
All you need to know about the IOU campaign



What is the aim of the IOU campaign?

The IOU campaign is the latest phase of the union's broader campaign to ensure that further education college employers adhere to a national agreement on pay.

In 2004, the union signed a national agreement that produced a new improved pay scale for lecturers. Initially, only around one third of the colleges implemented this new pay deal, leading the union to take widespread industrial action in 2005 to improve this.

As a result, the great majority of colleges have implemented, or are in talks to implement, the improved pay scale. But around 60 colleges continue to refuse to do this. Your college is one of them.

Your college has refused to put in place better pay for its staff. The college continues to secure LSC funding, but it has made a decision to pay you less than your colleagues at other colleges.

The aim of the IOU campaign is to drive your college and the other outstanding colleges towards implementing the same or a comparable improved pay scale for all lecturers.

What is the strategy of the IOU campaign?

The union's Further Education Committee has agreed a national strategy to identify targets from the list of outstanding colleges. These targets have been selected through consultation with branch and regional officers.

The branches at these target colleges have extra regional and national support in a membership-based campaign to win agreement on moving to the new spine. A plan of action has been agreed for all the target branches that involves campaigning, balloting for and taking co-ordinated industrial action where necessary.

Focusing on target branches means that each branch involved has access to more support and more resources than would otherwise be the possible. Winning progress in the target branches puts pressure on other employers to implement the pay spine by making it clear that the union will not accept continued refusal to implement the national pay spine. The message is clear: 'you're next'.

The key objective is to force managements begin negotiations through the threat of, or taking of,

industrial action and campaigning.

Progress in each college is reviewed as the campaign progresses.

Why is this campaign so important?

The reason that the national union is so interested in this campaign is that it recognises that IOU has enormous national and local significance. Obviously, the campaign has enormous significance for you.

When your colleagues in other colleges transferred onto the new pay spine, their pay and progression improved. Put simply, you are now earning less money and taking more time to improve your pay than you would at the college down the road. And in most cases we are not talking about small amounts of money. For many lecturers, the difference in annual pay can be as much as £4,500 per year. For some, it's even more. And with every year that passes, the amount of money that your college should have paid you grows and grows.

It's not about getting more money. It's about fairness and getting the money you should have been paid four years ago.

But even beyond the value of the money, the amount that your college pays you is a reflection of how much it respects you. If it thinks it can pay you less and get away with it, that says a lot about its attitude toward staff generally. That attitude will shape the way it behaves toward you in every sphere.

That means that if you use your union to press for better pay and force your management to listen, they will have to listen to you on other issues. So whatever other grievances you have in your workplace, you will be able to achieve more through the union if you are able to make the case for your employer showing you respect.

The campaign also has enormous national significance. If we can't hold employers to agreements made in their name by national bodies like the Association of Colleges, then our national agreements won't be worth anything.

That's why we have devised the strategy to press employers to stick to their agreements and that's

why members in the IOU campaign will have greater support and more resources than would otherwise be possible.

How the campaign has progressed

Phase 1

In the first phase of the campaign, at the end of 2008, a list of 17 colleges was agreed to form the first targets. The union wrote to the managements of each college informing them that unless there was progress to negotiate around implementation of the pay spine, UCU members would be balloted for action.

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As an immediate result of this, satisfactory progress was made in the following colleges, which were consequently withdrawn from the campaign: Aylesbury College, Bolton College, Tamworth and Lichfield College, New College Nottingham, Warwickshire College, Wirral College.

This reduced the number of colleges in the campaign to 11. These 11 colleges were balloted for action: Evesham College; Sandwell College; Sussex Downs College; Doncaster College; Dearne Valley College; Rotherham College; College of North West London; Croydon College; Askham Bryan College; Greenwich Community College; Nelson and Colne College

The ballots produced a big majority for action, showing that the union had correctly assessed that members in these colleges were angry about the four years of lost pay and the injustice of their lower pay. The date for industrial action to be taken was set for 5 February.

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On the eve of the strikes, managers at Nelson and Colne, Evesham and Askham Bryan Colleges agreed to enter talks and their members suspended the strike action.

The remaining eight colleges delivered a hugely effective strike in terrible weather conditions, winning a large scale regional news profile and coverage.

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In the immediate aftermath, Evesham College confirmed that satisfactory progress was being

made and was also removed from the campaign.

March 2009 saw a heightened campaign of demonstrations and a build up to two days of further strike action on 24 March. Membership grew significantly across the IOU colleges as a whole, with the rate of growth double that of the rest of the FE sector.

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Ahead of the planned strike action on 24 March, there was more good news as Sussex Downs, Greenwich and Sandwell Colleges confirmed that they were negotiating with a view to implementing. At Greenwich these talks broke down, but at Sussex Downs and Sandwell Colleges, enough progress was made to remove them from the campaign. The management of College of North-West London indicated that they would negotiate around implementation. This marked the end of phase 1 of the campaign.

How the campaign has progressed

Phase 2

At this point, national and regional officers reviewed the campaign and agreed that a second phase should be launched to try to win progress in the remaining colleges and add more colleges to the previous successes.

Four new colleges were balloted for industrial action, including City College Birmingham, Leeds College of Art and Design, Canterbury College and Suffolk New College. This ballot too was won handsomely and the campaign kicked off in ... with renewed vigour.

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Again, there were immediate results, with Canterbury College announcing that it would negotiate and being withdrawn from the campaign. City College Birmingham's participation was overtaken by the issue of job cuts and a dispute over contracts which the branch won through determined industrial action and energetic campaigning.

However, talks broke down at College of North-West London after a deal seemed close.

The culmination of phase 2 will be a one-day strike of all the remaining IOU colleges on 29 September. This will include: Doncaster

College, Dearne Valley College, Rotherham College, College of North West London, Croydon College, Askham Bryan College, Greenwich Community College, Leeds College of Art and Design, and Suffolk New College.

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With the announcement of this strike date, it was confirmed that progress at Nelson and Colne College was sufficient to withdraw them from the campaign.

Out of 21 colleges targeted in the course of the campaign so far, only nine remain outstanding.

What happens next?

There will be another one day strike on 29 September in which the following branches will take action: Croydon College, College of North-West London, Greenwich College, Rotherham College, Leeds College of Art and Design, Askham Bryan College and Suffolk New College.

Following consultation with branch and regional officers, it has been agreed that a new phase will begin. Each branch currently in the IOU campaign will be asked to review progress with national and regional officers following the strike, and those that wish to remain in the campaign will be asked to sign up to a new programme of action.

In addition, new branches will be approached to join the campaign.

The programme of action will include a month of action in October and November when protests, demonstrative action and recruitment activity will be combined with building a petition to the board of governors of each college and political lobbying.

In addition, colleges will be asked to sign up to a new timetable of industrial action and/or action short of a strike.

How long will the campaign continue?

Ultimately, the campaign will continue for as long as there are branches and members who want fair pay and are prepared to campaign for it. Our ultimate aim is to win complete adherence to the national agreement. That's ambitious, but already the highly successful record of the IOU campaign shows that campaigning produces results.

The campaign also shows that progress will not be uniform across the board. Each branch is in a slightly different position and may need slightly different tactics within a nationally co-ordinated campaign. And the campaign will only be viable in each branch for as long as members feel angry enough to campaign. That's why we have made it part of the campaign strategy to keep reviewing progress and reporting to the Further Education Committee.

But for those branches that wish to campaign, there will continue to be support from organisers and regional and national officials, campaign resources and national coordination, because the record of this campaign shows that it works.

The IOU campaign can help branches win pay justice for members and it can help branches grow, organise and better represent their members.



Contact information:

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