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National Negotiations Update - No progress in talks

Following the New JNCHES meeting on Monday 19 April, the higher education unions - the University and College Union (UCU), EIS, GMB, UNISON and Unite - issued the following joint statement:

"At the new JNCHES meeting held on Monday 19 April, UCEA failed to improve on their previous offer of a sum equivalent to 0.25% (non-consolidated). They also failed to respond to other aspects of the trade unions' claim, including the need for proposals to improve job security in the sector. They did, however, indicate a willingness to discuss issues associated with training and development further. UCEA negotiators agreed to refer the current position back to their board meeting on 29 April. The parties agreed to meet again on 5 May. The trade union side hope that the employer will come to the table with a credible offer."

At a time when thousands of jobs are at risk in the sector, the UCU negotiating team consider it unacceptable for the Universities, Colleges and Employers Association (UCEA) to refuse negotiations on a national approach to job security.

The employers' refusal to improve on the pay offer of 0.25% (non-consolidated) is a real terms pay cut on the back of a real terms pay cut last year.

UCU head of higher education, Michael MacNeil, said: "There is nothing to prevent UCEA negotiating a national agreement to prevent job losses. In fact in these exceptional financial circumstances we think it is absolutely essential. They have failed to understand, or deal with, the full scale of the jobs crisis in the sector.

To add insult to injury UCEA are also offering staff a real terms pay cut, this following a derisory payment last year. It is essential that the employers come back with a credible offer to avoid a dispute and worsening of industrial relations."

UCU's Higher Education Committee starts dispute preparations

In anticipation of the employers continuing their unacceptable approach to the national negotiations, on Friday 16 April, the Higher Education Committee agreed:

- To delegate to the national negotiators the ability to lodge a procedural dispute with UCEA should a satisfactory response not be made to the joint union claim
- To commence the necessary preparations for simultaneous industrial action at all HE institutions should a satisfactory response not be made to the joint union claim
- To recommend to sector conference that industrial action is likely to be necessary to obtain an acceptable offer from the employers in response to our claim.

Membership Records

Your assistance is essential in ensuring the smooth running of our communications, democratic structures and ability to run industrial action ballots. Can you please ensure that the records held on the central membership data base are as accurate and as up to date as practically possible, particularly with regard to workplace and employment grade information?

Branches and LAs are asked to advise their national membership contact of all changes and seek further assistance if required.

HE briefings for branches/LA

An update on the national negotiations will be provided at the HE briefings being held around the UK in April/May by the Head Office Higher Education team.

The briefings will be held in London (28 April); Birmingham (29 April); Glasgow (4 May); Bristol (12 May – please note change from previously advertised date of 5 May); and Leeds (14 May), and will include sessions on the following:

- national negotiations on pay and job security;
- HEFCE workforce framework report;
- academic freedom;
- research restructuring and research performance measures;
- governance;
- employment statutes.

We encourage attendance from members of all branches/LAs (2 per branch/LA). For further details and registration go to

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/UCUHE58.html> or click on the venues listed at http://www.ucu.org.uk/hebriefings_spring10

UCU Fighting Fund

Although taking strike action is a last resort, sometimes it is necessary to do so in order to combat intransigent managements. It's always tough to lose a day's pay, and so UCU has set up a fighting fund to support members facing difficulties as a consequence of supporting the union's actions.

HOW TO DONATE

Make a direct bank transfer, or set up a regular standing order, to:

Account name: UCU Fighting Fund

Sort code: 08-60-01

Account no: 20179432

Reference: 'Fighting Fund 2010'

or send a cheque (payable to 'University and College Union') to:

Fighting Fund 2010
Finance Dept
University and College Union
Carlow Street
London NW1 7LH