

Ballot opens on pay offer

At a meeting of the National Joint Forum on Wednesday 14 June the Association of Colleges improved their staged pay offer for 06/07 to 2% from 1 August 2006 and a further 1% from 1 February 2007.

On Friday 16 June the union's Further Education Committee considered the offer and decided to consult all FE members, through a postal ballot on whether the offer should be accepted.

The offer fell short of the Joint Unions' Claim for 7% however FEC took the view that it was the best that could be achieved through negotiations and without recourse to further industrial action.

Ballot opens: Thursday 29 June
Ballot closes: Noon Friday 14 July

The offer:

- Increases all pay scale points by 3% by February 2007
- Recoups the 0.4% shortfall with school teachers 05/06 pay award
- Keeps pace with the 2.5% school teachers increase for 06/07
- Establishes a mechanism for further progress on implementation of the new pay scales in the Modernising Pay Agreement

Catch up would settle 05/06 dispute

This year's claim included a catch up component from last years 2.8% employers offer which fell behind the school teachers 3.2% for the same period. The AoC's offer for 06/07

addresses this by exceeding the teachers pay award for this year by 0.5% by February 2007. Therefore if members vote to accept this offer the dispute over the 2.8% for 05/06 will also be settled. Branches that have received no increase for the 05/06 year would then be advised to seek back pay for the 2.8% still owing from the 05/06 offer.

Modernising pay – 8 point pay scale

The AoC's statement also urges colleges that have not implemented the 8 point scale for lecturers to enter into meaningful discussions with unions on agreeing a timetable for this by the end of March 2007. The assistance of NJF officers in reaching agreements is also offered where requested. This is an important commitment; if the offer is accepted UCU will prioritise efforts to secure local agreements on Modernising Pay. Further significant pay increases can be gained in these colleges through accelerated progression and harmonisation on to the new pay spine.

Continuous Professional Development

The AoC have committed to work together with the unions to develop agreed guidance on staff training and development in colleges and to include in this any developments related to the FE white paper proposals on Continuous Professional Development.

Any members requiring ballot materials in alternative formats should contact Martin Whelton either at mwhelton@ucu.org.uk or telephone 020 7520 3238.

The Offer

- 2% on all salaries and allowances from 1 August 2006, followed by 1% on 1 February 2007.
- Minimum support staff hourly rate of £6.29 from 1 August 2006 and £6.35 from 1 February 2007.
- The National Joint Forum (NJF) reaffirms its commitment to the Modernising Pay arrangements and continues to encourage colleges to implement pay modernisation in line with local circumstances.
- Local college management and joint trade unions are encouraged to enter into meaningful and realistic discussions, where those have not already taken place, to reach agreement on a timetable for modernising pay by the end of March 2007. The 6 trade unions envisage that this commitment will lead to the end of disputes on implementation triggered by a lack of such a timetable.
- "Where a further education corporation and the trade unions at a local level request assistance from the NJF due to financial issues in the implementation of Modernising Pay, the officers of the NJF will honour this request."
- In light of the recent White Paper we propose that the AoC and the joint unions work together to assess the impact of the white paper on training and development. Forthcoming information and guidance from the DfES will aid this process. We envisage that this work would then be incorporated into a Joint Agreement on Guidance for Training and Development in the sector, which will include any developments regarding continuing professional development.
- A benchmark survey of terms and conditions to be carried out across the sector; the details of which to be discussed at officer level, with the possibility of joint funding and sponsorship. It is hoped that the results of such a survey would encourage and promote best practice within the Sector and be reviewed by the NJF in 2007.
- The AoC is committed to the implementation of the Working Time Directive and has over the years issued comprehensive guidelines and has advised the sector regarding the implementation of the directive.
- The AoC will issue further advice to Corporations regarding their legal obligations with regards to the Working Time Directive and the importance of good practice regarding work life balance by autumn 2006.

Tough Negotiations

The AoC were brought back to the negotiating table for this years pay round on 14 March, months earlier than usual in an effort to end the dispute with NATFHE that triggered industrial action in November. NATFHE negotiators made it clear from the outset that the issues in dispute from 05/06 would need to be addressed in the 06/07 offer if the dispute was to be resolved.

