



Raj Jethwa
Chief
Executive
UCEA

25 May 2023

Dear Raj,

Re: Your letter dated 19 May 2023

We are writing in response to your letter dated 19th May 2023.

We remain concerned about various claims set out in your letter as well as your continued refusal to engage in negotiations without pre-conditions, thereby prolonging this dispute and the disruption facing universities across the country.

The higher education sector is currently in crisis, and we have repeatedly emphasised the need for urgent talks between UCEA and the HE trade unions in order to work together to address the crisis facing staff and students. Increasingly, we see individual employers, such as University of Cambridge, who rightly recognise the damaging impact of this dispute on their institutions and are calling on UCEA to engage in negotiations. We are disappointed that UCEA appear to be unaware of the scale of the crisis and continue to set unacceptable pre-conditions that seem designed to obstruct the possibility of negotiations and resolution.

We note that you state UCEA are committed to national negotiations, yet the remainder of your letter includes unreasonable pre-conditions. We remain willing and able to enter negotiations, but we cannot accept UCEA dictating the terms of these negotiations by stipulating pre-conditions regarding lawful industrial action and refusing to discuss pay in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. We would question how UCEA envisages genuine constructive negotiations taking place when one side has already dictated the outcome.

The joint unions note the broader political and economic context facing the higher education sector which you have set out. However, the latest available sector financial data shows that it is primarily staff who have borne the cost of this crisis, not employers.

We therefore cannot accept UCEA using future potential projections for HE finances to deny staff the pay rise that they need and deserve, and which we know the sector can afford today.

It is the view of the joint unions that if UCEA were genuinely committed to protecting student learning and education, employers would agree to enter urgent talks with the HE unions, which is the only way to end this longstanding dispute.

The main obstacle to an agreed resolution is the current absence of negotiations. The party refusing to negotiate is UCEA through the insistence on pre-conditions regarding industrial action. The most effective way of ending industrial action and addressing the growing contention caused by UCEA member institutions' threats of disproportionate, punitive pay deductions for action short of a strike, will be a negotiated agreement to resolve the dispute.

The joint trade unions remain committed to seeking such a resolution. We look forward to receiving confirmation of UCEA's willingness to re-enter negotiations to reach agreement and bring an end to the dispute to the benefit of all in the sector.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth and Jon

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on behalf of the New JNCHES joint trade unions