

# Higher Education Noticeboard

Last update: 18 May 2023

## Latest Bulletins

### Re: Your Letter Dated 11 May 2023

Posted on: 18 May 2023

Raj Jethwa Chief Executive UCEA

Dear Raj,

#### Re: Your letter dated 11 May 2023

We are writing to you on behalf of the five joint trade unions in response to your letter dated 11 May 2023, following our meeting between the representatives of these unions last Friday.

We have repeatedly expressed our desire to re-enter negotiations in order to resolve the dispute. We note that you highlight the potential disruption to students from industrial action, and we have been willing throughout this process to negotiate in order to reach an acceptable agreement for our members and bring the dispute to a close. It is therefore disappointing that UCEA are refusing to enter negotiations unless trade unions call off their lawful industrial action, thereby prolonging the disruption to students. We would urge UCEA to reconsider its position and return to the negotiating table over pay and the pay-related issues including equality pay gaps, casualisation, workload, and pay spine reform.

On behalf of the joint unions, we are writing to ask you to set up the negotiating meetings agreed in the latter part of 2022 for further negotiations over these matters as soon as possible, in the hope that we can resolve the issues that exist and move forward with productive negotiations.



Finally, you have raised some issues around industrial action which relate to some unions and not others. This year is unusual in that we started with an agreement to separate out pay from pay-related items. The action your letter refers to relates to the 2022-23 dispute between some unions and UCEA which you have never sought to settle. A further industrial action ballot relates to the 2023-24 pay uplift only, not the pay-related items. We remain willing and able to enter discussions with you to settle these disputes and hope UCEA will reconsider its position.

You will also have seen UCU's separate and more detailed response to your letter surrounding the aspects which relate specifically to UCU's action.

Yours sincerely,

**Ruth and Jon**

**on behalf of the New JNCHES joint trade unions**

## Updates For HE Staff



Posted on: 2 March 2023



Talks between UCEA and the HE trades unions continue. Following progress on terms of reference for a review of the UK HE pay spine, the focus is now on terms of reference covering equality pay gaps, contract types, and workload. Work continues with a further meeting scheduled with ACAS on 14 March 2023.

**A joint statement agreed by all five HE trade unions, 2 March 2023**

## Noticeboard Bulletin - 26-01-2023



Posted on: 26 January 2023



The Joint Unions met yesterday with employers to continue negotiations over pay for 2022/23 and 2023/24. Previously they had offered pay rises for staff of between 4 and 7%, with a portion paid in February rather than August. This offer had been rejected by the Joint Unions.

Eventually, the employers made a marginally improved offer which (compared to their original offer) provides an improved (but still below inflation) offer for those above spinal column point 42 and did nothing to address issues of poverty pay, pay compression, and of declining pay for all. The offer is described in more detail below:

The offer will be confirmed in writing (and will be split between February and August) but the overall percentage rises for both offers are shown below:

Original offer	Latest offer		
Spinal Points 3-5	7%	Spinal Points 3-5	8%
Spinal Points 6-14	7%	Spinal Points 6-14	7%
Spinal Points 15-25	6%	Spinal Points 15-25	6%
Spinal Points 26-42	5%	Spinal Points 26-42	5%
Spinal Points above 43	4%	Spinal Points above 43	5%

The Joint Unions responded that:

1. They were disappointed by employers continuing to insist on a real-terms pay cut for 2023/4 which fails to address the 2022/23 dispute.
2. We looked to employers to make an inflation-based offer backdated to August 22 as well as a commitment to resolve pay-related issues.
3. University workers have suffered year-on-year pay cuts and this offer fails to offer any improvement.
4. We remain committed to a negotiated settlement.



We reject any attempt by employers to divide university workers and we will continue to work together to put pressure on employers to address the crisis in the sector. We agreed that to not make an offer that meets inflation to those

university workers at the bottom end of the pay spine is particularly egregious while believing that all university workers are suffering year-on-year pay

cuts. To do this, employers must increase the total amount of funding being provided for the pay of university workers.

