

24 September 2009

Some of our staff who are members of the Tertiary Education Union (TEU) are currently taking industrial action.

The following Q&As are intended to provide you with further information on:

- the background to this action
- the ways in which Unitec is endeavouring to inform you of likely action
- the steps that Unitec is taking to ensure that you keep up with your studies and
- the steps that you may take if you wish to make a complaint.

BACKGROUND

1. Why are TEU members taking industrial action?

Over recent months, negotiations on a new employment agreement have been taking place between the TEU and six tertiary education institutions: Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, Northtec, Unitec, Western Institute of Technology, Whitireia Community Polytechnic and Wintec.

To date, the two parties have failed to reach agreement and members of the TEU, which represents the interests of academic staff, have chosen to take industrial action.

2. What form is industrial action likely to take?

While we cannot know for sure, it is likely that TEU members will take industrial action in the form of 'lighting strikes' (strikes that last for a period of an hour or two) and/or one-day strikes.

STAYING IN TOUCH

3. How will Unitec keep me informed of any industrial action?

We will endeavour to communicate with you as quickly as possible. Where we are aware that industrial action is likely, we are placing announcements on:

- the Blackboard noticeboard at <http://bb.unitec.ac.nz/>
- the 'latest news' section of www.unitec.ac.nz.

We have also set up an 0800 number that you can call for recorded information:

- **0800 10 95 90**

Information can change quickly and will sometimes become available at short notice, so you may wish to keep checking back for the latest updates.

It is important to understand that the TEU does not have to give Unitec any notice of their intention to strike and we have no way of knowing in advance which of their members will/will not choose to take part in this. Fewer than 50 per cent of Unitec's academic staff are members of the TEU and not all of these are taking part in industrial action

KEEPING UP WITH YOUR STUDIES

4. How can I find out whether any of my classes will be affected?

You should contact your Head of Department or Programme Director to confirm the status of your classes and, if relevant, alternative teaching arrangements. You can identify your Programme Director via My Course Details.

Remember that not all academic staff are members of the TEU and not all members of the TEU are taking part in industrial action, meaning that a large number of lectures will take place as usual.

5. What will Unitec do if my class is cancelled due to industrial action?

Where possible, we will make arrangements to enable delivery of your class.

If it looks as though industrial action will be prolonged, we will arrange alternative ways of teaching and delivering our courses to enable you to participate in classes. If this is the case, you will be updated accordingly.

6. I'm worried that industrial action may affect my assessments/ability to successfully complete my course. What is Unitec doing to help me?

In the case of prolonged industrial action where you have been unable to participate in classes through no fault of your own and where your course assessments are adversely affected, we will implement our Special Assessment Circumstances policy to assist with evaluation of course completions and grades.

Special Assessment Circumstances (SAC) are available to students when their performance in a summative assessment (e.g. a practicum, test, assignment or exam) is affected by factors beyond their control. You can find out more about Special Assessment Circumstances from your Programme Director, your Department Office or the USU Student Advocate on usuadvocate@unitec.ac.nz.

SEEKING RECOMPENSE / MAKING A COMPLAINT

7. I've spent money on travelling to Unitec only to find that my class has been cancelled. Will I be refunded for this?

We are investigating a procedure/system to handle refunds for out-of-pocket travel expenses (bus, mileage, parking) incurred by students who travelled to Unitec to attend classes cancelled due to strike action. We expect this to be in place, and to confirm application details, following the end of the teaching recess in Semester 2.

8. What if I want to make a complaint?

Our Student Grievance Policy is in place to handle any specific complaints that you may have. It is intended to make it simple for you to voice concerns and for Unitec to properly record, investigate and respond to your complaints.

You are encouraged to follow this policy by completing a Student Grievance Form, which is available to download from the myUnitec portal, as well as from the USU website. To make a complaint, complete as much of the form as you can and email it to student.complaint@unitec.ac.nz. Unitec will then assign someone to follow up with you.

We acknowledge and apologise for any inconvenience caused due to industrial action and assure you that we will continue to do all we can to avoid you being adversely affected as a result.