



2020-0006779MDPO

Michelle Donelan MP
Minister of State for Universities

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Jake Verity
President, University of Sheffield Students' Union

Email: su-president@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Mr Verity,

Thank you for your joint letter of 28 February setting out your concerns about the current ongoing disputes between the University and College Union and employers. I would be grateful if you could share a copy of this reply with your co-signatories.

I do understand your concerns about this matter. As you will be aware, universities are independent institutions responsible for their own decisions about pay, terms of employment and pensions. However, any action that deprives a student of their education is concerning. It is important that any disruption that may be caused is minimised and students' learning is not unduly affected.

Higher education (HE) providers have obligations under consumer law that are likely to be relevant to students facing disruption due to strike action. The government expects HE providers to consider students' consumer rights carefully in such events, ensuring that appropriate remedies and mitigations, including compensation, are available to them, to prevent and minimise the effects of any strike action upon its students.

However, it is important to note that students who are concerned about any issue related to their HE experience should in the first instance report their concerns to their HE provider. Guidance issued by the regulator, the Office for Students, encourages students affected by industrial action to discuss with their university whether it is possible to make up for any lost teaching and whether any other loss of services and support can be rearranged to minimise the disruption that students have experienced.

Where lost teaching has had an impact on assessments or other work that must be submitted, students may be able to submit a claim for this to be taken into account as part of the university's mitigating or extenuating circumstances process. Should this not be resolved, students can escalate the process through the university's complaints procedure.

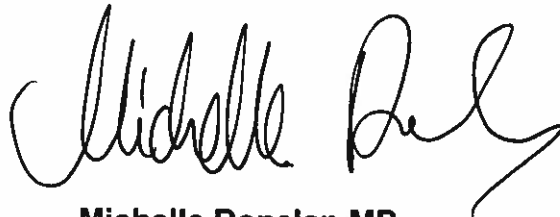
If the issue still remains unresolved, students have the right to make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA has published guidance on its website about its approach to complaints by students affected by the industrial action, and this is available to view at: tinyurl.com/TR55QE4.

Case studies on how the OIA has handled complaints on previous industrial action are also available to view at: tinyurl.com/VZ45TDA.

I strongly encourage all sides to continue to engage in constructive talks and bring these disputes to an end. However, as I am sure will appreciate, I am unable to intervene personally.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Donelan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michelle Donelan MP
Minister of State for Universities