

Jo Grady
General Secretary
University and College Union

By email

4 July 2023

Dear Jo,

2023-24 Negotiating Round

Thank you for your letter of 30 June. I am also in receipt of the letter from the Joint Unions of 29 June. I am responding separately to the Joint Unions.

As we have consistently stated, our mandate from the sector does not permit us to improve upon the 2023-24 pay uplift. In addition, our ability to continue negotiations on the pay-related issues from phase two of the negotiating round was contingent upon there being an acceptance of the Acas terms of reference and there being no further industrial action.

We note that UCU's members voted to reject the terms of reference and that new industrial action has taken place in the form of both a marking and assessment boycott and strike action in several HE institutions.

While there are still differences between the position of employers and UCU, UCEA recognises the willingness expressed in your letter to engage in meaningful negotiations to seek a resolution to the dispute.

There are some of the provisos identified in your letter, such as returning pay withheld from staff for participation in industrial action, which UCEA cannot accept as pre-conditions for the resumption of negotiations. We say this in the interests of full transparency.

However, we also recognise the positive intention contained in your letter. We, therefore, propose an urgent meeting outside of the New JNCHES arrangements. I would like to invite you and a small number of UCU representatives to a meeting with UCEA colleagues to discuss the marking and assessment boycott, and explore a potential process for resolution of the dispute which could lead to the marking and assessment boycott being suspended.

Given our respective positions, it is understood that the purpose of such a meeting is to explore the current obstacles to a resolution and whether a basis can be identified for the resumption of negotiations between UCEA and the Joint HE Trade Unions.

We also welcome the willingness of UCU and the unions to discuss the process for an independent review of sector affordability. We understand that the unions would like to discuss the scope and remit of such a review and we look forward to being able to progress this.

I have copied this letter to the Joint Union Side Secretaries and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raj Jethwa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Raj Jethwa
Chief Executive

cc Shahenda Suliman, UCU
 Ruth Smith, UNISON