



Higher Education Joint Union Claim 2025/2026:

Introduction

Staff in higher education are still suffering from the fall in living standards caused by the spike in inflation during 2022. Increases in pay since have not matched the increases in inflation. This, coupled with particularly steep increases in housing and energy costs, has seen the living standards of our members fall in the last three years.

Last year saw the end of the freeze in domestic student fees and the prospect of a longer-term funding settlement for the sector. Despite the recent series of announcements of job losses, redundancies and course closures in higher education, there is a prospect of additional funding for the sector.

We believe that the only way that higher education can succeed and demonstrate its ability to meet the criteria set by government for further increases in funding is by investing in its workforce. This includes providing for a pay increase that reverses the cuts in living standards that many of our members have suffered in the last three years.

UCEA and the Joint Trade Unions undertook substantial work last year to jointly agree terms of reference for four key areas of work last year. (Review of the pay spine, contract types/casualisation, workloads and equality pay gaps.) Although this offer of joint work was subsequently withdrawn as a result of some unions rejecting the pay element of the 2024/5 pay offer, we do not think that this work should go to waste and believe that the working groups should be re-convened under the previously agreed terms of reference.

In particular, the recent further additional increases in the national Living Wage have meant that need for reform of the New JNCHES Pay Spine is more urgent than ever. The increases in NLW have rendered many of the existing pay points obsolete, eroded meaningful pay differential between points, resulting in outdated and unfair pay arrangements. We believe that taking forward the discussions on reform of the pay spine should be an urgent priority of New JNCHES as part of this pay round.

In addition, last year's offer contained proposals to take forward work on issues arising from gender inequalities in pension provision, a Green New Deal and Just Transition, and on Term Time Only Contracts. We believe these issues still require further work and form part of our claim. However, rather than have further discussions on these issues as part of this year's negotiations, the trade unions are content that work on these areas are taken forward as proposed in the final offer to trade unions set out on 27 August 2024.

The spate of redundancies and course closures that have taken place across all four nations of the UK in the last year emphasises the need for further joint work to avoid further cuts and long-term damage to UK higher education sector. The trade union side is calling on UCEA to engage in further joint work to avoid further redundancies and to campaign for a sustainable long term funding settlement for the sector.

Given current major shifts in geopolitics, the joint unions believe that downsizing the Higher Education sector at this crucial time would be a strategic mistake. Over the next decade Higher Education will need to play a key role in the Government's industrial strategy and workforce development. Reducing the number of Higher Education institutions or continuing the trend of mass redundancies and/or course closures in the sector will be totally counterproductive in this context and will detrimentally impact economic growth at a time when universities play an increasingly vital role in their local communities and economies.

We expect UCEA to work with their members to develop realistic plans for the restoration of real-terms pay levels. We want to work with UCEA to address the issues affecting the higher education workforce and look forward to a positive response to our claim.

Joint Higher Education Unions Heads of Claim 2025/6

We are seeking the restoration of our members' lost pay. Below inflation pay rises over the past decade have resulted in members' losing up to 30% of the value of their pay.

- We are calling on UCEA for:
 - an increase on all pay points of at least RPI (as at August 2025) + 3.5%, or a flat rate increase on each spine point of at least £2,500 (whichever is greater)
 - Equivalent percentage rises to London Weighting and any other allowances
 - A new minimum pay rate of £15 an hour.
 - All institutions to become Foundation Living Wage employers and for all pay points below the FLW to be deleted.
 - A commitment to an urgent and comprehensive reform of the New JNCHES pay spine.
- To restore the offer from 2024/5 to develop joint agreements on workload, contract types/casualisation, pay spine reform, and tackling the gender, disability and ethnicity pay gaps using the previous jointly agreed terms of reference.

The recent increases in the national Living Wage have made the need for pay spine reform in the sector even more urgent and we are calling on UCEA to re-convene the

previously agreed pay spine review working group at the earliest opportunity with a view to include recommendations that can be in place from August 2025.

We call on UCEA to agree to take forward the other areas of joint work discussed as part of the 2024-25 pay negotiating round, included in the UCEA pay offer for 2024-5 and then withdrawn by UCEA; gender inequalities in pension provision, a Green New Deal and Just Transition, the migrant salary threshold/ associated visa costs and on term time only contracts.

