

Paul Bridge and Ruth Levin
Joint Union Side Secretaries
Joint Higher Education Sector Trade Unions

By email

26 July 2021

Dear Paul and Ruth,

Conclusion of the dispute resolution procedure – JNCHES negotiating round 2021-22

I am writing following the second dispute resolution meeting which took place on Friday 23 July 2021. This was the last meeting arranged under the New JNCHES Dispute Resolution Procedure. At the conclusion of the meeting the employers agreed to write to you to confirm our final offer.

In setting out our offer, it is important to understand that the financial uncertainty initially created by the pandemic has now translated into clear pressures for many higher education institutions. The most recent analysis from the Office for Students (OfS) shows that net operating cashflow halved between 2019-20 and 2020-21. The OfS analysis also suggests that there will be continuing reduced income from accommodation and commercial activities that rely on open buildings and facilities. Within this context, employers have had to show careful financial management in order to minimise the impact on jobs. Employers would emphasise, as we demonstrated in our meetings, that in the most recent year the higher education sector witnessed a substantially lower rate of redundancies compared to previous years and when compared to redundancy rates in the wider economy.

However, recent funding announcements which have frozen allocations in cash terms will continue to create challenges for employers. The impact of the reduction in high-cost subject funding for some courses will be intensified for some institutions by the removal of London weighting.

Within these constraints, UCEA has tried to produce a pay outcome that is fair and sustainable. In making this offer we would emphasise that the UCEA Board and Negotiating Team have not simply adopted the lowest common denominator. We have fully exhausted our mandate in carefully constructing an uplift which balances affordability across our member institutions, many of which now face considerable financial pressures, with a meaningful uplift for staff in the sector. We hope that the trade unions can appreciate our efforts in producing this offer, the details of which are set out below.

Pay uplift

In respect of the uplift to the pay spine, UCEA's offer is for an increase in the pay bill of 1.6 percent. This represents a substantial additional investment of approximately £164 million for the sector. Our proposal for the structure of the award is set out in the appendix to this letter.

The uplift would be graded in such a way as to award increases of between 1.54 percent and 3.6 percent for pay points below Spine Point 22, with an increase of 1.5 percent to all pay points at Spine Point 22 or above. This uplift is in addition to the progression pay increases, ranging from 1.5 percent to 3 percent, for around half of eligible staff covered by the negotiations.

For the avoidance of doubt, this fully exhausts the available mandate on pay as indicated by the sector and agreed by the UCEA Board. At our final meeting last Friday your colleagues were very clear about the minimum acceptable uplift they would be willing to consider. Unfortunately, in the current financial climate, this leaves an insurmountable gap between what employers can afford and what trade unions are willing to consider. However, as stated above, we believe that our full and final offer on the pay uplift is both fair and sustainable.

Pay spine compression

UCEA is willing to commit to the establishment of a New JNCHES working group to examine the drivers, impact and potential recommendations in respect of the compression of the pay spine. The group would examine this issue to see what recommendations can be made jointly and to ensure that any proposals are properly costed. Our preference is for such a working group to develop a jointly agreed position which both UCEA and the trade unions could test with members in preparation for the beginning of the 2022-23 annual New JNCHES pay round.

Career development

Promoting career development is something which our members, as good employers, fully support. We would, therefore, propose the establishment of a joint working group to examine career development and training opportunities. We understand the aspiration of the joint unions that such a working group would explore, but not be limited to, technicians and the Technician Commitment and academic-related staff. We would anticipate that the working group would be able to identify good practice with regard to career progression from within and outside the sector. However, it would remain a matter for HEIs to determine their own policies on progression between grades.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

With reference to Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) contracts, UCEA is prepared to engage in joint work with the sector unions to establish information on the nature of GTAs and similar roles, and the nature of the issues faced by your members and ours in the use of such roles.

Workload management

As a sector of autonomous employers there is a range of approaches to monitoring workloads both between HEIs as well as in relation to different staff groups. Although workload is not within the scope of New JNCHES, UCEA is willing to recommend through its existing structure of the Higher Education Safety and Health (HESH) Forum that HEIs adopt the HSE Stress Management Standards approach (or suitable equivalent system), where they are not already doing so. UCEA wishes to continue to work with the trade unions outside JNCHES, through the HESH Forum and through the roundtable group on coronavirus workforce issues. This could include:

- Potential changes to working practices and the impact on workload caused by the pandemic.
- Local action to reduce the incidence of work-related stress ill-health.

