

21 February 2014



UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES  
EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION

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To: Ben Thomas, Unison  
Mike McCartney, Unite  
David Belsey, EIS  
Sharon Holder, GMB

Dear Ben, Mike, David, Sharon,

**OFFER OF EXPLORATORY TALKS IN THE PERIOD LEADING TO OPENING OF THE 2014-15  
NEW JNCHES NEGOTIATIONS**

I understand that, at the TU side meeting earlier this week you discussed the possibility of there being a period of exploratory talks between the New JNCHES trade unions and UCEA in the run up to the start of the 2014-15 negotiations, which open for the first meeting on 26 March 2014. I trust therefore that this letter does not come as a surprise.

I have this morning agreed with UCU that they are content to proceed and that we will use the following statement to communicate what is happening (indeed UCU has already put out a short media release to this effect).

"UCEA and UCU have agreed to investigate with the other parties to New JNCHES the prospect of arranging exploratory talks, involving all New JNCHES unions, prior to the first scheduled negotiating meeting of the 2014-15 pay negotiations. The purpose of the exploratory talks would be to seek an early positive dialogue on the key issues in the lead up to the 2014/15 pay round."

In bringing UCEA into such a process, I have explained that I need to have undertakings from each of the trade unions that wishes to participate in the exploratory talks that,

- a) there will be no further industrial action called while the exploratory talks continue, and
- b) there will be no alternative communication from your union (to media or members) about the nature or substance of the talks. To be clear, this means that there will be no suggestion that employers have re-opened negotiations or the 2013-14 round.

An email from you confirming that you are content to give these undertakings to UCEA will suffice and we are not expecting these undertakings to have to be public statements from yourselves or from UCEA.

I realise that each of you will have some internal process to go through, or meetings to get past, before you can confirm your position with regard to these talks. However, I very much hope that you will be able to let me know by the end of next week where your union is on this offer of exploratory talks.

I personally think it will be a positive development to establish early dialogue in this way and I genuinely hope that your union will want to take part.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Fairfoul  
Chief Executive

cc. Paul Bridge, UCU  
Michael MacNeil, UCU  
Jon Richards, UNISON