The unions also call on UCEA to undertake further joint work to avoid redundancies, course closures, and cuts to academic disciplines across the sector, and to lobby politically for a sustainable long term funding settlement for the sector.

The trade union claim will also call on UCEA to;

- Recommend that institutions move all staff onto a 35-hour week, with no loss in pay, to be implemented at institutional level.
- Commit to the protection of national agreements relating to terms and conditions of employment including the Post-92 national contract and HE2000.
- Establish the Scottish sub-committee of New JNCHES as set out under the New JNCHES agreement.
- Call upon universities to reimburse all visa application and application-adjacent fees for migrant workers and ensure that the pay spine is appropriate for the new government-mandated pay thresholds for skilled worker visas.

Pay

We are seeking an increase in pay that restores pay levels lost to the recent spike in inflation. In addition, we are seeking a flat rate increase of at least £2,500 for lower paid workers to compensate them for the additional inflation pressures that they have faced and to tackle low pay in the higher education sector.

We demand:

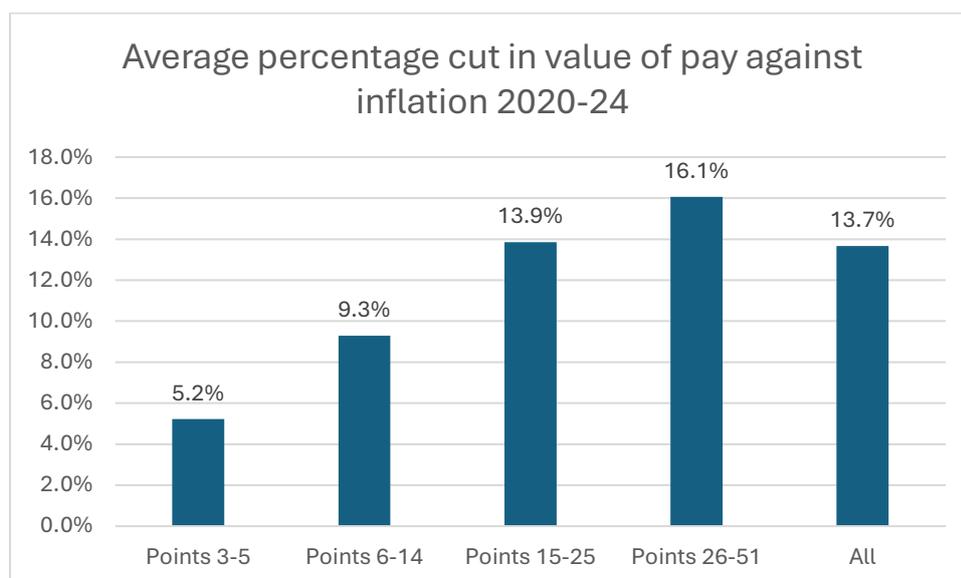
- an increase on all pay points of at least RPI + 3.5% or a flat rate of at least £2,500 (whichever is greater) and a commitment to restore lost pay.
- Equivalent rises to London Weighting and any other allowances.
- A new minimum pay rate of £15 an hour.
- All institutions to become Foundation Living Wage employers and pay points below the FLW to be deleted.
- UCEA committing to a comprehensive reform of the pay spine.

The Joint Trade Unions expect a pay offer to be made as early in the process as possible and no later than the second negotiating meeting of the New JNCHES forum.

Falling value of pay

Recent years have seen the steepest rises in the cost of living facing workers in over 40 years, hitting 11.6% in 2022 and 9.7% in 2023¹.