**A joint statement agreed by all five HE trade unions, 26 January 2023**

## Update After HE Pay Negotiating Meeting



Posted on: 17 January 2023



## Update after HE pay negotiating meeting on 16 January 2023: University employers fail to engage in serious negotiations

The joint unions arrived at today's meeting prepared to enter serious negotiations. We were disappointed that UCEA did not appear to share that approach. We presented our joint union claim for pay, which was RPI + 2% or £4K (whichever is higher) to address the need for a cost-of-living adjustment and begin to address the real terms decrease in salaries over the past decade. In response, this claim was described as an "April Fool's joke" by UCEA. UCEA indicated that there was no prospect of significantly improving their offer. However, after an adjournment they informed us that they were willing to go away and remodel their offer with the possibility of a very modest increase in the quantum of funding. We are meeting with UCEA next on Wednesday 25th January, and we hope that the employers will engage in serious negotiations with us. **A joint statement agreed by all five HE trade unions, 16 January 2023**

## New JNCHES Dispute Update



**Posted on: 11 July 2022**

The Joint HE Unions (GMB, EIS, Unison, Unite and UCU) met with UCEA on 6th July, in the first dispute meeting over the 2022-23 pay round, and pushed the employers to improve their final offer that all five HE unions have rejected.

The two dispute meetings, on 6th and 14th July, take place in the context of an unprecedented cost of living crisis and cumulative sub inflation pay outcomes in recent years. As a result, the meeting focussed on the derisory pay offer of 3% for the majority of our members.

UCEA did not make any improved offer at the dispute meeting. This will be very disappointing news for members struggling to pay their bills, dealing with excessive workloads, working weeks in excess of 35 hours, contract insecurity, pay inequality, no incremental head room, nor a Scottish JNCHES committee.

The joint union negotiators pressed the employers hard. As a result, UCEA have committed to formally consult their members on an improved offer for negotiating at the next dispute meeting on the 14 July. UCEA will take the outcome of the employer's consultation to a meeting of their board, which will take place before the final dispute meeting.

The joint union negotiators are encouraging branches to use the short window between now and the meeting on 14 July to lobby their Vice Chancellor or Principal to feedback to UCEA that they should make an improved offer and avoid a damaging dispute this autumn.

**Send on behalf of the Joint HE Trade Unions.**

**Noticeboard Bulletin - 20-07-2022**



**Posted on: 20 July 2022**

The joint HE trade unions (GMB, EIS, Unite, Unison and UCU) have met the employer representatives at UCEA for the second and final New JNCHES dispute meeting. It was a very disappointing meeting.



One of the actions from the first meeting on 6 July was that UCEA would consult employers on improving the final offer. UCEA gave an overview of the outcome of that consultation in the meeting. What is particularly frustrating is that despite UCEA's acknowledging the cost-of-living crisis has got worse for staff, they failed to make an improved offer on pay.

Employers understand the significance of this decision and have chosen to fuel a sector wide dispute rather than make an improved offer that could have avoided huge disruption in the autumn and tackled the cost of living crisis for staff in a fair and reasonable manner.

The joint trade union's find this position completely unacceptable given that we signalled in negotiations that we were prepared to move from our headline pay demand. In short, the unions moved to try and genuinely negotiate a fair pay settlement as member's pay has not kept up with inflation, but UCEA chose not to do so.

The formal New JNCHES dispute process has now concluded. Whilst we remain ready and willing to meet UCEA any time any place if they have an improved pay offer to make, each union will now continue to implement their plans to either consult members on the position or move to statutory industrial action ballots in the coming weeks.

Sent on behalf of the Joint HE trade Unions.

## Previous Bulletins

### **Joint Statement Between UCEA And HE Trade-Unions On Covid Testing For Staff**



Posted on: 5 December 2022

The unions in HE and Employer's Group have made a joint statement going forward regarding **Covid 19 Tests**.

