

National Bargaining News

March 2021

News from EIS/FELA National Reps

#CollegesNeedLecturers

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MILESTONE REACHED IN FIGHT TO STOP LECTURERS BEING REPLACED BY INSTRUCTORS

Last Friday negotiations between EIS/FELA and the employers produced a Joint Statement which is going forward for ratification by both sides. We believe that this represents an important step towards ending the replacement of lecturers by instructor-type roles.

How does it do this? Since national bargaining was set up in 2015 EIS/FELA has been trying to get the employers to agree the definition of a lecturer. Anyone who lectures knows what we do – we teach students. But the employers were resistant to a definition and recently it became clear why. Some college managements wanted to employ people to do lecturing work but claim they were not lecturers and so not entitled to lecturers' terms and conditions. The name might change – instructor, assessor, or tutor – but the effect was the same: individuals with huge workloads and inadequate preparation or marking time making it nigh on impossible to provide the professional service our students deserve.

The Joint Statement gives a definition of lecturing work and contains a pledge that national agreements covering such work will be applied. That is a welcome recognition that henceforth teaching in Scotland's Colleges is only carried out by lecturers. **To give both sides the opportunity to consult their constituencies and ratify the Statement, the first day of strike, Tuesday 16 March, has been suspended.**

However, strike action for one day on 25 March, two days in the following two weeks and three days after that could still happen. **You might ask why not simply suspend all action now?**

There is still more work to be done. An agreement in principle needs to be put into practice. Discussions on how that will work can now begin, but we need to be certain the agreement will be applied at college level. We are cautious because we have been here before.

It is no coincidence that the FELA FB page has been entitled **HonourTheDeal** for years. It has frequently taken industrial action **after** deals have been struck to get them implemented.

Here are a couple of examples. February 2017's newsletter says: 'we have agreed [pay]. So far so good, and then it all started to go wrong...' Management refused to implement the deal unless concessions were made on other things. It took a strike to get that deal honoured.

January 2019's newsletter says: 'Despite assurances of a meeting in January, the management side have now advised us that it is unable to meet with us ahead of the third national FE strike in three years.'

National bargaining should be respected and used to ensure the

smooth running of the sector to the benefit of all. We sincerely hope that this time round management realises it is futile and damaging to students' interests to not fully and swiftly implement agreements. **But just to make sure, only the first day of action is suspended so far.**

There is other unfinished business. The deal should stop the replacement of lecturers by instructors going forward, **but the lecturer replacement dispute at Forth Valley College remains to be sorted out.** Our members' action there has not been suspended their dispute continues for the moment with the full support of the EIS.

To sum up, important progress has been made. Before December management insisted there was no national dispute as local college managements could decide what terms and conditions to offer people who lectured students. It took our solid indicative FELA ballot in December to get them talking. It required a second (statutory) FELA ballot to achieve the Joint Statement reached on Friday. We need to keep the pressure on till the job is finished, because Colleges Need Lecturers!

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REMINDER:

EIS/FELA ANNUAL
CONFERENCE —FRIDAY 19th MARCH
2021

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