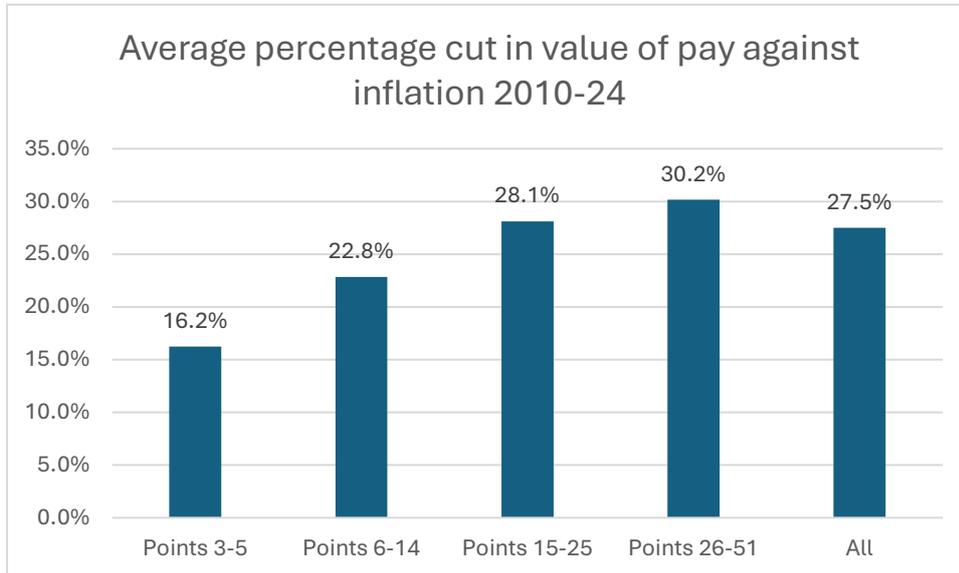
The consequences can be seen in the table below, showing the cut in the value of HE pay since 2020.



¹ Office for National Statistics, Consumer Price Inflation Reference Tables, December 2024

Across the HE pay spine, the average loss has been 13.7% between 2020 and 2024, varying from 5.2% on the bottom pay points to 16.1% across the top half of the pay spine.

In cash terms, the average pay point would be worth over £6,600 more had it kept pace with inflation.



When looking over a longer timescale, going back to 2010, the impact is even more dramatic. The average loss has been 27.5% between 2010 and 2024, varying from 16.2% on the bottom pay points to 30.2% across the top half of the pay spine.

These are even sharper drops than the economy generally, where cuts in the value of wages have hit 20% for the average worker and 22% in the public sector over the same timeframe.

Although inflation declined over 2024, it was still running at 3.6% at January 2025, led by major increases in housing costs - mortgage interest payments are surging by 15%², private rent is rising by 9%³ - as well as average household energy costs jumping by 10%⁴ and water charges by 8%⁵.

Furthermore, the last decade and a half has seen enormous spikes in the basic costs shown below⁶.

Expenditure Item	House prices	Bus & coach fares	Electricity	Gas
Price rise 2010 - 24	73%	93%	144%	92%

² Office for National Statistics, UK Consumer Price Inflation, January 2025

³ Office for National Statistics, Private Rent and House Prices UK, February 2025

⁴ Cornwall Insight, Forecast for Price Cap, November 2024

⁵ Office for National Statistics, UK Consumer Price Inflation, January 2024

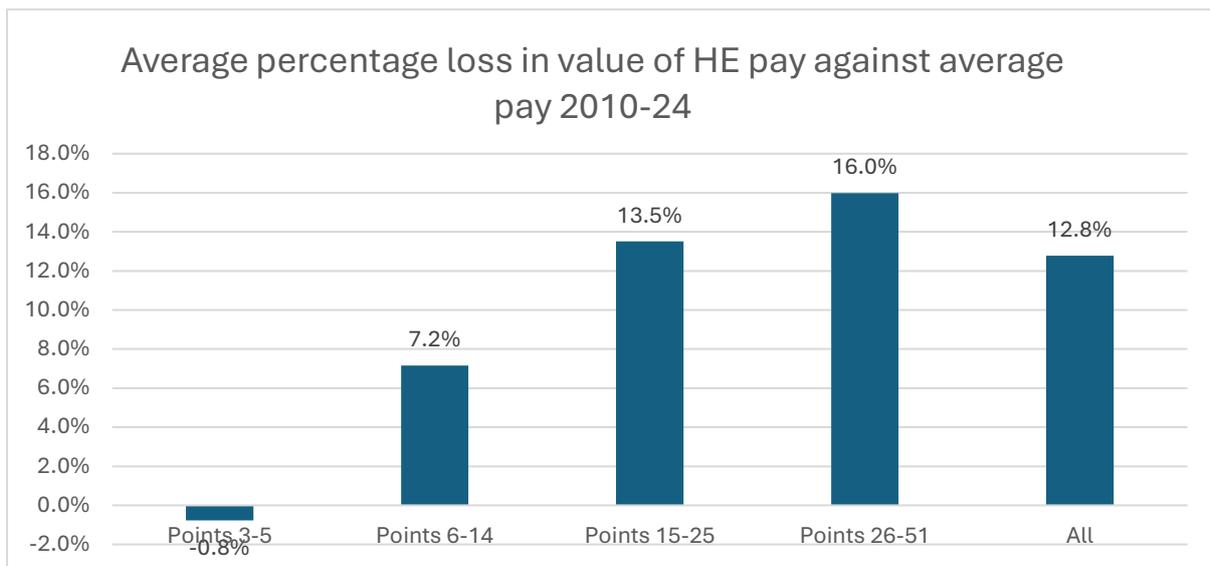
⁶ Office for National Statistics, UK Consumer Price Inflation Tables, December 2024, for bus /coach, electricity and gas prices, HM Land Registry Index, House Price Index, November 2024 for house prices