### **GMB Lodge Formal Dispute With HE Employers On Pay Offer**



Posted on: 5 December 2022



GMB have written to the University and College Employers Association (UCEA) to lodge a formal dispute to the **pay offer** covering the 2020–21 period. This follows a meeting of our National Higher Education Committee on Tuesday 12th January, where the offer was considered by member representatives to have fallen short of **pay claim submitted by the joint unions**.

This is the first stage in the dispute procedure, the next will be to meet with the UCEA as stipulated in Annex A of the *Dispute Resolution Procedure of the New JNCHES Agreement 2013*. The outcome of that meeting will be reported on both the national committee, and to members.

A meeting between the parties was held on the 12th and a further is scheduled for the 19th.

[Read the dispute letter here.](#)

## Noticeboard Bulletin - 22-07-2020



Posted on: 22 July 2020

The Joint Unions in Higher Education have made a pay claim for 2020/21 to the UCEA.

In brief:

- **An increase in all higher education salaries by the Retail Price Index plus 5%** on all 49 points of the national pay spine; for all pay related allowances including London weighting, to have same uplift;
- The minimum hourly rate of pay for staff employed by universities to be **£10.50 per hour**. This is to be applicable to staff at all HEIs whether the standard full-time weekly employment contract is 35 hours per week or above; In London, where the Living Wage Foundation rate will be **£10.75 per hour** this should be relevant minimum.
- Addressing compression of the pay spine, with the aim of **restoring the 3% differential** between pay spinal column points over the next three years;
- For **all universities to become Living Wage Foundation accredited employers** ensuring that outsourced workers receive at least the Foundation Living Wage rate;
- For **the standard weekly full-time contract of employment to be 35 hours per week** at



all higher education institutions;

- **Ending pay injustice** – meaningful, agreed action to tackle the race, gender and disability pay gap; to take an intersectional approach to the ways in which intersectionality and protected characteristics impact on pay equality;
- Meaningful, agreed action to **address excessive workloads and unpaid work**; action to address the impact that excessive workloads are having on workforce stress and mental ill-health;
- New JNCHES to establish **working group/s to look at career development, progression issues and training opportunities** in higher education.
- To establish the Scottish sub-committee of New JNCHES as set out under the New JNCHES agreement; to review and **consider how the Scottish Fair Work Convention dimensions can best be applied at a UK level**;
- Agreeing a framework to **eliminate precarious employment practises and casualised contracts**, including zero hours contracts, from higher education; converting hourly paid staff onto fractional contracts; agreeing national guidance to end the outsourcing of support services in higher education and to bring staff into in-house employment.

**Read the full claim & background, including detailed supporting argument, here:**





## Principles For Working Safely On Campus During The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic



Posted on: 1 January 1970



This joint statement has been agreed between UCEA and the HE trade unions: GMB, EIS, UCU, UNISON, and Unite.

As lockdown restrictions begin to ease, UCEA and the joint trade unions have developed these joint principles to support HEIs in planning to keep their campuses as safe as possible and ensure the health and wellbeing of HE staff, students and visitors.

## **1. Use of Government Guidance for Safe Workplaces**

HEIs will use government guidance and public health guidance (e.g. Public Health England and devolved nation equivalent) as the basis for their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. At an institutional level this response will factor in relevant local conditions and circumstances that employers and unions may need to consider. Unions will work with HEIs in the implementation of the relevant guidance for their institution.

## **2. Health and Safety Legislation**

The government guidance does not supersede existing health and safety legislation. HEIs must continue to abide by statutory health and safety obligations relevant to their nation, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, which provide rights to recognised trade union safety representatives, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which contains the legal duty on employers to conduct risk assessments. Health and safety legislation, coupled with the government guidance specific to Covid-19, should be seen as the minimum standards for HEIs to achieve.

