

National Bargaining News

March 2019

News from the national negotiators

Lecturer Professionalism Update

While we are in the midst of a pay dispute, the last year has not just been about pay for EIS FELA—we have also undertaken considerable work around the issue of lecturer professionalism.

A working group ran for much of 2018 to review the Lecturer Professional Standards. The new standards are now available to view at <https://www.cdn.ac.uk/professional-standards/>.

These standards will shortly move from their current host—the College Development Network (CDN) to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) as part of a wider development which should see the whole FE sector working more closely with GTCS.

The GTCS is the independent self-regulating professional body for teaching in

Scotland. The GTCS came into existence following industrial action by teachers in the early 1960s, demanding recognition of their professional role and status.

At present, GTCS offers voluntary registration for FE lecturers. Around 450 lecturers are registered in the Further Education category, with other college lecturers—particularly those in Early Years and in subjects such as English, Maths and Science—registered as primary or secondary school teachers but employed in Further Education.

The November 2017 NJNC Agreement delivered improvements to a number of core T&Cs and specifically addressed the issue of access to TQFE, with all colleges committing to providing this to new staff within two years of their start

date, along with significant improvements to funding and remission time arrangements for staff undertaking this qualification.

As part of this agreement, we committed to professional registration with a body ‘similar to GTCS’ by April 2019.

We have now had several working group meetings with GTCS, the Employers Association and Scottish Government and all parties have agreed that we should move forward on the basis of registration with GTCS.

This is a significant change to the sector—potentially as significant as the return to national bargaining itself.

Registration—and regulation—by GTCS will give Scottish FE lecturers a professional body and will improve professional standing. It recognises that teaching

in a college is a professional role which requires a body of knowledge and the development of skills and experience to effectively deliver vocational and academic qualifications to a wide range of learners.

Under local bargaining and subsequent mergers we developed not only significant gaps in salaries and T&Cs but also disparities in the role and qualification expected of teaching staff.

The move away from day – release to a more flexible TQFE delivery was seen by many colleges as an opportunity to cut costs, with lengthy TQFE backlogs building up in many colleges.

Now over a third of the sector do not hold a TQFE or equivalent qualification—a situation unthinkable in the schools sector.

Several colleges have attempted to replace lecturers with lower paid ‘instructors’, ‘tutors’ and ‘assessors’ - a move the EIS has vigorously opposed.. We believe these are lecturing positions and that they

should be recognised and paid as such.

In some subject areas, colleges also face competition from private sector training companies, cutting quality to the bone as they chase profit over educational opportunity.

The EIS is committed to the promotion of sound learning throughout Scotland, and this applies as much to the college sector as it does to any other part of education—whether the learning is taking place in a classroom, a workshop, a community centre or in a prison.

This means teaching and learning which is planned, delivered and assessed by highly qualified, professional lecturers—our learners include some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and they deserve nothing less.

GTCS registration and regulation would bring professional recognition to individual lecturers and to the sector as a whole, embed-

ding institutional and structural support for lecturer CPD—not just TQFE and initial induction, but also career long CPD, development opportunities and recognition of our professional role.

GTCS registration will bring many questions too—a full set of FAQs is being prepared and will be published as soon as it has been finalised.

The working group will meet monthly to take forward professional registration and the work is likely to run over a timeframe of 3-5 years.

GTCS has made it clear that its approach is inclusive—registration categories will be made available to lecturers who do not have TQFE, and there is no question of forcing lecturers into a school-shaped hole.

The model, which we are helping to develop, must recognise the diversity of the college sector and the breadth of knowledge, industrial experience and qualifications which lecturers bring.