

Dear students,

## GCU management: endangering the integrity of YOUR degree

As your lecturers, tutors and supervisors, we recognise the **energy and commitment** you bring to your studies at GCU, your efforts to juggle them with work and family commitments, and the demands and stress all this places on you. So we are committed to carrying out the process of your assessment marking and degree classification with **great care and responsibility**, and in doing so protect the **integrity** of your qualifications. In particular, it's essential that **employers** are **confident** in the quality of GCU degrees and, by extension, the abilities of GCU graduates.

We are therefore **very concerned** by the actions taken in recent weeks by GCU management to undermine the lawful and last resort Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) action taken by GCU teaching staff alongside colleagues nationally. We believe these actions pose a major threat to the **integrity of your degree** and the confidence employers will have in it. In particular, we have become aware that in some cases:

- Marking has been **reallocated** to **temporary staff** who have not been involved in **setting assessments** or **teaching** on the modules being assessed.
- Dissertations are being marked without involvement of **dissertation supervisors**, making it much more likely that they will be marked by someone with no close knowledge and understanding of the projects being assessed. Some marking of dissertations is being done by PGR students who have not been involved in dissertation marking previously and have little knowledge of the topic.
- Examinations are being **re-organised** without no involvement by module leaders, and with **content and formats** being subject to change.

We believe these extraordinary measures **disrespect** the time and energy **you** have invested in preparing for and undertaking assessments, and endanger the integrity of the very marking process that gives future employers a confident picture of your abilities. In choosing to **devalue the assessment process** rather than encourage national employers to settle the ongoing dispute swiftly, GCU management are prioritising **their** institutional interests over **your** education and employment prospects.

If you too are concerned, please contact GCU Principal Professor Stephen Decent ([stephen.decent@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.decent@gcu.ac.uk)) and encourage him to work with national employers to settle the dispute swiftly. Please copy in the chair of Court Rob Woodward: [rob.woodward@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:rob.woodward@gcu.ac.uk)

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We also want to thank you for the **magnificent support** GCU students are showing staff during this industrial dispute. As you likely know, the MAB has been called by the University and College Union (UCU) in response to our national employers' refusal to negotiate a reasonable offer on pay amidst a national cost of living crisis, on the back of a 25% real-terms pay cut since 2009. This is part of a broader **disinvestment in and devaluation** of Higher Education, which has caused unsustainable **workloads** and **casualisation** among university staff, and failed to address gender and ethnic pay inequalities. Many of your teachers are overworked, underpaid, undervalued and on insecure contracts, with some unable to buy a home or start a family. In recent national negotiations, employers failed to offer concrete progress on any of these matters.

We deeply regret the impact of the ongoing industrial dispute on your education. But we strongly believe that the quality of higher education in the UK, and students' academic experience, depend on teaching staff being afforded the dignity and respect of manageable workloads, fair pay and secure conditions. Similarly, the future standard of living of students seeking graduate jobs must be protected by the committed action of working people, amid a cost of living crisis pushing many individuals and families into poverty.

As always, we value the enthusiasm, insight and knowledge you bring to your studies and look forward to continuing to work together to build a University where we can all grow and flourish.

*(This statement while in draft was supplied to GCU Management on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May for their comment, and to allow the clarification of any perceived errors, however no comments were received by Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May)*

Yours in solidarity,

**UCU Branch Committee Glasgow Caledonian University**

For further information on our current dispute please see our campus unions blog:

<https://caledonianunion.com>

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