

4 July 2013

National Executive recommends rejection of final England FE pay offer and to ballot for national strike action

Dear Colleague,

A third national negotiating meeting took place between the AOC and the six college unions on 25 June 2013 where employers made a final recommended offer of a 0.7% pay increase from August this year, with a £282 increase for those earning equivalent to £14,052.

You may recall that talks had broken down at the previous meeting when the employers withdrew a 0.5% offer in response to the trade unions refusing to agree to a statement that included the commitment at a local level to *"open and positive discussion regarding approaches to incremental pay, flexibility and working practices"*

Lengthy discussions at officer level followed this meeting which led to a revised statement with more general wording similar to that accompanying previous offers, and importantly, with the explicit reference to incremental pay and working practices removed. The trade union side therefore agreed to take back the offer (full details below) to its relevant committees and membership for consideration.

The Further Education Committee of UCU (FEC) met on Friday 28 June to consider the offer. Members of the committee were unanimous in the view that the offer of 0.7% in response to our claim for a 5% increase was unacceptable in the context of inflation running at over 2% and the ever increasing levels of workload faced by members because of the tightening and/or worsening of conditions of service at a local level.

FEC was mindful of the policy passed at Annual Sector Conference last May which stated that in the event of an unsatisfactory offer, a ballot for national strike action should be held as early in October as possible. The committee supports this conference policy and is recommending that members reject the offer and the union organises a ballot for escalating industrial action.

The Lingfield Report, "Professionalism in Education" (October 2012) stated that:

An important contributor to any sense of staff professional disenfranchisement remains to be addressed. The Review panel does so with some hesitation, conscious that it has no place in negotiation of terms and conditions. We must observe, nevertheless, that the average salaries of FE staff, relative to their counterparts in schools and universities, appear to have declined substantially over time, and particularly sharply so in the last decade. It must be a common-sense conclusion that this would have an impact on FE lecturers' sense of professional self-worth and, in particular, on the appetite for interchangeability of qualifications with school teachers which was noted in our Interim Report.

FEC also noted that two schoolteachers unions (NASUWT and NUT) have recently launched a campaign in June over pay and conditions. A well supported one day strike was held in the North West with further strike action planned in the autumn term. If UCU members vote to take action we will, where possible, coordinate action with the teachers unions.

Attend your branch meeting and make sure you have your say!

FEC was very clear that to achieve any chance of an improved offer requires a very significant level of industrial action. It was therefore important that members are first fully consulted both on the offer and their willingness to take industrial action.

All branches have been asked to organise meetings before 9 October to consider if branch members agree or not with the recommendation that UCU should reject the final pay offer of 0.7% and organise a ballot for a programme of national escalating strike action to obtain an improved offer. Contact your local branch officers to find out when your meeting will take place.

The full text of the offer can be found at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/fepayengland>

Yours sincerely,



Barry Lovejoy
National Head of Further Education