

**A MESSAGE FROM DR MICHAEL SPENCE, PRESIDENT & PROVOST,
UCL**

Dear all,

Results day tomorrow should be a time of great celebration, especially for students in their final year. For the vast majority of you that is exactly what it will be. You will be learning the results of your hard work at UCL, and this will be a very proud moment indeed.

It is becoming clear, however, that despite the best efforts of so many people at the university, some students will not receive all their marks on time. This is because of the current national marking and assessment boycott (the 'MAB'), a form of industrial action involving university staff in over 170 institutions across the country who are refusing to mark students' work. You will undoubtedly be aware of this, [but can read more about the dispute here](#).

For most students, even for those with some marks delayed, this will not be a problem. They will be able to progress to the next year of study, or to be awarded their degree, as normal. But for a small number of students, the delay will have implications. There will be some in their first, second, and third years for whom we will not be able to confirm progression at the usual time, and some finalists for whom there will be a delay in the award of their degree. Details of what we are doing to remedy this situation are set out below.

I want personally to express how very sorry I am to those of you who will be affected by the MAB. The resulting uncertainty will be a cause of anxiety for those with missing marks, but particularly for those whose degree award will be delayed. This situation is

absolutely unfair to you, especially given that your education has already been so impacted by the COVID pandemic and by strikes.

What students can expect on results day

On results day (6 July) all students will receive a personal email setting out their results. If they have been affected by the MAB, they will also receive details of those in their department with whom they can discuss their marks. I must stress that only a limited number of students will be affected, but those who are will receive individual attention.

How we are mitigating the impacts of the MAB

We have been, and are, doing everything we can to remedy the situation of students affected by the MAB.

In preparation for results day tomorrow, we have been using emergency procedures to enable Boards of Examiners to make appropriate academic decisions to progress or graduate students where they are confident that programme learning outcomes have been met, even where marks are missing. This is not possible for all students, because in some cases the missing marks are crucial to determining the progression or award decision. As soon as the MAB is ended, we will be ensuring that all missing marks are provided as a priority, including for students who have been able to progress or graduate under the emergency procedures. The current mandate for industrial action ends on 30 September.

We are also adding an additional results day on 27 July and encouraging staff who are currently withholding marks to submit them by this time, before the formal end of the MAB.

We recognise that affected final-year students may be concerned about the implications of missing marks for their ability to take up offers of employment or further study. We have written to over 3,000 employers to outline the position and to ask for their understanding. Many have responded positively and supportively, and employers we have spoken to are very understanding of the situation and ready to support final-year

students in this position. The Careers Service are ready to help with any enquiries. The Russell Group universities have agreed that entrance to post-graduate courses will not be affected by the MAB, and I am willing to write on behalf of students holding offers at other universities, including those overseas, to explain the situation. If you hold such an offer, please contact my office at president.provost@ucl.ac.uk.

Additionally, the Home Office has recognised that the MAB potentially puts international students in a particularly challenging position. As such, it has provided some clarity on the position relating to graduate visas, [allowing students to extend their permission to stay in the UK while waiting for their results](#).

[Further information about what we are doing to support students can be found here](#).

Graduation ceremonies

Some finalists have also asked about whether they can participate in graduation ceremonies if their degree has not been awarded this summer because of MAB. We are keen that all our final-year students should be able to celebrate their time here, so the September graduation celebrations will be open to all finalists who would like to participate even where the award of their degree has been delayed.

What's happening in the national dispute?

Some students and staff have written asking what UCL is doing about the current dispute and, more broadly, to support our staff.

Perhaps surprisingly, the ongoing national dispute is something that we have limited options to influence. Pay for all institutions in the sector is determined through a national bargaining process involving the staff unions and UCEA, a body that represents almost all universities. We are just one voice amongst more than 170 institutions in that process. Sadly, the current pay offer is at the limits of what most universities in the country can afford. Some have had to defer the implementation of even the current offer, and others have plausibly argued that paying more would put them at risk of insolvency.

That said, I absolutely agree that our staff deserve to be better paid. This is an ongoing priority for me, and for all the senior leadership of UCL. On pay, while UCEA sets a national framework, and the current national dispute is about that framework, we have been exploring what we can do locally, within the national constraints, to better support our staff. For that reason, we have for some time been working on a local strategy to improve pay for many at UCL. We have already taken some small steps in that direction and expect to be able to confirm further commitments in the coming months. We have also been addressing issues such as job security and pay equality. Change is inevitably incremental, which I understand can be enormously frustrating, but it really is in progress.

You are a generation that has lived through the kind of turbulence that most of us would have found unimaginable prior to March 2020. You have shown agility and resilience in the face of unparalleled disruption, worked with focus and tenacity, maintained your high academic standards, and supported each other. You have my genuine admiration, and I am truly sorry that you now find yourself in this situation of uncertainty. Please know that we are doing all we can to work with others in the sector to bring the dispute to an end, and to ensure that you receive the results that you deserve.

As ever, I really welcome your thoughts and comments, which can be sent to me at president.provost@ucl.ac.uk.

Best wishes

Michael Spence
UCL President and Provost

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