Redeployment

Although redeployment is not within the scope of New JNCHES, UCEA would agree to enter into discussions with the joint trade unions outside of New JNCHES to explore whether there are examples of best practice and mechanisms which could be promoted to HEIs and further improve visibility of opportunities at different institutions.

Gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps

The UCEA reports *Caught at the crossroads: outlining an intersectional approach to gender and ethnicity pay gaps in HE* and *Taking action: Tackling the gender pay gap* underline UCEA's commitment to taking action to reduce the gender and ethnicity pay gaps. We also share the trade unions' desire to take action in respect of the disability pay gap. UCEA, therefore, supports the creation of a New JNCHES working group to examine the intersectional data to the extent it is available, and potential institutional-level solutions based on best practice. UCEA is also willing to endorse and encourage declarations in the collection of data on protected characteristics, in line with GDPR requirements. We believe that data and case studies can be used to promote real change. This working group could produce clear time-limited outputs to illustrate good practice and recommend that HEIs adopt this where they are able to do so. The working group could examine the national data, giving prominence to the findings, and also invite HEIs to submit and/or publish their own data on a voluntary basis. The work could then include identifying exemplar organisations who can help institutions who volunteer as pilots on their journey to reduce equality pay gaps.

In the circumstances confronting all higher education institutions, UCEA has delivered a comprehensive offer which meets many key elements of the trade union claim, where these fall within the New JNCHES remit. We very much wish to work with the trade unions to implement the many positive aspects of our offer. We would be willing to give a commitment to do so, with the understanding that making progress on some of the areas detailed in this letter will be more difficult if there is significant disruption in the sector

We hope, therefore, that individual trade unions will be able to acknowledge with their full memberships the progress made by this offer as a way of bringing a conclusion to the 2021-22 New JNCHES pay round.

Yours sincerely,



Raj Jethwa

Chief Executive

Appendix: UCEA final offer – New JNCHES negotiating round 2021-22

Spine point	Salary from August 2020	Uplift		Salary from August 2021
	£	£	%	£
3	16,736	602	3.60%	17,338
4	17,046	550	3.23%	17,596
5	17,361	540	3.11%	17,901
6	17,682	530	3.00%	18,212
7	18,009	520	2.89%	18,529
8	18,342	510	2.78%	18,852
9	18,709	500	2.67%	19,209
10	19,133	490	2.56%	19,623
11	19,612	480	2.45%	20,092
12	20,130	470	2.33%	20,600
13	20,675	460	2.22%	21,135
14	21,236	450	2.12%	21,686
15	21,814	440	2.02%	22,254
16	22,417	430	1.92%	22,847
17	23,067	420	1.82%	23,487
18	23,754	420	1.77%	24,174
19	24,461	410	1.68%	24,871
20	25,217	410	1.63%	25,627
21	25,941	400	1.54%	26,341
22	26,715	401	1.50%	27,116
23	27,511	413	1.50%	27,924
24	28,331	425	1.50%	28,756
25	29,176	438	1.50%	29,614
26	30,046	451	1.50%	30,497
27	30,942	464	1.50%	31,406
28	31,866	478	1.50%	32,344
29	32,817	492	1.50%	33,309
30	33,797	507	1.50%	34,304
31	34,804	522	1.50%	35,326
32	35,845	538	1.50%	36,382
33	36,914	554	1.50%	37,467
34	38,017	570	1.50%	38,587
35	39,152	587	1.50%	39,739
36	40,322	605	1.50%	40,927
37	41,526	623	1.50%	42,149
38	42,792	642	1.50%	43,434
39	44,045	661	1.50%	44,706
40	45,361	680	1.50%	46,042
41	46,718	701	1.50%	47,419
42	48,114	722	1.50%	48,835

Spine point	Salary from August 2020	Uplift		Salary from August 2021
	£	£	%	£
43	49,553	743	1.50%	50,296
44	51,034	766	1.50%	51,799
45	52,560	788	1.50%	53,348
46	54,131	812	1.50%	54,943
47	55,750	836	1.50%	56,587
48	57,418	861	1.50%	58,279
49	59,135	887	1.50%	60,022
50	60,905	914	1.50%	61,818
51	62,727	941	1.50%	63,668