

Dr J Grady  
General Secretary  
Universities and Colleges Union  
Carlow Street  
London NW1 7LH

**By email**

18 October 2021

Dear Dr Grady,

**New JNCHES negotiating round 2021-22**

Thank you for your letter of 15 October 2021. UCEA and its member institutions have two priorities in the current climate following the 2021-22 pay award: minimising the impact of the pandemic on staff and students, and preventing further disruption to students in the new academic year. We are certainly willing to meet with UCU to discuss the pay award with the aim of reaching an agreement and avoiding unnecessary disruption to students and institutions.

However, we hope that UCU is clear that significant financial uncertainty continues to confront many of our members. The headlines relating to positive student recruitment levels are of course welcome, but it is becoming very clear that this recruitment is far from evenly spread across our members. We hope your own branches are reporting to you the reality on the ground and the consequent varying financial situations facing institutions across the sector. This has reinforced UCEA's view – consistently confirmed through feedback from our members – that our offer, which carefully balances affordability across our member institutions, is the most appropriate national pay uplift given the circumstances of the sector.

The elements of our offer are set out below:

- **National pay uplift**  
Our offer delivers a minimum increase of 1.5 percent for all staff, with higher amounts available for those below pay point 22, up to a maximum of 3.6 percent. While challenging for some HEIs, we believe this award is fair and sustainable overall.
- **Career development**  
We have offered to establish a joint working group with trade unions to examine career development and training opportunities.

- **Graduate Teaching Assistants**  
We have offered to work with trade unions to identify the issues faced by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and staff in similar roles.
- **Workload management**  
We have offered to work with trade unions to look at ways of reducing the incidence of work-related stress ill-health.
- **Redeployment**  
We have offered to work with trade unions, outside of the New JNCHES process, to promote opportunities for redeployment between HEIs where this is feasible.
- **Gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps**  
We have offered to work jointly with trade unions to reduce the gender, ethnicity and disability gaps, by identifying and promoting good practice and recommending that HEIs adopt this where they are able to do so.
- **Pay spine compression**  
We have also offered to work with trade unions on solutions for staff at the lower end of the pay spine where the gap between pay points has become smaller over recent years.

Specifically in relation to pay spine compression, our preference has always been 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. In order to do this, we believe that work needs to begin very soon. We very much wish to work with the trade unions to implement this and the many other positive aspects of our offer. However, as we have said before, making progress on some of the areas above will be more difficult if there is significant disruption in the sector.

UCEA understands that UCU intends to ballot its members in individual HEIs on a disaggregated basis. As you will be aware, UCEA has repeatedly reiterated its ongoing commitment to New JNCHES and to national collective bargaining. We believe that we have also heard UCU's commitment to national bargaining. How this commitment is in any way compatible with industrial action as if UCU was pursuing 146 individual claims, rather than one single collective negotiation, is incomprehensible. As you know, no single HEI can determine the outcome of the UCEA offer for the pay award.

Rather than taking a path to unnecessary industrial action, we would hope that UCU recognises the positive opportunities to work with employers on the proposals in our offer. While we are willing to meet with your negotiators, if you think that this letter offers a potential way forward, we would also ask that you put our offer to your members before proceeding with a ballot for industrial action.

Yours sincerely,



**Raj Jethwa**  
Chief Executive