**OU Branch of UCU**

**Frequently asked questions about our local hardship fund**

**January 2024 –how the Marking and assessment boycott (MAB) is handled**

**Q. Will UCU be able to support me financially, if I take part in strike action and face hardship as a result?**

A. Yes. With industrial action, the local branch and national UCU appreciates that for some members this is just not a financial loss they can afford to take in full. This branch is also strongly committed to giving financial support to prevent hardship for members taking strike action. Those who need financial assistance can access the local OU branch hardship scheme.

**Q. How much support will national UCU provide?**

A. For universities making 20% deductions (such as the OU), the national fighting fund will not be providing any support.

**Q. How much support will the OU branch provide?**

A. In case of hardship, the OU branch will provide up to £90 per day of deductions. If your salary is less than £90 per day, the salary used by the OU for the deductions will apply.

**Q. When should I expect the deductions to be taken from my salary?**

A. For the MAB industrial action, the University is making deductions starting with the January 2024 payroll. For large deductions, it will split the deductions into three, affecting the January, February and March payrolls. Some deductions may run into April, particularly if there are queries.

**Q. When can I apply?**

A. For both the fighting fund and hardship funds you can apply as soon as you have had pay deducted/received a payslip with a deduction. Hardship payments will be made as payslips are made available.

**Q. What rules will apply?**

• Applications can only be made after the deductions have been made.

• Evidence will be required in the form of a payslip showing the salary and deductions made.

• The salary will be used to check the number of days deduction and the appropriate rate of union subscription.

**Q. Is the funding from the hardship fund taxable?**

A. No, the funding is not taxable, and does not need to be declared as income.

**Q. What happens if the OU refunds strike deductions?**

A. In this case we would ask that you return any funds from the hardship fund within 3 months of the OU refunding strike deductions.

**Q. What can I do now to make sure I am eligible to claim financial support?**

A. Payments are dependent on the member paying the current UCU subscription rate for their salary. This is the gross salary, before any deductions such as USS and tax, are made. If you think you might need to apply for financial support, it is essential that you check as soon as possible that you are paying the correct subscription rate for the contract you currently have. You can do this on the [MyUCU](https://my.ucu.org.uk/app/utils/login_form/redirect/membership%252Fmy_details/) website area. In particular, this may affect anyone who has changed their salary band or working hours since they joined UCU. This includes ALs, whose correct rate must reflect all modules for which they are currently contracted, even if there is only a temporary FTE increase.

**Q. Who will be involved in handling claims to the local OU branch hardship fund?**

A. Applications to the local hardship scheme will be put before a UCU branch sub-committee, consisting of the Treasurer and two other current or former senior members of the Union Executive Committee. Where practicable, personally identifiable details will not be made available to the sub-committee.

**Q. Is there a time limit for making a claim?**

A. Claims must be made within 12 months of the salary deduction in question and within 3 months of the last salary deduction.

**Q. How is the University calculating the deductions?**

Each member of staff taking part in the MAB will be deducted 20% of salary for each day of action. The way in which this is calculated was changed half-way through. Here is a sample (anonymised) explanation given by Payroll.

The MAB participation period was split into two phases: Part 1 held between 20 April 2023 and 27 July 2023; Part 2 held between 28 July 2023 and 06 September 2023.

You advised that you participated in part 1 and part 2. During part 1, deductions were made for each day that you would have ordinarily worked; and for part 2, deductions were based on working five days out of seven for the period of participation. Please note that any periods of approved absence and/or Bank Holidays have been removed from your total number of participation days. Based on the information that you provided within the form your total deduction is **£xxx**.

Deductions are applied at a daily rate of 1/365th of your annual salary prior to the cost-of-living salary increase in August 2023.

**Calculation Details**

Your deduction calculation details are as follows:

Start Date – 21-04-2023

End Date - 06-09-2023

Annual Salary – £yyy

Number of Days Participated in part 1 – aa

Number of Days Participated in part 2 –bb

Deduction Calculation – (20% x (aa+bb)/ 365) x £yyy

**Deduction Method**

The deduction will be split into three equal amounts and will be deducted in January, February and March 2024 as requested in your participation form.

Please note that standard tax, NI and pension contributions will apply.

**Finally**

If you have any questions about the support available, please contact the UCU office: [ucu-hardship-applications@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu-hardship-applications@open.ac.uk).

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