



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

Alisdair Barron, Chair of City of Glasgow College Board
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Ref: SC/GAO

3rd October 2023

Dear Alisdair

EIS-FELA Dispute at City of Glasgow College

Further to our previous correspondence on this issue, EIS-FELA members at City of Glasgow College continue strike action and are re-balloting for a further mandate for industrial action in pursuit of a satisfactory resolution to the dispute over redundancies, cuts to courses and jobs, and terms and conditions. We are asking management to engage with us in order to resolve the dispute.

EIS-FELA members at City of Glasgow College will have been on strike for the best part of 11 weeks by 12th October, which is the next date for our collective consultation meeting and will be one month since the last. This is one of the longest running strike actions in Scotland in recent years yet management have not sought to resolve the dispute.

Around 16 members of EIS-FELA have been served Notice of redundancy at time of writing. Others have already taken VS in the first round, resigned, retired, or 'volunteered' for redundancy at the statutory rate. HR have confirmed that 107 lecturers have left employment with CoGC since 3rd May 2023. We believe up to another 75 may have left between November and May 2023. This would equate to just under 40% of all lecturers. Furthermore, it means the savings which the Board required to be made in 2022-23 should have been met by now thereby not requiring compulsory redundancies to continue.

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Nonetheless, we understand an announcement was made by the Principal to managers on Thursday 28th September that further redundancies are now required. This comes despite assurances given in the Principal's briefing a few weeks ago and the College promoting and creating new roles in the HR department and new bank lecturer posts on commercial contracts, in contravention of the assertion that all other mitigations had been made.

Can you please advise why further redundancies are now required and if the Board were aware of this announcement on 28th September? We believe you will be presented with an updated financial briefing at the Board meeting on 4th October and may be advised that strike action means SFC will look to claw back course credits for 2023/24. We ask that evidence is presented to you of the number of courses which have not run this academic year directly as a result of strike action (and not due to other issues).

College management have been threatening staff taking strike action that more jobs will be lost due to the strike action itself, yet we have received no substantive evidence of this claim. We have never been told nor discussed at consultation meetings falling student numbers; indeed, we believe student roll is on par this year with previous years despite ongoing inflationary pressures pushing more people to work instead of education. Furthermore, we know the students' association has not yet surveyed students as to the impact of the dispute (not only the strike) therefore it seems entirely premature for ELT to decide students will be leaving the College due to the industrial relations within and in such numbers that more redundancies are required.

If further courses are cut and student numbers fall due to lack of lecturers, as opposed to strike action, then we believe there will come a point when the College is being publicly funded for work it is not carrying out. We can only assume ELT will be looking to rely more and more on commercial income streams at this point, perhaps in a bid to privatise the College via City of Glasgow International Ltd or otherwise. We believe this is the real meaning of 'rightsizing'.

Can you also advise if SFC have agreed the College can open a further VS scheme? We believe managers were told a VS scheme would open in January to deal with the 'excess' of lecturers. SFC's agreement to open a further VS scheme would be very surprising considering compulsory redundancy is supposed to be a last option and ELT previously stated there was no more money for VS after the previous round.

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We asked the Principal and senior management for confirmation of these rumours last week and requested an emergency meeting prior to 12th October but not one manager has responded yet. Making such an announcement without any prior notice to trade unions shows, yet again, a complete contempt for the idea of collective bargaining and Fair Work.

Senior management understand the branch are seeking a Fair Work resolution to this dispute which also makes industrial relations much less pernicious for the future. This means seeking an overhaul of industrial relations culture which allows us meaningful consultation and negotiation going forward, including access to key information prior to negotiations (as is trade union reps' right under the legislation).

We want to save members' jobs, ensure a fair and sustainable workload which doesn't harm students' education, put learning support lecturers at the heart of our work, and ensure there is a shift to positive industrial relations going forward. This is the outcome which will benefit the students most and for which City of Glasgow College was built to serve. We ask again that compulsory redundancies are ceased whilst the above issues are explored in a bid to resolve the ongoing dispute.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Sarah Collins

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