

IN THIS ISSUE OF HE NEWS:-

- ❖ **Pay Update**
- ❖ **Redundancies Update**
- ❖ **Election of National Negotiators**
- ❖ **HEC Priorities 2009-10**
- ❖ **Health Educators' Advisory Group**
- ❖ **HEC Statement on Iran**

PAY: Update

Talks with the UCEA remain at an impasse in relation to the pay round for 2009-10. The Higher Education trade unions (UCU, EIS, GMB UNISON and Unite) have condemned the final pay offer put by the employers, and a joint statement by the unions has expressed collective dismay at the appalling offer from the UCEA.

The offer consisted of the following elements:

- An increase of 0.5% to all scale points with effect from 1 August 2009;
- Post-1992 institutions that retain separate London weightings recommended to increase these on average by the same percentage uplift;
- On equality issues, a joint working-group to undertake further work to investigate systematic issues around the gender pay gap and to monitor the application of equal pay reviews, and updating the 2008 guidance on work-life balance;
- On job security, UCEA continued to argue that this was a matter on which they had no mandate to negotiate.

The unions made clear in their joint statement that they rejected the employers' rationale that incremental rises and pension costs could be balanced within the cost of the pay rise. It was also noted that FE employers have tabled a 1.5% pay offer. Moreover, the trade unions

stated their outrage at the employers' refusal of their request for constructive engagement at a national level to improve job security in the sector and criticised the employers' failure to enter meaningful negotiations in this difficult period.

Also part of the offer is a joint working group to look in more detail at the application of the Framework Agreement. This will include the operation of contribution points, the extent of harmonisation of terms and conditions of employment (in relation to which we will of course argue that harmonisation should only be upwards), and the assimilation of hourly paid lecturers. Ways of improving the collection of pay data will also be covered. A joint working group on sustainability is also proposed to consider the factors affecting Higher Education Institutions. It would act as a forum for discussion on strategic developments, including finance (and importantly) workforce, and organisational change.

All unions agreed on the joint '5 unions 1 demand: Defend Higher Education' campaign, with campaign materials dispatched to branches/LAs. These should be circulated to members and given due prominence.

HEC Sector conference agreed that there should be thorough consultation on future action. In line with this, meetings for branches/LAs and

scheduled for the following locations/dates:
Birmingham, 29 September; Edinburgh, 30
September; Manchester 1 October; London, 2
October (see UCU HE Circular UCUHE/27)

Redundancies – Thousands of HE Jobs Under Threat

Thousands of jobs remain under threat in the Higher Education sector, despite national funding settlements well above inflation. In total, the UCU estimate that close to 4,600 jobs are at risk in higher education. Cuts will affect not only staff but students who, despite the introduction of fees and the increase in costs associated with attending university have been subject to increasing staff:student ratios in recent years.

Branches and local associations are reminded that we have produced a redundancy briefing that can be found at:
http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/9/3/ucu_chaliredundancy_jun09.pdf

Joint union statement on HE job cuts

The following statement has been signed by NUS, UCU, Unison, Unite, GMB and EIS:

'As representatives of both staff and students in higher education, we are deeply concerned at the announcement by the UCEA that two-thirds of all universities are considering job cuts.

At a time when demand from students for access to higher education has never been greater we believe that any strategy of cutting jobs is deeply problematic.

The scale of redundancies in those institutions who have already announced cuts is substantial with both jobs and whole departments threatened. Cutting jobs could further raise staff:student ratios (which have already doubled in the last 15 years), and lead to larger seminar, class and lecture sizes; less contact

time and an increased workload for those staff who remain. Any proposals to cut crucial support and academic related staff jobs without whom universities simply could not function will not be accepted by any union as a rationalisation for protecting such ratios. Cuts of any kind could have a devastating impact upon the quality of education experienced by current and future students.

Given UCEA has raised the spectre of mass redundancies across HE at national negotiations, there should be nothing in principle to stop the HE sector from coming together to provide reassurances on seeking to avoid job cuts rather than their current position- hiding behind claims of institutional autonomy.

We therefore believe that a partnership between unions and employers to reach a national agreement on job security is essential if we are to defend education.

We pledge to campaign together on defending education, reflecting the belief that our sector plays a critical role in mitigating the effects of the economic recession; creating the conditions for future prosperity and providing all in our communities with access to the opportunity to learn.'

It is important that branches and LAs currently involved in discussions on local procedures do not agree anything less beneficial than the provisions in the draft national agreement (see UCU HE Circular UCUHE/28). Any relevant agreement should be checked with UCU national office.

Election of National Negotiators

At the meeting of the HEC on 26 June 2009, the results of the election of national HE negotiators – voted on at UCU Congress – were announced. Anne-Marie Green, Gavin Reid, Joanna de Groot

and Christine Vie were declared as elected. The other members of the team are: Terry Hoad (Vice-President, Chair of HEC); Liz Lawrence (Vice-Chair of HEC); Simon Renton (Vice-Chair of HEC); and Michael MacNeil (National Head of Higher Education).

