

## 10-point briefing on UCEA's offer to UCU and the other trade unions

### A brief recap

1. Members will recall that in April 2019 UCEA made a 'final' pay offer of 1.8% to HE staff. The unions' claim to employers had also raised the issues of casualisation, workload and pay inequality. UCEA failed to fully address the union's arguments on these issues.
2. In response, UCU balloted members and HE staff in 57 institutions took part in eight days of strike action during late November and early December.
3. Arising from UCU's ballot, UCEA agreed to a series of ongoing talks with the union. On 27 January, 2020 UCEA made a further detailed offer on behalf of HE employers.  
**The offer can be read in full [here](#).**

### The offer summarised

4. The offer sets out a series of expectations upon employers as well as proposals for joint national action in three key areas: **contractual arrangements; workloads and mental health**; and **gender and ethnicity pay gaps**. The offer does not contain any improvement in the 'final' pay offer of 1.8% made by UCEA in April 2019.

### Contractual arrangements

5. On contractual arrangements UCEA set out the following main expectations:
  - indefinite contracts will be the general form of employment relationship between employers and employees
  - staff employed on fixed term or casual contracts be given access to staff development, training, appraisal and careers advice and hold similar terms and conditions of employment to those in comparable jobs with indefinite employment
  - HE institutions undertake a review of their institutional policies and procedures for the engagement of individuals on fixed term and casual arrangements
  - that institutions be encouraged to hold local discussions with a view to limiting the use of zero hours contracts
  - institution level arrangements for an individual who believes their hourly paid engagement does not provide fair terms for the work expected of them to have this examined

- clarity for post-graduates who are employed as to the work required and the remuneration for the work they perform, including where this constitutes part of a stipendiary arrangement
- all relevant HE institutions become signatories to the **new researchers' concordat** and develop plans to meet the concordat's employment principles
- institutions will have arrangements to identify staff who have held a fixed term contract or succession of fixed term contracts for more than the statutory threshold of 4 years for consideration of a conversion to ongoing employment.
- institutions have policies which seek to avoid an individual, unless to the parties' mutual benefit, being provided with a succession of fixed term contracts
- a new employer/union national working group that would: undertake an examination of the data on 'zero hours' and 'hourly-paid' employees, and; produce a report of the sector-level analysis and findings.

## Workload and mental health

6. On workload and mental health, UCEA set out the following expectations:
- HE employers and their local trade union representatives to engage in dialogue about concerns that arise relating to stress at work
  - HEIs develop procedures to ensure that individuals are being given achievable work demands against the expectations of their role and the professional discretion they are expected to exercise
  - HEIs, working with stakeholders including staff representatives, will explore their cultures and behaviours that may be compounding the pressures that individuals may be under in their workplaces
  - HEIs that do not have such arrangements already should put in place systems to enable individuals to raise concerns about workload demands
  - UCEA and the unions will jointly promote and continue to develop national Stress and Mental Wellbeing resources and support
  - Sector-level dialogue between Universities UK, UCEA and the trade unions to enable high-level discussion of the large number of sector-level initiatives currently being developed to address staff mental health issues.

## Gender and ethnicity pay gaps

7. On pay gaps, UCEA set out the following expectations:
- HEIs who identify a gender pay gap or challenges with gender distribution in their workforces will commit to the importance of understanding and addressing the underlying issues
  - HEIs to work with stakeholders, including their recognised trade unions, in developing action plans

- HEIs to be transparent about their action plans by making them publicly available and monitoring and reviewing outcomes with timescales for this against individual actions/outcomes
- HEIs to continue to carry out regular equal pay audits to assure themselves that they do not have pay inequalities and that these are not a contributing factor to their gender pay gap
- HEIs to find ways of engaging with their recognised trade unions in appropriate ways to achieve trust in their auditing processes with regard to the staff the trade unions represent
- institutions to place a high priority on work to examine their BAME distribution in the workforce and data on ethnicity pay and on developing plans for interventions that will help them address the issues this highlights
- UCEA and unions to develop an HE specific 'checklist' of suggestions for areas of employment policy and practice which institutions might consider in examining blockages and enablers to women's career progression and representation in certain gender dominated roles.

## National review

8. UCEA proposes that arrangements be established to examine progress on the issues through joint publication of aggregate, sector-level data where these are available.

## What happens next?

9. There is little doubt that the union has made progress on the three non-pay issues since April 2019. The acceptance at last by UCEA on behalf of institutions of some responsibility for addressing casualisation, workload and pay inequality has happened as a direct result of the successful strike action undertaken by UCU members.
10. UCU's Higher Education Committee (HEC) will consider the proposals at its meeting of 30 January 2020. Only your elected representatives on the HEC have the authority to vote to accept the offer, put the offer out to members for consultation, or call further industrial action in pursuit of a better deal. We will let you know as soon as possible once they have made a decision.

28 January 2020