



Questions and answers about UNISON one day strike to be held on Thursday 28th May 2009

Why are UNISON members going on strike?

Members of UNISON are taking strike action following the dismissal of a member of staff for gross misconduct. The decision to strike was taken after a disciplinary hearing and a failed appeal.

Who voted for strike action?

A ballot was held of the 110 members of UNISON who work at SOAS. Forty five ballot papers were returned - 14 voted against strike action and 31 voted in favour. SOAS employs more than 1,000 people so this is less than three per cent of the staff population and just 28 per cent of UNISON members.

Is the School able to disclose details of the case?

The School believes that internal disciplinary and grievance complaints should remain confidential and not be made available. That is why the School is deeply disappointed that individuals participating in the disciplinary process, including the complainant, have been named by union representatives.

Was the disciplinary process carried out in a fair manner?

SOAS's disciplinary and grievance processes have been agreed with UNISON and UCU. The disciplinary procedures were fully complied with and UNISON regional officers were involved throughout the process.

Was the appeal carried out in a similar way?

The appeal against dismissal was conducted according to the process agreed with UNISON. The same UNISON regional officer represented the member of staff at this hearing. The representative confirmed from the outset that she was happy with the hearing panel.

How will a strike affect staff and students?

The School will do all it can to minimise disruption. Some library and IT services may be affected which will inevitably impact on staff and students.

Can anyone take strike action?

No. Only members of UNISON who voted for action will be protected by law. Staff who take 'sympathy' action (not in unions and in unions other than UNISON) will be in breach of their contract.

Do I have to take strike action if I'm a UNISON member?

No. UNISON members are entitled to take strike action but are not obliged to do so.

What are the consequences of going on strike?

UNISON members who go on strike will be in breach of their contract and as a result, the School will deduct a day's pay.

Does the School have a policy on pay deduction?

Yes and it can be found on the SOAS website <http://www.soas.ac.uk/hr/procedures/>

Will there be a picket line?

UNISON is organising pickets at the main entrance to SOAS premises. There will be no more than six official pickets at the entrance to the building and they will be identified by armbands. Pickets will be respectful and not in any way threatening. Members of staff are not obliged to speak to those taking part.

What if I am on leave on the day of the strike?

Staff who have already booked annual leave will not be affected. However we have advised managers that any further annual leave requested on the day of the strike will not be agreed to ensure adequate staffing levels.

What if I am working from home or away from the office on SOAS business?

Staff who normally work from home on this day or those away on School business should confirm their arrangement with their line manager to ensure pay is not deducted.

What are the consequences of strike action?

Taking strike action will inevitably lead to students not being able to access all the services they need and staff may have to cover for colleagues who are on strike. It will also lead to UNISON members losing a day's pay.

What next?

SOAS is disappointed that strike action is going ahead despite all the proper processes being followed. It does not wish to suspend its internal processes, which were agreed with unions, on the basis of one case. The School remains committed to working with unions to ensure that all policies and procedures are implemented effectively and that similar action is avoided in the future.



Human Resources Department
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