

Hardship Fund - Guidance for Members

The Local CUCU Branch Hardship Fund provides support to CUCU members during disputes where substantial pay is deducted for taking part in industrial action. This local support is **in addition** to UCU's [National Fighting Fund](#).

The branch's Hardship Fund relies solely on donations and therefore does not always have sufficient funds to support all members that may apply. The Hardship Panel asks that only those **in need** apply. The panel reserves the right to adjust payments or refuse payments.

Please note that our dispute is with the university, and you cannot strike from work paid by the colleges. See our FAQs for more information.

Eligibility (national & local)

If you are a central member of staff (have a contract of employment with the University) you are encouraged to **apply to the [National Fighting Fund](#) in the first instance (with exception of ASOS/MAB, see below)**. However, if you are in a position of hardship, do not hesitate to then apply to the local fund.

To be eligible to make an application to the fund you must meet the following criteria:

- Be a current and fully paid-up member of the union at the time of the action and the date of application. Please note that no payment can be made for members who are in arrears or paying at an incorrect subscription level.
- Have taken part in the industrial action called by the union.
- Have lost pay for the action.
- Be a worker or employee of the University of Cambridge or be in receipt of a university stipend. This includes casual staff hired by the University on workers' agreements (for example demonstrators, hourly-paid teachers or research assistants).
- Be able to supply a scanned copy, or photocopy, of your pay slip(s) showing the gross amount of pay deducted in respect of each day's participation in the action. If you don't normally receive a payslip (for example, because you are a casual worker on a workers' agreement), you need to be able to provide other evidence that you suffered a deduction from your earnings because of having participated in the action (see below).
- Have made the application to the CUCU Local Hardship fund within 3 months of the last payslip showing wage deductions because of strike action.

Please note: Where local branch Hardship funding is made available to members, this is normally paid out only after the **1st** day of action taken and from **the 2nd day** of lost pay. Where appropriate this principle will be interpreted flexibly or on a pro-rata basis in relation to part-time and hourly-paid staff.

The hardship committee also welcomes applications from those workers that the University classifies as self-employed, who were scheduled to work on strike days, but who have cancelled their work due to the industrial action (for example, guest lecturers due to teach a one-off session). Evidence that work had been offered and accepted prior to strike action but was cancelled afterwards due to strike action (like an email exchange), will need to be supplied for the claim to be considered.

Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) & Marking & Assessment Boycott (MAB)

For MAB deductions: the national fighting fund only applies for 100% deductions, so in this case you do not need to apply to the national fund before applying to the local fund.

During any ASOS/MAB, payments from the local hardship fund will be reduced in line with the scale of pay deductions. e.g. if the university is deducting 50% of pay we will make payments of £25/£37.50 respectively for higher and lower paid staff.

In making assessments, the panel will prioritise claims from members with low monthly pay, and:

- on casualised, temporary hourly paid or fractional contracts;
- with costs associated with being a migrant worker in the UK;
- at risk of rent or mortgage arrears;
- single salary household, or with a whole household income where more than one income is affected by the action;
- with dependents;
- at risk of other forms of financial hardship.

These criteria have been chosen following the example of QMUL (<https://qmucu.org/apply-for-the-strike-fund/>).

If you wish to be prioritised based on one or more of these criteria please indicate this on your application.

What evidence is needed to support an application for financial support?

Applications must be accompanied by evidence of pay deduction, i.e. copies of the relevant pay slip from the employer. Applications for financial support cannot be considered without this evidence unless in the most exceptional circumstances, where application is made for an advance on a hardship payment. Your pay slip will be treated with strict confidentiality. Scanned pay slips can be submitted in PDF or JPEG format.

For those members who do not normally receive a payslip, you must provide evidence of your work for the University (eg. a temporary worker agreement, timetables, copy emails regarding details of lectures/supervisions missed by taking strike action. These can include copy emails of cancellation notifications of supervisions/lectures to students etc).

Exceptional Advance Payments and Repayment of Advances

The CUCU Local Hardship Fund can, in exceptional circumstances, provide funding in advance of payslip evidence, in anticipation that the appropriate payslip evidence will be provided within 3 months and that the member is fully eligible to receive hardship funding. These are 'advance' funds.

If the applicant is found to be not to meet the criteria listed above under "Eligibility", or if payslip evidence is not provided, the advance must be repaid in full.

What happens if the employer reimburses my deducted pay?

If this happens, we expect you to repay any payment you receive from the Hardship fund within 3 months of receiving the reimbursed pay from the employer. This will allow us to maintain the Hardship fund to support members taking action in future.

How will I be paid?

The application asks you to provide your bank account details. Payment will be made by BACS (bank transfer) only. **Please ensure that you correctly enter all the bank details, as we may not be able to recover payments sent to an incorrect bank account.** If this happens, we regret it may not be possible to make a further payment from the fund to compensate for a mis-directed payment.

What will I be paid?

It is expected that the maximum payment per member will be *£75 per day of lost pay, and the total payment may be capped. Applications are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and the amounts awarded may vary according to members' circumstances. Payment from the Local Hardship Fund combined with the strike pay from the national Fighting Fund cannot amount to more than the loss of earnings.

Please refer to the **Hardship Fund General Information for further details of the payment structure as this differs based on annual income.*

As a local fund, the Panel can apply discretion to the amount paid, where it feels it is most needed. If you feel you would qualify for further discretion, please make this evident (with back up information) via your application.

The executive committee is in the process of agreeing payment levels for casual workers who participate in the MAB and might not be deducted by days of participation by the university. We will update this page soon with relevant information.

When can payment be expected from the local CUCU Hardship Fund?

The panel for the local Hardship Fund will endeavour to process applications and make payments as quickly as possible after receiving evidence of deductions. If a member's application for Local Hardship Fund support is approved, then the Branch will endeavour to make payment of the funds within 3 weeks of the application being received.

Such a turnaround time will normally mean there is a minimum 3-week gap between loss of earnings and Hardship Fund payment owing to the need to provide documentary evidence of pay deductions.

If there are significant personal circumstances leaving the striking member vulnerable (e.g. with essential unpaid bills or at risk of exceeding an agreed overdraft) special application may be sought for funding to be approved and granted *in advance* of the payslip details being made available to the branch. Please see above under 'advance'. In these cases, members should make their request in writing to the Hardship fund at least 3 weeks before the date funding is absolutely required.

Payment from the Hardship fund is tax free. For sources of advice on tax, see [the CAB guidance](#).

The application procedure and process

Any request for local CUCU Hardship Funding will be considered fairly and in strictest confidence by a panel appointed by the Branch Executive.

In keeping with the Union's commitment to transparency and good practice, the panel members will include an independent representative (a branch member but not connected to the committee) with casework experience who will be charged with monitoring equality issues; the Branch Treasurer; and one other who may be a retired member in good standing. The panel will not know the identity of the claimant during the decision-making process.

To apply for local Hardship funds, please complete the [Hardship Application Form](#) and submit to hardshipfund@ucu.cam.ac.uk mailbox.

Appeals

Appeals can only be made on procedural grounds and should be addressed to the Branch President, who will review the matter in conjunction with another member of the Executive Committee.