

National Bargaining News

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News from your EIS NJNC negotiators

NJNC making progress—but not there yet

NJNC negotiators have been busy, with weekly Short Life Working Groups (SLWGs) on both pay and T&Cs for three months which culminated on 15 December.

The Short Life Working Groups (SLWGs) were initially set up in September in response to an utter lack of progress at the NJNC. The March 2016 agreement had set out dates for agreement on migration rules, pay scales and T&Cs, every single one of which had been missed.

The Groups were extended at the end of October and again at the end of November, putting pressure on management to engage in meaningful negotiations with actual outcomes.

The Pay SLWG was tasked with developing separate national pay scales for promoted and un-promoted lecturers. The former involves pay harmonisation and migration to take long serving lecturers to the agreed £40,027 top of the pay scale by April 2019. The good news is that progress has been made, with a mechanism for un-promoted staff which the EIS negotiating team is now prepared to recommend.

Progress has also been made on promoted teaching staff pay points, and we are hopeful that this aspect will be resolved for the next NJNC Side Table meeting planned for early February 2017.

The other SLWG is working on National Terms & Conditions (T&Cs). This group has made some progress, albeit slow. Key elements of the EIS' proposed T&Cs include 21 hours maximum weekly class contact, 66 days annual leave and permanisation. While we have agreed a num-

ber of elements of the new national T&Cs—these key items are still to be resolved, with management emphasising the need for 'flexibility'....

Where do we go from here?

The EIS FELA Executive met on 16 December, endorsed the SLWG Pay's outputs on un-promoted pay and agreed to further extend the Short Life Working Groups into January 2017.

There will be further meetings of each group through January, followed by a side table lecturers NJNC meeting in early February.

We are keen to reach a resolution on both pay and T&C. Our members deserve nothing less—we cannot sustain the current inequality and we cannot accept a situation where an agreement takes over a year to implement.

We met with the Scottish Government Minister with responsibility for FE and have agreed to giving her a further update on the progress of the SLWGs.

We reminded the Minister that national bargaining for FE was an SNP manifesto commitment, and that it was her government that brought the NJNC into being.

Whilst the government does not have a seat at the table, it cannot allow this process to fail. The Scottish Government is watching progress closely, and the Employers' Side is well aware of this.

The EIS wishes a resolution, but not at any price. EIS national policy is that we will not trade T&C for pay, and we have been absolutely clear from the outset that we view these

as separate negotiations—settlement on pay cannot be dependent on the outcome of the T&C discussions. Sadly, this is what the Employers wish us to do.

What happened with the £100 from the last settlement?

As members will recall, we are still in dispute with management over the payment of £100 from the March 2016 Agreement. This payment should have been backdated, as it comprised part of the pay rise for 2015/16. We have had two disputes meetings in an attempt to resolve this, and we anticipate an ACAS meeting early in the New Year. We are separately exploring an employment tribunal claim on this matter.

What about cost of living rises?

We submitted our 2017/18 pay claim at the December NJNC meeting. Our claim is for £1000 flat rated on all salary points. This reflects the rising cost of living—in particular concerns about rising inflation in the wake of Brexit.

It also reflects the additional workload lecturers have faced since mergers and regionalisation, as wave after wave of experienced lecturers took VS and departed the sector.

The pay claim also takes into account median pay rises in key sectors such as construction, finance and STEM, areas in which colleges struggle to recruit and retain experienced staff.

Management Side has acknowledged receipt our 2017-18 Pay Claim and we anticipate negotiations beginning in the New Year.