The first NJF meeting on 14 March ended with the AoC putting what they described as their "serious offer" of 1.5% which was rejected by all unions and described as a "slap in the face". Following this insulting offer the Further Education Committee of NATFHE scheduled two days of industrial action in early May as a robust response.

The AoC responded to the threat of industrial action with the promise of a significantly improved offer at an NJF meeting on 9 May and the planned action was suspended to give these talks a chance to bear fruit.

The 9 May meeting of the NJF saw the employers offer 2.5% from 1 August 2006 however this was also rejected as it did nothing to address the 0.4 % shortfall compared to school teachers in the previous years offer. The employers then offered 2% from 1 August 2006 and a further 0.9% from 1 February 2007. This offer was also rejected as it was less in cash terms than the original 2.5% offer. The Unions ended this meeting urging the AoC to re-think their approach and also to consider what other commitments they could make to resolve other outstanding issues in the claim and agreed to meet again on 14 June.

At a protracted NJF meeting on 14 June the employers initially offered to bring forward the 0.9% by one month to 1 January. This was also rejected as it was 30p per year more than the 2.5% offer. After a number of hours of further talks the employers finally made the current offer of a phased 3% with further commitments

to the other claim elements including implementation of the Modernising Pay Agreement.

ULR persistence pays off!

Two years after going through initial training Union Learning Reps at Bradford College have secured a ground breaking agreement with management. Despite many difficult industrial issues over that time at Bradford, including pay and threatened redundancies, the branch kept ULRs on the agenda.

The College have now recognised the important role ULRs can play in improving the quality and take up of staff development by setting up a joint staff development committee and agreeing to 10 hours remission for UCU learning reps. Staff will have a chance to find out about it and meet their ULRs at a college wide Staff Development Day in July and the college will sign a joint agreement on learning with UCU and other unions later in the year. For more information please email dclarke@ucu.org.uk

Win At Walsall

We are very pleased to announce that the branch have succeeded in obtaining a satisfactory resolution of the long running dispute over the attempt to impose an un-negotiated contract under threat of dismissal.

Following a publicity, legal and industrial action campaign by the branch, the college management finally met with union national and regional officials to hammer out a deal which as well as removing the "Sign or be Sacked" element, established shorter annual teaching hours, the protection of holidays and remission arrangements.

Other college managements should note this result and think twice about attempting similar tactics.

Adult learning cuts campaign

UCU continues the NATFHE campaign against the current wave of adult learning cuts. We need accurate up to date information on what cuts are being proposed and what action branches are taking. Providers are now receiving their final LSC 2006-2007 allocations, although the final position on adult learning won't be clear until mid July when the results of who has won the Train2Gain contracts are known. Last week UCU officials convened a meeting with the AoC, NIACE, ACM, UNISON and the WEA to co-ordinate and continue the campaign against the adult learning cuts. For more information on the Cuts Campaign, including news of local action and campaign materials, hit the adult learning cuts button on the NATFHE section of the UCU website at www.ucu.org.uk.

STOP PRESS: an article in the Education Guardian 20 June talks about FE Minister Bill Rammell having meetings with MPs over the next month about FE funding for 2006-2007 and the adult learning cuts. Branches should contact their MPs to ensure they are fully briefed on the local position and that they get to see Rammell.

Adult cuts race assessment

If your branch has been affected by the cuts in adult funding, has the college conducted a Race Equality Impact Assessment? If your college has conducted an assessment please send a copy of the assessment to **Chris Nicholas** at: UCU Head Office, 27 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JP or you can e-mail Chris at cnicholas@ucu.org.uk.

Responses to Government Consultations

FE White Paper

In March the FE White Paper was published with a raft of proposals for the future direction of FE. As ever it was a mixed bag of the good - the

extension of entitlements to those up to 25 without level 3 qualifications, the acceptance and encouragement of HE in FE; the bad - contestability and the ugly - proposals for workforce development without resources to implement and an over emphasis on employer engagement with all the focus on what colleges have to do and nothing on what is expected from employers. UCU have produced its response.

This should be on the UCU web site soon or is available from Dan Taubman, UCU Colleges Department at dtaubman@ucu.org.uk.

