Vice Chancellor

 Vice Chancellor’s Office

 Lanyon Building

Student Name:

Student Number:

Course:

Dear Professor Greer,

I am writing to express my support for the industrial action taken between the 20th February and 13th March and to express my frustration that staff are forced to strike for the second time this year for their basic rights.

I wish to add my voice to the call for UUK to end the strike by working with UCU to find workable solutions understand on the broad areas of pay, working conditions, inequality and pensions.

I would also like to express empathy with staff in a time when we, as international students, are paying extortionate amounts in fees from £16,000 up to £40, 000 per year, while cuts have been made in areas directly impacting international student experience, and we continue to be affected by any number of hidden costs - from material costs to even graduating.

It is not acceptable to me that staff have seen their pay decrease in real terms by 20% since 2009, nor that they are expected to pay more into a pension scheme that will still pay out an estimated £200,000 less over the course of retirement.

I am deeply concerned at the degradation of working conditions, particularly around workload and casualization. I find it alarming that here in Queen’s we have over 1,300 academics who are employed on zero-hour or fix-term contracts, particularly when 64% of surveyed staff members reported that they were concerned with their workload and 63% were concerned with work related stress. I am concerned both for the wellbeing of staff and for the impact this has on the quality of the education that I receive as a Queen’s student, due to reduced contact time and less time spent by staff preparing for classes and marking and feeding back on assessment.

Finally, I am concerned at the lack of movement by UUK to address the gender and race pay gaps. I do not find it acceptable that across the sector, women are paid 15% less than men and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff are 10% more likely to be employed on an insecure contract.

These issues are important for the well-being of both staff and students and the reputation and standing of our University. Queen’s prides itself as being a global university, and has been recruiting an increasingly diverse student population from around the world- however we fail to see this diversity represented in our staff body, nor do we see vital support needed for international students, such as language support, and culturally competent wellbeing services, being provided. This is despite continual increases in international tuition fees, and larger recruitment targets every year. Being a member of the Queen’s community, I feel these issues are extremely important to me.

I would therefore like to hear the position of the University on these key issues. I also hope that you will take a public stance against the cuts to staff pay and pensions, the casualization of working practices and the inequality in opportunity for staff.

I believe that Queen’s should be proactively trying to resolve the strike by urging UUK to offer workable solutions to these issues. Can you explain to me what you are doing to resolve the industrial action? Could you set out detail surrounding your plan to improve the working conditions of members of staff? Can you explain how you will be able to attract world class academics to the University if the employment conditions of staff are not improved?

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours Sincerely,