Forecasts for the year ahead show no signs of inflation substantially abating, with the Treasury putting inflation over 2025 at 3.9%⁷.

Falling behind average pay rates

The ability of higher education institutions to attract and retain staff in the long term will be damaged if the pay of its staff falls behind the going rate in the labour market.

The graph below demonstrates how pay settlements for higher education institutions have fallen behind economy averages over a sustained period.



Over the period 2010 to 2024, an average wage would have grown 12.8% more than the average HE pay rate. Across the pay spine, the lowest points have grown marginally more than the economy average, but among points 6-14 the relative decline against average pay has been 7.2% and across the top half of the pay scale it has been 16%.

Given that average earnings are currently continuing to grow across the economy at an average of 5.6%⁸, substantial increases are necessary simply to arrest any further decline in the competitiveness of HE wages on the labour market.

Living Wage

The Living Wage has become a standard benchmark for the minimum needed for low-paid staff to have a “basic but acceptable” standard of living.

⁷ HM Treasury, Forecasts for the UK Economy, February 2025

⁸ Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Overview, January 2025

Higher education institutions are now competing in a labour market where the Living Wage of £12.60 an hour outside London and £13.85 an hour in London has become an increasingly common minimum point in the pay scale.

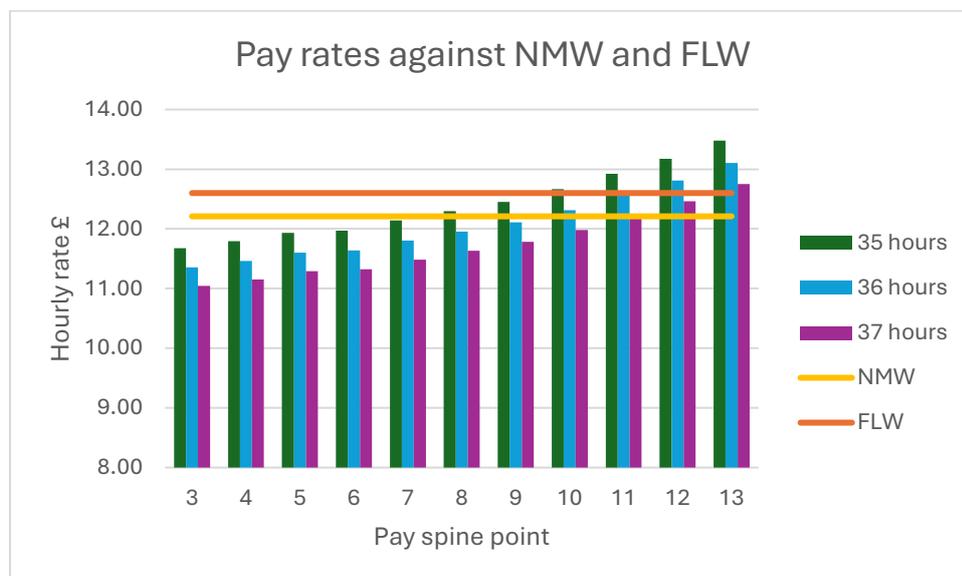
Studies supported by Barclays Bank have shown that Living Wage employers report an increase in productivity, a reduction in staff turnover / absenteeism rates and improvements in their public reputation.

