



29 June 2023

Dear Raj,

We are writing to you on behalf of the five joint trade unions in response to your letter dated 16 June 2023.

We are disappointed that despite the impact of this dispute on universities across the UK, UCEA remain unwilling to re-enter negotiations with us without pre-conditions in order to resolve this dispute which on the current trajectory will not only impact staff and students this academic year but also next year.

You will already know that the joint trade unions do not accept your claims that the pay uplift pushed the pay packet 'to the sector's limit' and that the financial data provided by HEIs which boast record surpluses and reduced expenditure on staff directly contradict this claim. We also cannot accept your repeated claims that a further pay uplift will put jobs at risk and increase workloads, and we are disappointed that UCEA continues to make these kinds of unsubstantiated claims which only worsen already fractured industrial relations. The joint unions are strongly of the view that, during the greatest cost-of-living crisis faced in a generation with interest rates rising, a fair pay settlement and a review of the new JNCHES pay spine alongside meaningful action to address casualisation and equality pay gaps are essential prerequisites to ensure that the sector can recruit and retain staff. We would also reiterate our position that it is unacceptable that employers are attempting to pass on the cost of their financial mismanagement to staff.

We have always maintained that we are willing to enter talks without your previously stipulated pre-conditions, and that includes talks over the sector's finances. We are,

therefore, willing to meet to discuss sector finances and to jointly agree on an external, independent facilitator for this exercise. We believe this exercise must also include establishing a realistic understanding of the cost-of-living crisis facing our members with the aim of informing a meaningful pay uplift that we know the sector can afford, and that our members need and deserve. Our members have faced successive years of real terms pay cuts and worsening conditions and should be prioritised in any proposed discussion about the expenditure of HEIs.

We also remain willing to re-enter negotiations on the following four areas you have outlined to build on the work done earlier this year:

- Pay spine reform
- Contract types/Casualisation
- Workload
- Equality pay gaps

However, you will understand that the joint unions cannot call off industrial action, including the marking and assessment boycott, on the narrow terms that you have presented in your letter.

We once again urge you to return to the negotiating table without this pre-condition in order to work together to resolve this dispute for the benefit of staff, students, and the sector as a whole. We hope that you will do so in good faith, and we look forward to hearing from you in a timely manner.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth and Shahenda - Joint Secretaries to and on behalf of the New JNCHES joint trade unions

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