

London, United Kingdom - Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## High Court orders: UCL Group Litigation to Proceed to Trial, Fixes Trial Dates

Claim by c. 5,000 UCL students heads to trial  
after settlement talks fail

Student Group Claim now helping more than  
155,000 students seek compensation from 100+  
universities

- The High Court today made important decisions in the first Student Group Claim court action, *David Hamon & Others v University College London*.
- The defendant, University College London (UCL), said last year that the proceedings should not be allowed to go ahead “*unless and until*” students first completed UCL’s own internal complaints procedures, and if that failed, the OIA ombudsman process. In July 2023 the High Court rejected UCL’s attempt to mandate such an approach, noting: “*some of the Claimants’ concerns about the OIA [ombudsman] scheme are valid ...*” and raising concern “*whether UCL and the OIA have sufficient resources to deal with this volume of complaints*”.
- In July 2023 the court paused the proceedings for eight months to encourage the parties to reach agreement, but settlement talks were unsuccessful, and the parties are now headed to trial.
- After a two-day hearing in the Royal Courts of Justice on 18 and 19 June 2024, judge Senior Master Cook today directed that a four-week trial will take place during the January to April 2026 period.
- The decision comes as Student Group Claim helps 155,000+ current and former students seek thousands of pounds each in compensation from more than 100 universities for Covid and strike-related disruption.

Between 2018 and 2022 millions of students paid between £9,250 and £40,000 a year for lessons that were cancelled or moved online and restricted access to campus facilities as a result of Covid and strike-related disruption.

Approximately 155,000 students have now instructed law firms Harcus Parker and Asserson via the website [StudentGroupClaim.co.uk](https://StudentGroupClaim.co.uk) to seek compensation from their 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.

The legal team acting for nearly 5,000 current and former UCL students attended the High Court on 18 and 19 June 2024 for a case directions hearing at which the court decided how the claim should be managed up to trial.

In 2023, UCL asked the court to block the claims indefinitely until students first completed an internal UCL complaint and then, if it failed to resolve the matter, a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), an industry ombudsman. UCL’s solicitors said that the 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*”. Their barrister said that:

*“the proceedings brought by the Claimants ought to be stayed to allow them time to ... pursue the statutory-backed ADR process described above [i.e. a complaint to UCL and then to the OIA]. Only if that process does not resolve the claims should the stay be lifted.”*

That position was rejected by the High Court in July 2023, paving the way for the claims to proceed to trial.

Today the judge has directed that a four-week trial of test cases is to take place, starting in January 2026, and made directions to apply to any further claimants who join the claim.

Alongside the claim against UCL, similar claims are being prepared against more than 100 other UK universities. Solicitors have been in correspondence with more than 50 universities, including LSE, King’s College London, Imperial College London and the Universities of Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, 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 be entitled to 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><b>Shimon Goldwater</b>, solicitor to Student Group Claim (partner at Asserson) comments:</p> <p><i>“It is regrettable that UCL failed to settle these proceedings during the eight month period the court designated for that purpose.</i></p> <p><i>This group claim will now go ahead to trial unless settlement can be reached. The students we represent would welcome sensible settlement proposals from UCL so that this matter does not need to proceed to trial.”</i></p>	<p><b>Matthew Patching</b>, solicitor to Student Group Claim (partner at Harcus Parker) comments:</p> <p><i>“With trial now fixed for 18-months’ time, UCL should focus on making a reasonable settlement proposal to the claimants rather than continuing to fight this claim through to the end.</i></p> <p><i>UCL moved almost all teaching online during Covid but refused to reduce students’ fees.</i></p> <p><i>Today’s important decision brings UCL students and our clients at more than 100 other universities one step closer to receiving fair compensation.”</i></p>
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## Notes to Editors

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### *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 155,000 current and former students have signed up to bring claims via the [Student Group Claim website](#) (up from 20,000 in October 2022), 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's, City University and University of the Arts London. Since then, solicitor correspondence has continued with more than 50 universities in total on behalf of students.

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.

For more information on Student Group Claim see the website: [www.StudentGroupClaim.co.uk](http://www.StudentGroupClaim.co.uk)

<b>About Marcus Parker</b>	<b>About Asserson</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marcus Parker is a commercial litigation firm that specialises in bringing and defending complex claims, usually involving large groups of claimants.</li> <li>- The team has a strong track record of delivering successful outcomes for groups of consumers, institutional investors and private individuals.</li> <li>- The firm is a recognised market leader in group litigation, case management and litigation funding.</li> <li>- Some of the firm’s most famous cases include the Lloyds / HBOS acquisition case, The Tesco Equal Pay Claim and The VW Emissions Action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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.</li> <li>- 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.</li> </ul>