Consequently, there are now over 15,000 employers accredited as Living Wage employers by the Living Wage Foundation, including almost half of the largest companies listed on the UK Stock Exchange and household names such as Aviva, Barclays, HSBC, Nationwide, Google and IKEA are among them.

The precedent of the Living Wage, in tandem with recruitment and retention pressures, has also pushed major employers of low-paid staff in the retail sector to increase pay. Sainsbury's and Argos workers are set to see a rise from £12 to £12.45 per hour in March 2025 before a further increase to £12.60 in August, while Lidl and Aldi have pushed rates for customer service roles in stores to up to £14 an hour. Similarly, Amazon raised its rate for frontline operations staff to between £13.50 and £14.50 per hour, depending on location, toward the end of 2024.

Within the public sector, the Living Wage has now long been set as the minimum pay rate across all Scotland's public sector organisations and this was extended to social care workers in Scotland's private and voluntary sector from October 2016. The Welsh Government committed to achieving the same goal in social care by 2024.

The graph below shows how the bottom pay spine rates among higher education institutions compare against the £12.21 an hour National Minimum Wage set to come into force from April and the £12.60 an hour Living Wage applicable outside London from May.



On a 37 hour week, all points up to pay point 10 fall below the 2025 National Minimum Wage and it's necessary to go up to pay point 13 for the first to reach the Foundation Living Wage.

Job cuts and course closures

The unions call on UCEA to undertake further joint work to halt redundancies and course closures.

Specifically, to:

- a) Explore an emergency package in relation to redundancy avoidance.
- b) Work with the joint unions to lobby government to implement more stable funding for the higher education sector, with a view to avoiding redundancies, course closures and cuts to academic disciplines. This should include a return to a system of block grants based on capped student numbers.

Pay spine review

In recent years it has become apparent that as pay increases have not kept up with the rising cost of living that this has directly impacted on the sustainability of the bottom end of the pay spine. For the past few years, the lowest pay points have needed to be raised, or eliminated altogether, in order to comply with the government's minimum wage. Whereas in the past the lowest pay point was comparable to the Living Wage Foundation rate, this is no longer the case, and certainly not for those working a more than a 35-hour week – the majority of the sector.

The joint unions believe that there should be short term steps taken to urgently address the bottom end of the pay spine to ensure that HE employers are, at the very minimum, keeping up with the Living Wage Foundation rates irrespective of standard working hours contracts. We also believe that there should be joint work undertaken to ensure that the national pay spine provides universities and their staff with a suitable and sustainable national pay spine for the coming decades. With the reduction in pay points at the lower end, the reduction in differentials between SCPs, the removal of some increments from grades by HEIs, the time has come to review the national pay spine.

We believe that this review should work within the principle established by all partners in the National Framework Agreement.

The rationale for differentials in the pay structures is important, particularly at a time when our members are taking on more duties as HEIs restructure and make cuts in staffing. In recent years the outcomes of New JNCHES have resulted in the pay spine differentials not being consistent throughout the spine, which impacts on equality, fairness, and consistency grounds. The unions are calling for a restructure of the pay spine to restore the even incremental gaps throughout the pay spine and address the

issues of pay compression that exist. Given the high levels of uncertainty affecting the sector, differentials need to be predictable over time rather than being eroded.

The principle of ensuring that all staff were employed on grades with incremental progression was an important element of the National Framework Agreement and one which the unions believe needs to be carried forward. With universities needing to take action to address poverty pay, there are an increasing number of staff who are not employed on incremental grades and the majority of staff have reached the top of their pay grade. The unions note that incremental pay increases are contractual, and that national pay bargaining relates to achieving increases in the pay award for all employees at the full rate for the job.

