Dear Students

I am writing to you about the current industrial dispute on the future of the USS pension scheme.

You may now be aware that a deal to end the strike was rejected yesterday by branches of the University and College Union (UCU), including the St Andrews branch.

An interim proposal for reform of the scheme had been agreed on Monday night by Universities UK (on behalf of universities) and the national leadership of the UCU trade union.

Yesterday however, following meetings of UCU’s branch representatives, the union after all rejected the proposal. The press has carried comments from UCU leaders explaining their position.

Although the proposal was only an interim measure, it would have been broadly acceptable to the University as a step towards a sustainable long-term solution. Most importantly, it would have lifted the threat of strike action which is causing considerable stress to students, staff and their families.

In the meantime, as you know, UCU have called for 14 more days of industrial action. If this were a local dispute, and a solution were in our hands, we would seek to progress it immediately: that is unfortunately not possible.

We will, however, be asking our UCU colleagues not to disrupt students’ studies any further, but to work together with the University towards reform of the USS, reconsideration of the scheme’s valuation, and review of the timeframes within which a solution must be found for the Pensions Regulator.

Please be assured that our students’ academic and personal welfare are of the greatest importance to the University. As the Deans and Heads of School have already made clear in their recent message to you, we shall ensure that your grades this semester are fair, and that you obtain the credits you have earned towards your Degree programmes. I also confirm that our Graduation schedules will be unaffected by the industrial action.

Sally Mapstone
Principal and Vice-Chancellor