



26 April 2022

The joint trade unions (UNISON, UCU, Unite, EIS and GMB) met with UCEA for the second pay negotiating meeting of the new Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (new JNCHES) on Monday 25 April 2022.

Our meeting took place in the context of over 10 years of real terms pay cuts for our members working in Higher Education, and in the midst of the biggest cost of living crisis for 30 years. Our members have worked tirelessly to keep the sector going over the last two difficult years and we hoped that employers would acknowledge the need for real recognition and reward for that work.

Following the first meeting on 30 March, the joint trade unions received an initial offer in writing from the employers on 21 April. This offer fell well short of our joint pay claim. It involved an offer of a 2.75% sub-inflationary rise on the majority of pay points, with bottom loading on pay points 3-19 ranging from 6% at point 3 to 2.8% at point 19, to accommodate the legal requirement to meet the new national minimum wage. The offer included a rise in all other pay related allowance by the same percentage points, and an offer to continue talks to progress all other elements of our joint claim.

At the second meeting the joint trade union side pressed the employers hard on the current cost of living crisis and the impact of this on our members, and on the need to address and eradicate poverty pay. We stood by all elements of our claim and reiterated that we are seeking real progress on those issues in relation to the compression of the pay spine, pay inequalities, workload, stress, insecure employment, outsourcing, redundancies and Scottish JNCHES.

We made it clear to the employers that we are aware that low pay is making it increasingly difficult for universities to recruit to their lower paid jobs and some others, and that demoralisation amongst staff at all levels is now a massive issue, with a knock-on effect on health and wellbeing.

We pointed out that the adjustments being offered at the bottom of the pay spine were not generous and no more than was necessary in order to accommodate the rise in the national minimum wage, and that this offer was a pay cut, in real terms, not a pay rise. We pushed the employers to make a more substantial offer, and they came back to say that they could offer another 0.15% on the pay bill overall. This means the majority of staff are being offered 2.9%. In the context of the real suffering we know our members are currently experiencing, we found this to be a woefully inadequate response.

We are expecting a revised offer from the employers in writing within the next few days and the third pay negotiating meeting of the new Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (new JNCHES) will take place on 5 May 2022.

A joint statement agreed by all five HE trade unions, 26 April 2022.