## **3. Consultation with Campus Trade Unions**

HEIs recognise the positive contributions that unions can make. UCEA HEI member institutions commit to consulting with recognised trade unions on staff health and safety, and about how the institution will manage risks from Covid-19 including regarding the re-opening of departments and services. HEIs should work jointly with trade union representatives, staff and students to resolve issues.

## **4. Risk Assessments**

Plans for managing staff returns to campus will only be implemented when risk assessments have been completed. HEIs will undertake appropriate risk assessments and review them in consultation with trade union health and safety representatives. Unions will support a risk based approach to controls and will help to inform their members regarding the appropriateness of controls. As part of carrying out risk



assessments, HEIs will ensure that relevant advice and expertise is available and given appropriate weight and consideration.

The Public Health bodies have provided extensive guidance on what to consider in any risk assessments, and HEIs will consider the full range of preventive measures aimed at minimising the risk, and spread, of infection. Decisions on any measures, including the provision and use of PPE, will be based on the outcomes of risk assessments, based on what is reasonably practical for that workplace. A generic risk assessment for Covid-19 should also be conducted to draw out potential issues, considering both mental and physical health during the pandemic.

This should cover all staff and, depending on the size and complexity of the institution, may either be one single HEI-wide risk assessment or a series of different generic risk assessments covering different sites/departments.

## 5. Communication

HEIs will communicate regularly with all trade union representatives, staff and students on health and safety issues related to Covid-19. HEIs will be clear about what can and cannot be done to adapt practices relating to work and study and consider the provision of any training, as needed, for staff. Staff and students should have clear channels through which to raise with their HEI any concerns that they have or any suggestions which the HEI might not have considered previously.

## 6. Impact on Staff

Universities will assess how the transition back to campus will affect different cohorts of staff and take into account any equality considerations. HEIs will seek to identify reasonable actions to mitigate possible adverse impacts on specific group/s including those, or those living with, people who are shielding or vulnerable.

### Noticeboard Bulletin - 02-06-2020



**Posted on: 2 June 2020**

The joint HE Trade Unions have met with and agreed a framework nationally on a proposed safe return for Higher Education Institutions.

You can download that full statement [here](#), or read it below:



## Noticeboard Bulletin - 24-04-2020



Posted on: 24 April 2020

[Download PDF](#)

Higher Education Bulletin 1



GMB and sister unions have been discussing the current problems facing everyone in Higher Education with the Employers.

GMB continues to push for the best possible deal for workers in these extremely challenging times we are working with the employers to achieve this end. The employers association is the University and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), and covers the vast majority of Institutions involved in Higher Education.

Employers and Trade Unions have issued a joint statement on Covid 19 which reads:

UCEA and the EIS, GMB, UNISON and Unite have come together to agree this joint statement for the HE sector regarding staffing issues associated with Covid-19. We are aware that this is a fast-moving situation. The overarching approach in this statement is that institutions and unions seek to work together to help the sector navigate the staffing issues created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The parties to this joint statement are aware that HEIs have been working extremely hard to respond effectively to the risks posed by Covid-19. Given the diversity in the sector, it will be important for individual HEIs to develop their own local responses, tailored to their unique staff, student and operational profiles; however, we believe that all HEIs will benefit from partnership working between the employers and their recognised local trade union representatives.

In developing this joint statement, we have sought to collate the key issues that HEIs should consider, with reference to their local trade union partners, as well as relevant sources of information. The situation is changing on a rapid basis, and we understand that HEIs will want to be fully prepared to engage their staff.

In developing local plans in response to Covid-19, employers should continue consulting and following the latest guidance and advice issued by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE), Health Protection Scotland (HPS), Health Protection Wales (HPW) and the Health and Social Care Public Health agency in Northern Ireland (PHA), as appropriate, alongside advice from local infection prevention and control specialists.

The issues for consideration below are subject to the availability of the relevant staff and may be revised in the light of developments or changes in Government advice.