HEC Priorities 2009-10

Priorities for 2009-10 were agreed at the meeting of the UCU Higher Education Committee (HEC) on 26 June 2009. The priorities can be grouped around three themes: Collective bargaining; Professional issues; and Alternative visions for higher education. They are as follows:

- 1** Collective bargaining
 - Pursuing national bargaining objectives on pay, with an emphasis on bargaining for equality (e.g for HPLs and FTCs and involving equal pay audits);
 - Defending jobs and pursuing agreements that promote job security;
 - Completing implementation of the Framework Agreements and analysing its impact;
- 2** Professional issues
 - Working to maintain high standards and effectiveness of teaching by pursuing measures to reduce student: staff ratios and reducing workload;
 - Developing policy in response to the proposed Research Excellence Framework and to pursue measures to facilitate greater engagement in academic research;
 - Responding to ongoing attacks on academic freedom;
- 3** Alternative Vision for higher education

- Participating in the development of the union's manifesto for the forthcoming general election;
- Developing UCU guidelines for good governance across the sector.

These agreed priorities are focused around improving conditions and the quality of professional life for staff in higher education. The priorities will provide a guide for the work of the Higher Education Committee and staff team at the UCU and for the allocation of finite resources over the academic year.

Health Educators' Advisory Group

An initial meeting of the Health Educators' Advisory Group was held on 28 April 2009. Participants came from a range of higher education institutions, and from various professional strands within healthcare education. The HEC meeting of 26 June 2009 approved the formalisation of the Advisory Group as a working-group reporting to it. It will prioritise work on health education issues at local and strategic levels. Up to two members from each region will be co-opted onto it.

UCU representatives on the JLC (joint liaison committee) with other health union with whom we have joint membership agreements will also be elected from this working-group.

The Advisory Group will be tasked with the following:

- 1** Responding to Public Policy Initiatives impacting on Health Educators: The UCU will be seeking closer and more direct involvement in consultations on the development and commissioning of work in this area.
- 2** Addressing Workloads: Health educators are particularly overloaded with work and the UCU will be seeking to address this through local negotiations.

- 3** Working with other unions within the sector: A joint liaison committee has been set up with the aim of establishing a forum for relationship building and information exchange.

We are looking for two representatives from each region to be on the Advisory Group. There are a number of vacancies that need to be filled. Current composition/vacancies are as follows:

Scotland – two vacancies;
Northern Ireland – two vacancies;
Wales – two vacancies;
Northern – Julia Charlton (Northumbria),
Veronica Killen (Northumbria);
North West – two vacancies;
Yorkshire and Humberside – Mick Ashman
(Sheffield), one vacancy;
West Midlands – Howard Russell
(Staffordshire), one vacancy;
East Midlands – Grahame Cope (Nottingham),
one vacancy;
Eastern and Home Counties – two vacancies;
South West – two vacancies;
Southern – Sara Demain (Southampton), one
vacancy;
South East – two vacancies;
London South: two vacancies;
London North, two vacancies.

If you are interested in joining the Advisory Group please contact: cbernabe@ucu.org.uk

HEC Agrees Statement on Iran

The HEC meeting on 26 June 2009 also endorsed a motion on the situation in Iran in the light of the continuing refusal of the Iranian Guardian Council to acknowledge the flawed election count in the recent Presidential elections. The Presidential election of 12 June saw the incumbent Mahmoud Ahmedinejad controversially declared the victor over, Mir Hossein Mousavi. Opposition protests have followed widespread claims that Mousavi was robbed of victory in a rigged contest.

The HEC motion – proposed by Jim Guild and seconded by Maeve Landman – noted the

legitimate demands of the 'defeated' Presidential candidates and wider Iranian society for a recount of these votes, or a re-run of the election itself. It also noted the outstanding role played by academics and students, in the face of state-sponsored intimidation, in leading the protests against this stolen election.

The HEC motion therefore condemned the death of students at Tehran University at the hands of a pro-government militia and the recent detention of 70 academics and university leaders after a meeting held with Mr Mousavi on 23 June. Moreover, the motion condemned all extra-judicial deaths caused by an Iranian establishment seeking to retain power by any and all means.

The HEC motion concludes with a statement of support for the legitimate demands of academics, students, workers and progressive elements of Iranian society in their struggle for a fair Presidential election and a liberalisation of Iranian society.

Following the arrest of the 70 academics, UCU general secretary Sally Hunt also issued a statement deploring the actions of the Iranian government and particularly the disturbing way that academics were being targeted by the state for meeting with opposition leaders.

According to The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, around 240 prominent Iranian lawyers, activists, journalists, professors, human rights defenders, and students have been arrested without warrants at their homes or places of work by unidentified agents and taken to undisclosed locations, since the regime launched its crackdown on dissenters following the presidential election.