

# THE BULLETIN

Nov 2014



UCL DEFEND EDUCATION

Free



**AGITATE  
ORGANISE  
RESIST**

**MARCH FOR  
FREE EDUCATION  
NOV 19. QUAD. 11AM**

## WHO ARE YOU AND WHY AM I READING THIS?

*FB: UCL Defend Education  
@uclantics*

We're a group based at UCL, campaigning for free, funded, accessible education, and for social justice and freedom more broadly. We want educational institutions to be liberatory and democratic, not tied to serving the interests of business and the government, and we fight for decent conditions for students and education workers. We resist cuts, marketization and privatisation, not only in education but other public services, and we oppose sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and disablism.

Our group came out of 2010's mass occupations and protests against tuition fee increases. Since then, we've helped Stratford residents defeat our university's attempt to bulldoze their homes, played our part in the national campaign that halted the privatisation of student debt, supported campus workers striking for decent pay. We are part of a democratic network of student activists across the country through our affiliation to the National Campaign Against Fees & Cuts.

We are a democratic, open group for anyone who agrees with these goals. We meet weekly at 6pm on Wednesdays to organise. Come and have a chat!

*Our first meeting this term is our launch on Oct 1, 6pm - see back for details.*

# YOUR LECTURER WON'T MARK YOUR WORK. THIS IS WHY.

On 6 November, university senior managers' refusal to back down over attacks on pensions left staff in the UCU trade union no choice but to start an assessment boycott. That means that at UCL and 68 other universities, staff – including postgrad TAs – won't set or mark exams, assessed assignments or coursework until their pensions are protected. We must be clear – university bosses are entirely to blame for any disruption causes to students. The boycott could halt tomorrow if the attacks were called off.

## Solidarity

UCU members have supported our fight against fees and it's time for students to return that solidarity. Students stand to lose out too. The changes won't just slash retirement benefits by up to 27% for the people who make our education happen, pursuing them to the grave with

financial insecurity. They will also damage the quality of education, and make it easier for university bosses and the government to implement further spending cuts and privatisation in universities later. They're part of the ongoing neoliberal effort to smash the right to a decent pension across the economy.

## Bad maths!

What's more, the employers are justifying the cuts based on dodgy statistics and misleading analyses, which have been criticised by experts – and even by some university managers! Even if there was a big deficit in the pension fund, it should be filled by cutting universities' marketing gimmicks, senior managers' six-figure salaries, and the profits of outsourcing companies – workers shouldn't bear the brunt! Now, rather than backing down

so the boycott can end and staff and students can be protected, bosses at some universities want to make matters worse and escalate the dispute by victimising staff implementing the boycott.

## Practical help!

UCL Defend Education stands in solidarity with our staff. We're not just fighting for their rights but to defend education and students' interests too. We've won UCLU's support, and started a student petition to sign and share. And over the coming weeks we'll be working to spread the word and, if necessary, organising protest and direct action to support staff. Join our meetings to get involved!

**Sign the petition:** [chn.ge/1Eo7qAu](https://chn.ge/1Eo7qAu)  
**Find out more:** [ucl.org/defendpensions](https://ucl.org/defendpensions)

## HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE IN QATAR

UCL Campus was established in 2012 and offers various masters and research programs. You must, however, be aware of the terrifying work conditions and more than a thousand workers that died during the building work for the 2022 Fifa World Cup.

## Imprisoned by Work

This not exclusive to the World Cup, Qatar is know for the vil Kafala system that affects migrant workers (94% of the work-force in Qatar). These workers enter the country through a sponsorship (kafala) system where their bosses are their sponsors. That results many times in the confiscation of their passports by the bosses. Besides, most workers are paid about \$1 per hour and most of

their first salaries goes towards the plane/boat ticket they took to get to Qatar. Without a passport or money and trapped by the kafala system that states that they need permission from their bosses to move jobs, workers find themselves imprisoned. Workers are also barely allowed to organize to fight for a better life. Trade unions in Qatar have to be linked to a national state-supervised union, and strikes can only happen after governemntal approval.

## LGBT+ Rights Abuses

LGBT+ rights in Qatar are not great either. Currently transgender people do not have the right to challenge their legal gender, male homosexuality is considered a crime and lesbians can also be punished

for violating "morality laws". It is repulsive that UCL, proud to be one of the first university in the UK founded on humanist grounds, have not reacted to those practices in Qatar.

## We can help!

We should stand up to defend the rights of our fellow students and workers in UCLQ. Workers should have a decent wage, an independent union and similar work conditions to the workers in the London campus; students should organize in a student union; and LGBT+ students and staff should be protected from discrimination of any kind. **Come to the meeting hosted by UCL DefEd on Dec 2 to help develop demands and build a campaign.**

# HALLS OF HORROR

For most, living in halls isn't exactly luxurious but we put up with it. Most students experience any number of 'horror stories' during their time in student accommodation. Certainly, after only a couple of months at UCL, the newest batch of freshers already have enough to last them a year.

## Cockroaches!

If you live in Max Rayne you will now likely be intimately familiar with the cockroaches. Students are finding them across the building; in their kitchens and even in their bedrooms. Does Max Rayne somehow attract unhygienic



*Artists impression of a cockroach*

students or are UCL ignoring what must be an infestation?

## Fire!

For other unlucky students, attempting to cook for the first time after arriving ended with the arrival of two fire engines. Understandable, perhaps, if they had burnt their cooking, but not so much when all they did was turn on the ovens. Within minutes the kitchen was filled with smoke due to the incredibly poor condition of these ovens. There are plenty of other stories, too. From toilets being out of use for the first two weeks upon arrival, to a windowsill that is held together with tape and numerous bedroom windows that aren't even sealed properly.