Key issues for consideration:

- Ensuring that any communication channels that HEIs have established in respect Covid-19 reach all staff groups, including any workers employed by an outsourced services provider.



- Ensuring that all staff and representatives are aware of procedures for the care of, and response to, suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19.
- Ensuring that relevant risks and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) assessments have been reviewed to identify who may be at risk of harm, how this may arise and identifying what measures can be put in place to control the risks with reference to PHE (or devolved equivalent) guidelines. This should include, where necessary, the provision of gender-sensitive personal protective equipment.
- Ensuring adequate provision of soap, paper towels, hand sanitiser, tissues and bins.
- Organising an enhanced programme of cleaning, concentrating on “touch points”.
- Ensuring effective procedures are in place to allow staff and representatives to raise any concerns at the earliest opportunity in relation to facilities, policies and processes for managing Covid-19. Ensuring staff feel able to raise concerns without detriment, and that feedback is given to staff on the outcome. While the expectation is that staff should raise their concerns with their line managers / supervisors in the first instance, they should be made aware of alternative local routes for raising concerns.
- Where staff are being asked to work from home, or in other alternative locations, in response to changes in the way that the HEI’s operations are conducted due to Covid-19, appropriate consideration should be given to risk assessment, the provision of equipment, and the mental and physical health of staff working in alternative locations. Consideration should also be given to how staff can remain connected with each other, with regular opportunities for virtual contact.
- Where staff are parents or carers, consideration should be given to how staff can work from home when schools are closed. In addition to the ability to work from home, consideration may also need to be given to flexibility in working hours. This should be balanced against the need to ensure the delivery of operations and services.
- In line with Government guidance, identifying business critical roles to ensure only essential services are operating. Where staff working in those roles have underlying health conditions, ensuring risk assessments are carried out and official guidelines are followed accordingly.
- Where staff are suspected or confirmed to have contracted Covid-19, ensuring their personal details are treated as confidential, and that staff are reminded of their duty to



protect the confidentiality of other members of staff.

- Ensuring Government advice on staff travel is communicated widely.
- Where staff or members of their household are required to self-isolate, clearly communicating pay arrangements during this period of absence. Where staff are being paid under contractual sick pay arrangements, consideration should be given to treating any absence as related to compliance with national infection control guidance, rather than counting towards any sickness absence policy triggers.

## Key Workers

If any Higher Education staff are formally in the key worker category, you will already have been written to, to confirm your status. If you have any concerns please contact your GMB Region.

## Higher Education Pay

2020

Initial pay discussions had begun, but have been put into abeyance while the Covid 19 pandemic persists. The employers have agreed however that any settlement will be backdated.

Further bulletins will be issued shortly.

If you need any further information, please

email: [publicservices@gmb.org.uk](mailto:publicservices@gmb.org.uk) or [kevin.brandstatter@gmb.org.uk](mailto:kevin.brandstatter@gmb.org.uk)

## Higher Education Bulletin 2

GMB and sister unions have been discussing the current problems facing everyone in Higher Education during the pandemic. Nearly all Universities have moved any teaching on line, but many GMB members continue to work on campus providing essential services to remaining students and staff.

GMB has also been pressing the Employers to clarify whether the Governments Job Retention Scheme applies in the sector. This provides funding for employers in the private sector, to avoid the need for redundancies.

While Universities are public sector institutions, many receive funding from the private sector for specific projects. The Guidance below was circulated by Government on 17 April. This is an extract of the Guidance as it applies to Higher Education is set out below:



## Higher Education

During and after the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, our aim is for Higher Education (HE) providers to continue to:

- deliver HE provision
- support the needs of students, both on and off campus

We will work with HE providers to help them access the range of measures on offer to:

- support financial viability and sustainability
- safeguard jobs (including those staff on casual, hourly paid or fixed-term contracts)

We have confirmed that the Student Loans Company is planning to make Term 3 tuition fee payments as scheduled.

