



21 July 2022

Dear **Vice Chancellor or Principal,**

The five trade unions (GMB, EIS, Unison, Unite and UCU) of the New Joint Negotiating Committee for the Higher Education Sector, are writing to you again to express our deep concerns about the outcome of the final NEW JNCHES meeting on 14 July. After the first New JNCHES dispute meeting on 6 July, we wrote to you expressing our frustration regarding a lack of serious engagement in the dispute process by your representatives at UCEA. We were also very clear that there was still time to avoid widespread industrial action in the autumn, if you had given UCEA a mandate to make a meaningful offer on pay at the final meeting on 14 July.

It is hugely disappointing to have to confirm that no such mandate was given to UCEA and consequently no improved pay offer of any kind was made.

We found it particularly disappointing that UCEA, as part of justifying why they had not been given a mandate to negotiate, outlined that some vice chancellors and principals had responded to their survey by saying that they found it hard to agree that a better offer should be made when the trade union side had not moved at all in terms of our position on what level pay offer we would consider in order to settle our dispute. This left us perplexed and deeply concerned and potentially let down if our position had not adequately come across to you, as we had quite clearly moved our position at the first dispute meeting considerably, from seeking a pay increase of RPI plus 2% as laid out in our pay claim, to indicating that we would consider an offer that met any of the recognised measures of inflation, without the additional 2%. We pointed out that this was a very significant move.

During the talks, UCEA fed back on their survey findings, and specifically acknowledged that employers recognised that inflation had worsened and also recognised the way these impact on their staff/our members as pay had not been keeping up with inflation for over a decade. We were deeply disappointed when UCEA went on to say that you and other sector leaders responded that because other cost increases had to be met, employers were unwilling to improve the pay offer. We indicated that warm words and recognition will not pay our members rising bills or lift them out of poverty pay.

Since the start of this negotiating round in March, where UCEA did not make any offer at the first meeting, to the final dispute meeting last week, no meaningful offer has been made that reflects the cost-of-living crisis being faced by staff in higher education. It cannot be said the joint trade unions were unwilling to negotiate, we were. It is our view that sector leaders and their representatives fixed their position on pay early in the negotiating round and then counted down the clock, the result of which will be widespread unrest and industrial action this autumn. The joint trade unions will make sure that staff, students, and their families are clear where the fault lies.

Finally, if at any point, UCEA is given a mandate to improve the offer on pay, we would be more than happy to meet with you and discuss such an offer.

Best wishes,

Sent on behalf of the Joint HE Trade Unions