

London, United Kingdom – Embargoed until 12:00 on 21 February 2024

Student Group Claim against UCL will proceed to trial after settlement talks break down as c. 4,000 more UCL students officially join the action

- Settlement talks between University College London (UCL) and students suing the university have ended without agreement.
- The UCL students' group claim will now proceed to trial.
- Since the claim was filed, the number of UCL claimants has increased significantly, from 924 to c. 5,000, demonstrating clear support from students and alumni.
- To date, circa 153,000 students have instructed solicitors Marcus Parker and Asserson via the website [StudentGroupClaim.co.uk](https://www.studentgroupclaim.co.uk) to seek compensation from more than 80 UK universities.
- Thousands more students are expected to join the Student Group Claim as it progresses; the total value of compensation could reach into the hundreds of millions of pounds.

UCL students claim the university breached its contract with them between 2018 and 2022 when, during Covid and lecturer strikes, there was a material difference between what students paid for and what they actually received. In that period the university failed to provide its students with in-person tuition by cancelling classes or moving them online and denying or severely restricting physical access to campus facilities like libraries, study spaces and labs.

At the first court hearing in May 2023 UCL attempted to block the proceedings, claiming students must first complete an internal complaint to UCL and then to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), an industry ombudsman. UCL's solicitors said that the group claim should not be allowed to proceed *"unless and until the OIA's statutory complaints process has run its course and has been unable to resolve the complaints"*.

In her ruling handed down in July 2023 the judge, Senior Master Fontaine, expressed concerns about UCL and OIA's ability to deal with complaints at this scale, and declined to order that the students participate in these schemes. Master Fontaine then "stayed" the proceedings and encouraged the parties to engage in settlement discussions.

Talks between the students and UCL took place during January 2024 but did not lead to

agreement.

The group claim will therefore continue to trial.

The next step is for the court to hold a case management hearing at which the judge will lay down a timetable towards trial and fix a trial date.

Because no settlement was reached, the students' legal team have added thousands of new claimants to the formal proceedings against UCL, which increases its size from 924 to circa 5,000 claimants.

David Hamon (pictured), the lead claimant and a member of the claimant committee, said:

“It is a real shame that agreement was not reached with UCL. After a delay of nine months since the hearing last May and no sign of progress in mediation, we are really keen to have our claims heard by the court. I hope that this matter can now move swiftly forward to trial so that UCL’s students can receive compensation for the education that was lost.”

Alongside the claim against UCL, similar claims are being prepared against more than 80 other UK universities. To date 17 other UK universities have been sent letters before action, including LSE, King’s College London, Imperial College London and the Universities of Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Warwick and Cardiff.

If successful at trial, it is anticipated that current and former UK-resident undergraduates who were at university during the pandemic could win compensation in the region of £5,000 each, with significantly higher sums expected to be awarded to graduate and international students, who tend to pay higher fees.

<p>Shimon Goldwater, solicitor to Student Group Claim (partner at Asserson) comments:</p> <p><i>“The parties have tried and regrettably failed to reach agreement on settlement terms, so this claim will now proceed to trial. I hope that the court will fix a trial speedily so that the claim can be resolved without further delay for the students in receiving fair compensation.”</i></p>	<p>Matthew Patching, solicitor to Student Group Claim (partner at Marcus Parker) comments:</p> <p><i>“Our clients went into settlement talks with an open mind; it is a shame that agreement was not reached, but the door remains open for settlement at a fair level for students. If the claim is not settled, it will continue to trial, we hope without further delay.”</i></p>
--	---

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

For media enquiries please contact: DRD Partnership – Email: sgc@drdpartnership.com, Jonny Harris, 07522574293 or Bea Lohn, 07788660921.

For more information on Student Group Claim see the website: www.StudentGroupClaim.co.uk

About Student Group Claim

Leading solicitors Asserson and Marcus Parker have teamed together to help affected

claimants recover fair financial compensation of thousands of pounds each from their universities through no win, no fee group court claims.

The claims are for breach of contract. Universities entered contracts with students promising to provide teaching and access to facilities, but during Covid and strike action by staff, universities did not provide those services in full. Students are therefore entitled to compensation for the difference in value between the services promised and the services actually provided.

So far, around 153,000 current and former students have signed up to bring claims via the [Student Group Claim website](#) (up from 120,000 in July 2023), with more signing up every day. The claim covers those who studied in the academic years 2017-18, 2019-20, 2020-21 and/or 2021-22.

Following the commencement of litigation against UCL in April 2022, on 19 October 2022 letters before action were sent to a further 17 universities, pursuing similar claims – namely the universities of Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Warwick, LSE, Imperial, King’s College London, Queen Mary University of London, City University and University of the Arts London.

Unlike students, universities thrived financially during the Covid period and can afford to meet their legal obligations and make good their students’ losses. Many increased their income from student fees over the pandemic and boosted their savings, in some cases receiving millions of pounds in Government furlough payments. The 18 universities being challenged earned a surplus (i.e., profits) of more than £1 billion during the 2020-21 financial year and collectively hold more than £16.3 billion in net assets.

About Marcus Parker	About Asserson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marcus Parker is a commercial litigation firm that specialises in bringing and defending complex claims, usually involving large groups of claimants. - The team has a strong track record of delivering successful outcomes for groups of consumers, institutional investors and private individuals. - The firm is a recognised market leader in group litigation, case management and litigation funding. - Some of the firm’s most famous cases include the Lloyds / HBOS acquisition case, The Tesco Equal Pay Claim and The VW Emissions Action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asserson is a prize-winning firm of solicitors specialising in complex commercial dispute resolution with a proven track record of getting excellent results for its clients. - The firm acted for a group of solar energy companies in which the claimants won c. £60 million from the UK Government. At the time, this win was the largest ever Human Rights Act settlement against the UK Government.