

NATIONAL DISPUTE UPDATE

At the final New JNCHES meeting held on 28 July, UCEA continued to refuse national level talks to develop jointly-agreed proposals to improve job security. With fears that over 22,000 jobs are at risk, this refusal is unacceptable and irresponsible.

The employers' final offer to the joint unions was for an increase on pay points of 0.4%. With RPI running at 5.0%, the employers' offer represents a real-terms pay cut for the second year running. A copy of the full offer has been sent to branches/LAs.

The five trade unions accused the HE employers of refusing to engage in meaningful national negotiations in response to the first ever joint union claim. It should be noted that the offer also failed even to address many other aspects of the claim, including measures to improve equality in the sector. For example, the employer failed to make an offer in response to the modest claims from the trade union to:

- remove the bottom two pay points of the national pay spine and its extension at the top to create additional points beyond point 51
- assimilate hourly-paid staff to the national pay spine
- produce joint proposals to close the gender pay gap

- develop a national system for the remuneration of external examiners

UCU negotiators rejected the employers' offer. The union has written to UCEA to inform them that we consider there has been a breakdown in the negotiating process. Those HEIs that are party to the national negotiations have also been written to informing them that we consider a dispute to exist and informing them that unless UCEA make a more credible offer then the union is mandated to ballot members for industrial action.

The Higher Education Committee has agreed that in the absence of an agreement, there will be a ballot for industrial action in September. Branches/LAs should be making the arrangements for branch/LA meetings and for delivering a 'yes' vote.

Branches/LAs are reminded that new 'Fight the cuts' campaign materials are available here:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/defendeducation> Copies of these materials can be ordered from Justine Stephens jstephens@ucu.org.uk

If you would like to arrange a national speaker to attend a branch meeting then please contact Christine Bernabe on 020 7756 2500 or cbernabe@ucu.org.uk