Professionalism

Yet another DfES consultation out now and with a response date of 4 July. It is on the various proposals outlined in the FE White Paper on FE workforce development. These are around changes in Initial Teacher Training for FE, requirements for CPD for serving lecturers, registration and license to practice and qualifications for principals. UCU is not opposed to the proposals but has grave concerns about many aspects of the changes. UCU have produced its response. This should be on the UCU web site soon or is available from Dan Taubman UCU Colleges Department or email Dan at dtaubman@ucu.org.uk

Failing colleges and contestability

The FE White Paper is proposing a hard line on failing and "coasting" colleges and departments and areas of work that get bad inspection grades. Improvement notices will be issued by the LSC and a Quality Improvement Agency accredited improvement adviser will be sent. If within a year there has been no improvement the LSC can take action. This could be sacking the principal or the governors, bringing in a successful neighbouring provider or putting the college or department out to tender. UCU is currently trying to get rights for a branch in a "failing" college to consult with the LSC and the QIA adviser and submit their views. If your college or department has recently failed inspection let your regional office know.

14-19 update

Developments around 14-19 continue apace. The Government is clear that 14 - 19 education and especially the new specialist diplomas can only be delivered by partnerships of schools and colleges. The DfES has recently created a "gateway" containing advice and guidance on how providers can put themselves and partners forward to pilot the new arrangements. Branches should be asking their managements if the college is putting itself up. The DfES guidance is on the DfES web site; follow the links to 14-19 on www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/

Specialist diplomas are the new qualifications and learning programmes being developed in 14 occupational areas. The first 5 will be in health and social care, engineering, construction and built environment, IT, creative and media. These will be launched in Sept 2008. The DfES has recently published an up date on progress on the new specialist diplomas including the proposed content. This also can be found through the DfES website.

UCU ACL Conference

The main theme of this conference will be ACL after the FE White paper and the adult learning cuts.

It will be held on

June 30th

at the Britannia St Conference Centre
in London

It is free to UCU members and there
are still places left.

Speakers from NIACE, DfES,
Institute of Education.

To attend please contact Martin Whelton,
UCU Colleges Department at
mwhelton@ucu.org.uk
telephone 0207 520 3238

UCU Health and Safety news

The first edition of UCU Health and Safety News is out now with details and suggested actions on:

- **New Workplace Fire Safety Legislation**
- **HSE Publications to go free**
- **TUC Risks e-bulletins**
- **HSE Reducing Stress Project – Universities and Colleges involved**
- **European H&S week**
- **Improving safety reps rights HSE consultation**
- **UCU survey of H&S**
- **UCU H&S advice line**

This Newsletter can be downloaded from:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/h/1/hsnews1_june06_1.pdf

**Watch out for the upcoming
UCU Equality News!**

Teachers Pension Scheme ballot

UCU members will shortly be asked to vote on whether to approve an agreement reached between trade unions and employers over new arrangements for the Teachers Pension Scheme. UCU's Transitional Arrangements Committee agreed on 9 June that the issues involved were of sufficient importance that they should be put to a postal ballot of individual members who are members of the scheme.

Ballot papers will be accompanied by details of the changes to the scheme and the alternative views towards these taken by UCU's predecessor unions. Look out for further information about the ballot including dates to be announced shortly.

Organising for Disability Equality training

**All trade union members, stewards,
union contacts, college managers and
other staff are invited to attend a 1 day training
course delivered by UNISON/UCU on Organising
for Disability Equality.**

**Participation is encouraged
from all areas of the college and not confined to
Equality Officers.**

New laws from December 2006 will place a public duty on public bodies to promote disability equality. This will affect all public bodies from local councils, to Government departments including FE and sixth form colleges.

The course forms a part of the ongoing
UNISON/UCU Disability Equality Project
which is looking to ensure full implementation of the
Disability Equality Duty.

Monday July 17 2006

10.30 am - 4.30 pm
Arena Point, Manchester

Friday 21 July

10.30 am - 4.30 pm
UNISON HQ, Mabledon Place, London

Please ring Sian Davies on 020 7551 1511 or email her on
s.davies@unison.co.uk
for more information.