These word clouds are taken from the letters sent out to staff and students at universities in the run up to the UCU industrial action (25th November-4th December 2019). They are taken from a range of universities in the UK in response to a request I posted on twitter and facebook.

We were interested in the kinds of emotive language used in these letters, as well as what they focused on as the main content of their correspondence. What is interesting about the word clouds is the different kinds of language used: the HR letters to staff use much more careful and benign language, talking about ‘challenges’ and ‘uncertainties’. The letters to the students focus much more on ‘assignments’, ‘mitigating circumstances’, ‘inconveniences’. Its is the letters form the VCs which are much more emotive and brutal, talking about ‘contractual’ issues, ‘disruptions’, critiquing ‘collegiality’, and warning of ‘breaches’ of contracts.

We always talk about data stripping emotions and trying to present information in neutral terms: these word clouds are pretty emotive, just from scraping the letters.