

College funding (e-petition 229744) Westminster Hall debate Monday 21 January 2019 University and College Union briefing

About UCU

The University and College Union (UCU) is the UK's largest trade union for academic and academic-related staff in higher and further education, representing some 120,000 members working in universities, colleges, training providers, adult education settings and prisons.

Why is college funding an issue?

As the **Institute for Fiscal Studies** highlighted in September 2018, in recent years further education funding has suffered the biggest funding squeeze of any area of education:

- Between 2009 and 2019, overall college funding fell by around 30%.
- Since 2010-11, funding per 16-18 student in further education colleges fell by 8%. The 16-18 budget was frozen in cash terms for the seventh consecutive year in 2018.
- Funding for adult education and apprenticeships has fallen by 45% since 2009-10, coinciding with a drop in the number of adult learners of at least 1million.
- The government's funding pledge of £500m for new T-levels from 2020 will only just fill the funding gap created by other cuts since 2010 (and this funding is supposed to support a 50% increase in learning hours so delivery will require extra resource). T-levels will also take years to come fully 'on-stream' so any funding boost they bring to colleges will be gradual.

The impact of cuts

Funding reductions have meant many colleges have had to make difficult decisions about what to fund. For students, it has meant fewer hours of teaching and support, and a more limited range of study choices. For staff:

- Pay has fallen in value by 25% in real terms since 2009. In cash terms, that means a £2,484 pay cut on the bottom point, rising to over £9,000 for experienced lecturers and more for those higher up the scale. Where colleges have failed to implement the recommended pay rises, the fall is even greater.
- Teachers in further education colleges earn on average £7,000 less than teachers in schools, often for doing the same work. The recent pay award for school teachers has only widened this gap.
- Since 2010, around 24,000 teachers have left the further education sector - around a third of the total teaching workforce.

FE pay

Pay is a major issue for both staff and the colleges they work for. Two thirds of college leaders cite inability to match pay expectations as a major barrier to recruiting skilled staff.

However, many colleges have also failed to implement even the below-inflation pay rises recommended by employer body the Association of Colleges (AoC) in recent years. An FOI request (completed by 65% of colleges) revealed that in 2015/16 the majority of colleges did not implement even the 1% recommended rise. Of those who responded:

- 103 colleges did not implement any pay rise
- 9 implemented a rise of 0.5%
- 45 implemented a 1% rise
- 5 implemented between 1% and 2%

However, despite acknowledging that staff deserve a decent pay rise, the employer body the Association of Colleges has made another below-inflation pay recommendation of 1% for 2018/19. This followed a failure to secure a government intervention of additional funding for pay.

UCU members at 16 colleges will be taking **strike action later this month** (Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 January) as part of the dispute over pay. The strikes are part of a second wave of action after UCU members at six colleges **took action in November**.

Speaking ahead of the strikes, UCU head of policy Matt Waddup said: 'The government must take the blame for a failure to invest in further education, but colleges cannot hide behind these cuts to shirk responsibility for their staff. UCU will continue to campaign for more investment from the government but, whether this is forthcoming or not, strikes will continue until colleges show that they are at last prioritising their staff.'

The government's response so far

The government has said it is looking at FE funding, both as part of the Augar review and internally within DfE, and will consider it as part of the spending review in 2019.

However, many colleges are already being faced with difficult choices about resource; without urgent action we risk further cuts to provision and staffing in the intervening period between now and the spending review.

Love Our Colleges: fair pay and funding now

UCU welcomes this debate on college funding, which has come about thanks to the e-petition started by students as part of the **Love Our Colleges** campaign - a partnership of education trade unions, the Association of Colleges, the TUC and the National Union of Students.

UCU urges the government to act swiftly to improve FE funding, in line with the Love Our Colleges campaign **manifesto** which called on the government to:

1. **Increase college funding to sustainable levels**, including but not limited to:
 - a) Increasing the 16-19 funding rate by 5% a year for the next five years, and extending the pupil premium to cover post-16 students.
 - b) Fully funding a National Retraining Scheme to support level 3 to 5 skills
 - c) Introducing a lifetime learning entitlement to fund skills training for all adults who have not previously achieved a level 3 qualification.
2. **Provide immediate exceptional funding, ring-fenced for pay**, to cover the costs of a fair pay deal for college staff from 2018/19 onwards.

Further information

For further information about college funding and the impact of cuts on staff please call 020 7756 2596 or contact publicaffairs@ucu.org.uk.