## Water?

There was also the infamous 48 hours during which Ifor Evans and Max Rayne were without hot water and heating after a fuse was blown. At least the students were contacted by management about

it... once the problem had been fixed. Fortunately, at the start of term, a few lucky students were able to put off the halls 'experience' for about a week as building work had not been completed in their accommodation when they arrived.

## The rent is...

However, if most students, past and present, have had some kind of 'horror' experience during their time in halls, why bother writing about them? The answer is simple: the rent is too high. UCL runs some of the most expensive student accommodation in the country and that would be somewhat justifiable if it ran some of the best student accommodation in the country, but it doesn't. Excluding the 'horror' events, the basic standard of student accommodation does not correspond to the price that we are paying. When UCL charge extortionate rents and don't invest it back into the accommodation (or at least charge lower rents), the students have to put their foot down and do something about it.

## DON'T JUST ASK NICELY: STRIKE!

We don't have to settle for these extortionate rents and terrible living conditions. Already at halls in Camden, residents with elected reps are organising together and putting pressure on the managers to fulfil their demands. Get in touch with us to join that campaign or for help starting one in another hal

Sadly it's not always enough to ask nicely. UCL managers have an interest in keeping rents high and costs

low. Our campaigns could have to take action to force improvements.

In the past, one powerful tactic has been the rent strike. Residents collectively agree not to pay rent until an acceptable deal is reached. At Sussex in the 1970s a student rent strike halved a rent rise and stopped low quality halls being built. 4 years ago, an Oxford college struck over fire safety.

We hope UCL managers voluntarily improve standards and cut rents. But if we have to fight, we will.

Please tack this to Top of Lower End of Window.  
Glasgow Labour Party Housing Association  
**RENT STRIKE**  
**AGAINST INCREASES**  
**WE ARE**  
**NOT REMOVING**

# WHAT'S THE POINT IN MARCHING?

We do not expect to wake up on November 20 with free education. We all know, secretly, that marching on Parliament does not automatically solve the problem we are marching against or give us what we are marching for. What then is the point of marching?

## Find eachother!

First of all, mass demonstrations do offer a sense of empowerment in and of themselves; the feeling of being able to roam the streets of a city. This value of this experience cannot be denied and it is often the stepping stone to more radical actions.

## Solidarity

The demonstration also builds solidarity between activists old and new - it is unfortunate, however, that this is usually at its highest in the face of adversity such as heavy policing, and we must look to transferring that solidarity out of the demonstration and in to day to day life and building our activist networks.

## Direct Action

One of the most important functions

of a demonstration is a springboard for direct action. Think of the occupations of Millbank or Fortnum & Masons, or the invasions of banks and tax avoiders: most have used the energy from marches to go on to do more radical actions. Whilst activists on demonstrations should not feel forced to do these things, demonstrations to contain a vast amount of potential energy which makes direct action possible.

## This is just the beginning

We can't win free education just by passing policy, and nor can we win it just by marching; we have to win it by occupying, organising and agitating in our communities and on our campuses to build a mass movement that does not just include university students school and college students and workers. In short, the point of demonstrations is that each and every one has the potential to act as the beginning of a new wave of action, and has the potential for a new generation of activists to once again feel as if they own the streets.

**November 19 is just the beginning. See you there.**

# THINGS TO KEEP YOU OCCUPIED

Nov 17

Banner Making for the Free Education demo.

Portico  
6pm

Nov 19

**NATIONAL DEMO FOR FREE EDUCATION**

Quad  
11am

Nov 20

London-wide Meeting:  
Where Next for the Student Movement??

Venue tbc  
6pm

Dec 2

Workers' Rights in Qatar  
UCL Medical Sciences G46  
6pm

**Every Wednesday:**

*Defend Education meets every Wednesday at 6 in Drayton B.06 to organise our campaigns and then have a bit of a social!*

# WHY MASK UP?

We mask up to protect ourselves from a surveillance state which is ever growing to target and identify activists. It doesn't matter if what you do is entirely peaceful, police will still try to identify you, create a file on you and attempt to prosecute you. Endless evidence proves the police and state security services target protesters, activists and campaigners of any type.

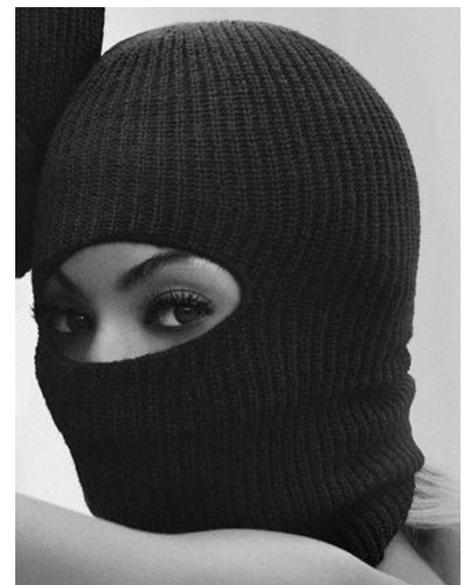
## Random Arrests

Last year UCL students both in, and walking past, a 'cops off campus' demo were randomly arrested; everyone is a possible target and thus all must

take the precautions necessary to protect themselves from the arbitrary intimidation of the state. Even if you're not participating in direct action, masking up gives solidarity to those that do by letting them hide within our ranks. Protection is in numbers.

## Retaliation

It's often said we should avoid masks and be proud of what we do. But the system doesn't reward our pride, and when we're fighting against the government, it's stupid not to expect them to retaliate, and history proves they do.



*Beyonce knows the dress code.*