

## HE officers' report

Following the branch delegate meeting (BDM), UCU's higher education committee (HEC) met on 27 September 2024 and agreed to reject the pay element of the offer, adopting the following motion:

### UCEA's final offer: next steps

HEC notes

1. UCEA's final offer (27/8/24) for the 24/5 pay round.
2. HEC's rejection of the pay element of the offer on 10/6/24.
3. The outcome of the BDM on 24/9/24.

Resolves:

1. To reject the pay element of the offer.
2. To accept the ToRs on the pay related elements on the pay spine, workload, casualisation, and equality to enable talks to proceed.
3. To immediately launch a campaign for a fully funded sector and fully funded pay raise including sustained lobbying of government
4. To hold a consultative ballot of members on all elements of the offer, lasting no longer than 3 weeks with HEC's recommendation.
5. To convene a special HEC to consider the results of the consultative ballot and plan next steps.

HEC therefore **recommends** that members **reject** the pay element of the award and **accept** the terms of reference on the pay related elements.

A higher education committee meeting will be reconvened after the consultative ballot to consider the next steps. The decisions that members are being asked to make are important.

### Background: pay, sector finances and the new Westminster Government

This year's pay negotiations took place against a background of intense pressure from the employers arguing that they cannot afford to pay a pay increase that meets

inflation, never mind one that meets the joint unions' claim of August 2024 RPI+2% (3.5+2%).

The result is that our members' pay rates have continued to fall in real terms by around 1% against RPI, on top of an 11% pay cut over the previous two years. At the same time, up to one-third of UCU branches have faced substantial redundancy /restructuring programmes in the last 12 months.

In April 2024, in anticipation of a possible change in the Westminster Government, and recognising the developing financial crisis in Higher Education, the union's Special HE sector conference resolved that UCU should develop a political campaign focused on three immediate demands. These were abolishing the 'hostile environment' (including for overseas students), covering additional employer TPS contributions and restoring the block grant to match the fee shortfall. UCU recognises that these demands may play out differently in devolved nations, given higher education is a devolved matter.

Conference also resolved to 'develop a strategy which includes returning to UK-wide action in academic year 2024-25' and HEC voted in July to build a campaign for industrial action to win the four fights dispute (see Appendix). We encourage members to take these decisions into account when voting on taking industrial action whether or not you vote to accept the terms of reference for pay-related negotiations.

The steps we need to take to change our sector will not be easy, but they are necessary. We know from our counterparts in further education that their demands in Northern Ireland were successful in securing a pay uplift worth 11.2% for college lecturers, backdated to September 2023. Our sister union, the NEU, that their demand for a 'fully-funded pay rise' was successful in winning 5.5% for school teachers in England and Wales. If members vote for industrial action, HEC resolved it should take place in the context of a UK-wide campaign to demand government intervention to stabilise the funding of the sector (a campaign for a 'fully-funded sector'), creating the conditions for the union to make real progress on behalf of all of our members.

## **UCU HE officers**

**Lucy Burke**

**Maria Chondrogianni**

**Maxine Looby**

**Sean Wallis**

## Appendix: Four Fights dispute motion

Adopted by HEC 5 July 2024

HEC notes

1. The unacceptable pay offer for 2024/25 and no meaningful offer on casualisation, workloads and equal pay.
2. Continuing attacks by employers on branches.
3. SHESC motion HE9 passed on returning to UK-wide action on the four fights in academic year 2024-5 and to organise strike committees to synchronise local action.
4. Special HEC rejection of the pay offer.

HEC believes that members deserve a UK-wide campaign on the unresolved four fights issues and that HEC must therefore build this campaign.

HEC resolves to

1. Keep all elements of the four fights together and not put an offer to members that does not make significant progress on all of them.
2. Reject the pay offer.
3. Build a campaign for industrial action to win the four fights dispute.