We expect that in most circumstances, HE providers will be able to continue paying their staff as usual because HE delivery has largely moved online, and staff are maintaining key services, including those for students remaining on campus.

### **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Schemes (CLBILS) and COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF)**

If HE providers meet the published criteria for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) or the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), they should consider approaching their bank to apply for the scheme, if they judge that is needed. HE providers who do not meet the criteria, namely those with turnover exceeding £500m, may similarly wish to explore the COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF) and should liaise with their bank to discuss eligibility. If their bank does not issue commercial paper, UK Finance has published a [list of those banks that are able to assist](#).

### **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)**

Where the above schemes are not appropriate, HE providers are eligible for the CJRS. HE providers should only furlough employees and seek support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if they meet the following conditions:





- the employee works in an area of business where services are temporarily not required and whose salary is not covered by public funding
- the employee would otherwise be made redundant or laid off
- the employee is not involved in delivering provision that has already been funded
- (where appropriate) the employee is not required to deliver provision for a child of a critical worker and/or vulnerable child
- the grant from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme would not be duplicative to other public grants that the HE provider receives and would not lead to financial reserves being created

Any grant from the CJRS should not duplicate other sources of public funding where these are being maintained, such as UK home student tuition fees. However, we do recognise the complexity of HE revenue and the role that cross-subsidy plays. If it is difficult to distinguish whether staff are funded through public or commercial income for the purposes of meeting the first 3 conditions as listed above, and some staff will be funded through multiple sources, as a guiding principle, HE providers should not seek to furlough a higher proportion of their wage bill than could reasonably be considered to have been generated through commercial income, including from non-public research grants and contracts. It is likely that decisions on whether to furlough staff will need to be taken on a case by case basis. To be eligible for the CJRS, when on furlough, an employee cannot undertake work for, or on behalf of, their employer.

Where research work has been paused (for example, where grant holders have requested a no-cost extension to UK Research & Innovation grants) and therefore providers are not able to receive payments towards staff costs for a period, resulting in a loss of income due to ceased or reduced delivery of research programs, providers should consider their eligibility and apply for the wide range of financial support that HM Treasury has already announced for businesses, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in line with the above conditions.

The DfE is considering appropriate measures to monitor the use of these schemes in order to detect any duplication of funding, and will be considering potential options to recover misused public funding as required.

We will continue to engage with the sector and update this guidance, and provide further clarification as necessary.

Further bulletins will be issued shortly.



If you need any further information, please  
email: [publicservices@gmb.org.uk](mailto:publicservices@gmb.org.uk) or [kevin.brandstatter@gmb.org.uk](mailto:kevin.brandstatter@gmb.org.uk)

## Noticeboard Bulletin - 17-06-2020



Posted on: 17 June 2020

**The University & College Employers Association have written to the Joint Unions in Higher Education, indicating there will not be an uplift in pay accross the sector in the next financial year.**

The joint trade unions, in response to the UCEA position, are calling for the following:

- Consideration to be given to increasing pay by, at least, inflation in order to ensure that staff don't suffer a pay cut from 1 August 2020;
- Consideration to be given to providing increases to address compression at the lower end of the pay spine along with increases in pay on the lowest spinal column points in order to meet the national living wage (and the Living Wage Foundation rates where that is followed);
- Anational higher education job security commitment;
- Acommitment to the New JNCHESnational bargaining structures for 2021/22, and future years, with HEIs signalling clear commitment to this process;
- A New JNCHES pay negotiation meeting to be held before mid-July 2020;
- For the New JNCHESautumn meeting to be convened as a higher education pay and finances review meeting;
- For discussion to continue on the equality and pay-related elements of the joint unions' claim including, but not limited to, tackling the gender and ethnic pay gap, casualisation of the workforce, workloads, Scottish JNCHES sub-committee.

READ THE EXCHANGE HERE:





