

To All EIS-ULA Members

Dear Colleague

I thought that I would write to you to update you on some of the latest developments in Higher Education, and potential consequences for EIS-ULA members.

1. HE Governance Bill

The Scottish Parliament passed the Higher Governance Act this week. The EIS, other trade unions and the NUS had campaigned hard for it and there was some considerable opposition from most of the HE leadership in Scotland. The Government did amend the Bill to remove some of the clauses that could have led to potential excessive control by the Government in the future.

The key parts of the introduced Bill were kept, and the EIS is confident that these will improve governance and be of benefit to staff and students.

These key elements are:

- a. A senior lay member elected by staff and students, who will chair the University Governing Body (except for Ancient Universities where a Rector may also act as Chair).
- b. A stronger legal definition of academic freedom to protect academics' right to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or the privileges they may have.
- c. Two additional places on each University governing body for staff members elected from the membership of recognised trade unions.
- d. A strengthening of academic board structures within Universities.

The Act may be found here:

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_Bills/Higher%20Education%20Governance%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill74BS042016.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_Bills/Higher%20Education%20Governance%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill74BS042016.pdf)

2. Scottish HE funding

Whilst opposing the HE Governance Bill, some Scottish Universities were vociferous in stating that they are not public bodies; the Government has coincidentally reduced the amount of public funding awarded to the University sector for FY2016-17. The reduction in funding is of around £35m, which is approximately a 3% cut.

The Government has maintained research funding levels, and the cut will therefore be made to the teaching grants. The size of each University's teaching grant may be found here (Table 2):

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/communications/Announcements/2016/SFCAN042016.aspx>

The cuts are significant and may cause problems for those Universities which are highly reliant on these teaching grants. The Robert Gordon University has announced that redundancies are likely and other Universities may follow.

The Post-92 Universities are more susceptible to changes in public funding than the pre-92s who tend to have a more diverse range of income streams. There are some indications that some Post-92 Universities will be seeking to broaden their funding streams – it is the EIS view that this may lead to a greater emphasis on research, commercial income and obtaining grants.

3. Teaching Excellence Framework

The UK Government has responsibility for the English HE system, and it recently issued a Green Paper with the idea of a "Teaching Excellence Framework" (TEF), a teaching equivalent to the Research Excellent Framework. The incentive for English Universities to participate in the TEF would be that Universities that do well in the TEF would be able to raise their tuition fees over £9k.

There are indications that there is support from some Scottish Universities (if it is introduced in England) to introduce the same TEF exercise here in Scotland. The

rationale being that the Scottish Universities would not wish to be seen to be different from the "British" University sector and to allow students to compare teaching quality across the UK.

The TEF is likely to increase the importance of the National Student Survey (NSS) and lead to Universities placing greater importance on the quality and consistency of teaching. This is likely to lead to increased pressures on lecturers and University teachers.

4. 2016-17 Pay Claim for the UK University Sector

The EIS, GMB, UCU and Unite unions have issued a joint Pay Claim for the 2016 - 17 pay negotiations that are about to commence at New JNCHES later this month. The claim may be found at: http://www.eis.org.uk/ULA_Salary_Scales/JNCHES-2016-17-HE.htm

5. Increased Use of Disciplinary and Employee Support/Capability Procedures

In the last six months or so I have noticed that a range of Universities are implementing formal disciplinary and capability procedures more frequently than before. In some cases, line managers seem to be "banking" issues and then raising them together in a formal process without raising them informally at a prior point. It also seems that some HR advisors see themselves as serving managers rather than staff or ensuring natural justice.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries.

Yours faithfully



David Belsey
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