

We have voted overwhelmingly in the largest ever turnout in an industrial action ballot to take industrial action to protect the livelihoods of our colleagues and friends. We will be taking Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) from 10th May. Full strike action will follow if management do not abandon these proposals.

The officers in the Liverpool Guild of Students have given their full support to our campaign. You can too by sending an e-mails expressing your concerns and demanding the redundancies are withdrawn to the following members of the Senior Leadership Team:

- Vice Chancellor Dame Professor Janet Beer jbeer@liverpool.ac.uk
- Executive Pro Vice Chancellor Health and Life Sciences, Professor Louise Kenny Louise.Kenny@liverpool.ac.uk
- Pro Vice Chancellor for Research, Professor Anthony Hollander aholla@liverpool.ac.uk
- Pro Vice Chancellor for Education, Professor Gavin Brown gmbrown@liverpool.ac.uk

Strike action is completely avoidable if these senior managers listen to your voices and withdraw these redundancies. Our working conditions are your learning conditions.

Please join us and make your voice heard.

<https://www.liverpoolguild.org/articles/officer-stance-on-project-shape-redundancies>

