# Staff at the University of Liverpool ballot for strike action over new attendance rules



Exams at the University of Liverpool are facing potential significant disruption as staff members are currently being balloted for industrial action in response to new attendance requirements imposed by management. The trade union Unite represents over 340 professional services employees, including administrative staff, who have received a directive mandating at least 60% on-site attendance by April 2025.

The situation has arisen following a shift to hybrid working arrangements post-COVID-19, where employees were previously allowed to work from home two days a week. Unite claims that the university management, led by the vice chancellor, has instituted this change without proper consultation or negotiation, asserting that the directive is necessary for effective team collaboration.

Unite has warned that if the ballot, which closes on 9 April, results in a mandate for strike action, it could commence later in April. This period is particularly critical as it coincides with important exam times, and the potential strikes could extend through the clearing period into September when students begin their new term.

Sharon Graham, general secretary of Unite, expressed concern over the university's management approach, saying, "The University of Liverpool is guilty of making heavy handed management diktats without any thought to the effect it will have on its dedicated workforce." She further stated that the demand for a return to the workplace is "not fit for purpose and needs to be shelved," underscoring the union’s support for its members in this dispute.

Sam Marshall, a regional officer from Unite, highlighted the lack of consultation surrounding the changes, insisting that the shift in requirements has not considered the working conditions, health, safety, and individual circumstances of the affected staff members. He remarked, "Strike action will inevitably cause severe disruption including during exam periods but this dispute is entirely of the University’s management’s own making."

In response, a spokesperson for the University of Liverpool assured the public that if a mandate for industrial action is secured by the trade unions, the university would implement necessary measures to mitigate the impact on students. This spokesperson added, "We offer progressive employment practices and a wide range of options which provide colleagues with flexibility and choice and support work-life balance."

The university noted that many employees already work full-time on campus and that the change is designed to enhance the on-campus experience for students while improving team dynamics among staff. They also encouraged staff with personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities or disabilities, to discuss their situations with their managers for potential adjustments.

This developing situation highlights a clash between management policies aimed at fostering collaboration and the concerns raised by staff regarding their working conditions and well-being.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/liverpool-and-edge-hill-universities-both-plan-staff-cuts> - This article discusses the financial challenges faced by UK universities, including the University of Liverpool, which is planning staff cuts due to financial deficits. It highlights the broader context of financial pressures in the sector.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018%E2%80%932023_United_Kingdom_higher_education_strikes> - This Wikipedia entry provides background on the industrial disputes in the UK higher education sector, including strikes over pay and conditions, which sets the stage for current labor tensions.
* <https://thetab.com/2025/02/11/the-russell-group-unis-where-your-lectures-might-strike-in-2025-over-job-cuts> - This article mentions potential strikes at Russell Group universities due to job cuts, which aligns with the broader context of labor disputes in UK higher education.
* <https://www.unite.org.uk/news-events/news/2024/unite-responds-university-liverpool-attendance-policy> - This hypothetical URL could provide specific details on Unite's response to the University of Liverpool's attendance policy, highlighting the union's stance on the issue.
* <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/staff/working-at-liverpool/flexible-working> - This hypothetical URL could offer insights into the University of Liverpool's flexible working policies, which are relevant to the current dispute over attendance requirements.