

Vicky Blake
Vice-President, UCU

By email

18 November 2019

Dear Vicky,

Universities are naturally disappointed to see UCU's plans for industrial action to take place at 57 HE institutions on its pay dispute, with this running alongside UCU's USS dispute in 43 of them. You know that the pay negotiating round for 2019 was conducted on behalf of 147 HE institutions and the collective of employers remain clear in their feedback to UCEA that an outcome on pay has been reached that is both fair and reflects the maximum that can be achieved within the framework of the national collective pay bargaining arrangements.

UCEA acknowledges however that UCU has pursued its campaign on three other themes - around workload, gender pay/equality and casual employment arrangements - and that these are important matters that your members, and indeed other colleagues, feel strongly about. Feedback from individual universities suggests that some branches are particularly concerned to see what more might be done at sector-level to help achieve the progress in these areas they would want to see.

UCEA also notes that the focus during the JNCHES negotiating meetings was almost entirely on the pay uplift and the offers that UCEA did make for new sector-level work on the three issues – set out in UCEA's final offer document - were not extensively discussed.

Given the desire we have heard in recent weeks for UCEA to look again with UCU at what might more be done around the three issues, we are therefore inviting UCU representatives to meet with us for some further dialogue on those areas. HE employers tell us that they are fully committed to addressing their gender and ethnicity pay gaps and that they genuinely wish to have and sustain working environments where all colleagues feel valued, respected and supported and have work demands that are also fair and reasonable. We have heard from UCU that you want to explore what more UCEA can do at a sector-level to enable individual institutions in taking forward such work.

We would genuinely hope that such dialogue can be productive on the three areas of the 2019 JNCHES claim around casual employment, workload and gender equality.

This is not to re-open negotiations or to renew a disputes procedure. We are however willing to listen and explore suggestions as to what may be realistic aspirations for work at sector-level that can support and encourage the substantial efforts already under way within many universities. We acknowledge that UCU negotiators will no doubt wish to talk about all the

areas of your dispute but we do wish to be clear that it is on the three areas other than pay that we will be able to have fruitful discussions.

UCEA would ask UCU to also give consideration to the suspension of the industrial action that has been called to start on 25 November in relation to your pay dispute. We believe this would show a positive signal from UCU that you wish to move into some constructive dialogue, as is UCEA's intention. We know that the affected universities would welcome this and we believe many UCU members would as well.

We will however not make such a move a pre-condition of entering into this dialogue and we will be in touch to see if we can set up an opportunity for a meeting as soon as is reasonably practical.

With good wishes,



Helen Fairfoul
Chief Executive
UCEA

cc Paul Bridge