

National Bargaining News

4th November 2021

News from EIS/FELA National Reps

Employers Stall on Pay

We have been in negotiations with Colleges Scotland since early August in pursuit of a cost of living pay rise. As you know annual negotiations take place on pay rises for staff across the country. In our case these negotiations take place between your National Reps and National Reps from Colleges Scotland.

The current offer equates to less than 2% for the vast majority of our members, at a time when [RPI is sitting at 4.9% and rising](#) . Your National Reps have rejected this offer.

The offer of £800 on all scale points falls well short of the aspirations of our members who would be facing a significant real terms pay cut if this were accepted.

This comes at a time when increasing workloads, increased stress levels and overall well being in the sector have never been more worrying.

Your National Reps have again urged Colleges Scotland to reconsider this offer and return to the negotiating table as soon as possible with an improved offer in order to avoid another damaging dispute in FE. We will provide another update after the next meeting with Colleges Scotland.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE TO MEMBERS

Given the unfortunately continuing high prevalence of Covid 19, and the sometimes confusing and conflicting messages on Covid safety measures, your union offers the following reminders of advice relating to on campus working.

Health and Safety law

1 Responsibility for H&S under Section 2 of the H&SWA Act remains a management duty, while compliance with management provisions is a responsibility of employees.

2 Under Section 7 of the H&SWA each individual has not only the right but the duty to keep themselves from harm.

3 Baseline measures, in particular the provisions on face coverings/masks are contained in the [Scottish Government guidance available at this hyperlink](#).

These remain in force and are a legal requirement for colleges to implement.

Face coverings

The wearing of face coverings is a legal requirement in colleges. It is a management responsibility to ensure that the only exemptions applied are when:

- 'wearing one makes you extremely anxious or distressed.
- you've got a physical or mental illness or disability which means you can't wear one'.

Temporary exemptions apply when

- taking medication, such as an inhaler.
- in an indoor communal part of the workplace (including colleges and universities settings) and you are separated from others by a distance of at least 1 metre or by a screen or partition – however, we would still encourage staff to wear face coverings in this situation, if possible.

- when sitting down in a hospitality venue such as a pub, café or restaurant (note that on public transport a face covering must be worn at all times when not eating or drinking) when eating or drinking.

If someone is not wearing a face covering in a setting where it is required, (like in any teaching space without screens or partitions enforcing 1 metre distance) you can politely ask if they are exempt (but should not investigate the reason for exemption for GDPR reasons).

If the reply is unsatisfactory you should go and find a manager who will take the appropriate action to ensure the legal responsibility of the college regarding face coverings is enforced.

Ventilation

Due to the aerosol spread of Covid 19 ventilation is an essential component for safe operation on campus and is an important management responsibility.

To ensure adequate ventilation is in place, regular monitoring of air quality is essential. One means of doing this is checking CO2 levels with CO2 monitors.

When teaching on campus you should:

1 request that air quality in your teaching setting is monitored. This usually means asking for a CO2 test to be conducted 30 minutes after the start of a class.

2 If the CO2 level is above 800ppm you should take action to bring it down to a suitable level. This can take a number of forms:

3 Open windows if they are closed.

4 Find a manager to request a change of classroom; to approve a class break to allow levels to fall/ split classes; reduce numbers in class; or move the class to online.

You might find it useful to put any requests to management regarding face coverings and ventilation in writing for future reference if necessary.