The sections in this claim on loss of value, inflation forecasts and settlement data, when compared with the pay increase contained in recent settlements, show how far behind both the cost of living and average pay settlements the pay in HEIs has fallen. Our members at the top of grades have therefore faced a steady erosion in their pay packets from below-inflation settlements together with no increment.

The above inflation increases in the NLW from April 2025 have made the need for reform of the New JNCHES pay spine greater than ever. We believe that UCEA should agree to take forward this piece of work urgently with the trade union side with the aim of agreeing recommendations that can be applied by August 2025.

Percentage Gap between Different Spinal Column Points

The joint trade unions are seeking, as part of this year's pay settlement, a recognition of the dwindling value of pay for those at the top of grades. We are seeking additional pay uplifts at the lower end of the spine to address pay compression and a remodelling of the pay spine to address the erosion of differentials across the pay spine. Seeking to restore a 3% gap across the spine is a means to achieve this. Establishing a joint working group to address this problem in a comprehensive way would be a useful way to take this problem forward.

Pay Related Elements

Contract Types/ casualisation

According to the latest available HESA staff data (2022/23), 62690 academics are employed on fixed-term or atypical contracts – a figure that has changed little in recent years. This figure rises to almost half for teaching-only academics (45%) and nearly two thirds (66%) for research only staff.

Across the sector 32,625 academic staff are employed on hourly paid contracts (HESA 22/23), with 31,590 of those staff only receiving part time hours.

Women and BAME staff are more likely to be on some form of casualised contract.

Casualisation remains a problem for all academic staff groups but the use of fixed-term contracts for research staff, and zero hours and hourly-paid contracts for teaching-only staff is endemic.

According to FOI research undertaken by Unison, there are nearly 25,000 zero hours contracts issued to support staff in the sector. The joint unions are seeking a commitment from UCEA to a joint call for universities to commit to a new institution-level action and implementation plans to create greater security of employment and to commit the necessary resources to do so.

We expect the JNCHES working group looking at contract types to:

- Identify ways in which the sector can reduce its use of casualised contracts.
- Make a recommendation to act on zero hours contracts such that all staff having at least minimum guaranteed hours that reflect their working pattern on an employee contract.
- Develop, agree, and promote principles at a UK- level which employers are able to apply through the appropriate local consultation and/or negotiating machinery on the following contract types:
 - Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs): to include an appropriate workload allocation mechanism, guarantee that all GTAs are paid at the appropriate grade for the work they are conducting; receive paid training, and have access to the same rights and entitlements as all permanent members of staff.
 - Fixed-term contracts (including open ended contracts with an ‘at risk’ date): to include agreed limitations on their use, a minimum contract length of 24 months (other than in genuine cases of cover), a process to move all staff who have more than one contract extension or with no more than 4 years’ service to genuine open ended contracts with a focus on better management

of redeployment, the provision of bridging funds (for example for use between research grants for both research and support staff working on externally funded research projects) and a move to research 'hubs'.

- Post Graduate Researchers (PGRs) : to include an agreement to the principles in the UCU PGR manifesto as the basis for local negotiations aimed at creating greater alignment between the terms and conditions for postgraduate researchers, in their capacity as doctoral researchers, and employees.
- Hourly-paid contracts: to include agreement on a process to move staff on hourly paid contracts to fractional contracts.
- Review progress on reducing casualisation for different contract types on an annual basis.
- Recommend to UCEA's members to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment when undertaking work relating to contract types so that mitigating action can be taken with regard to any adverse impact/s identified.

This section of the pay claim comes under section 7 of the New JNCHES Agreement, 26 March 2013 which references fixed-term, hourly paid, and low pay (which relates to the outsourced services which, in many cases, employ staff on the lowest rates of pay.) Additionally, section 8 of the third bullet point, states that 'areas of employment practice...with the potential to produce material for dissemination to institutions', in the New JNCHES Agreement, 26 March 2013.

Term Time Only Contracts

As part of last year's pay negotiations, the trade union side raised the issue of the need for joint guidance for staff employed on term time only contracts. There have been substantial changes in statutory guidance and legal precedents in relation to workers on these type of contracts.

The trade union side believe that many staff on term time only contracts are routinely being treated less favourably than full time equivalent colleagues, particularly in relation to the allocation of annual leave.

We believe that we should be looking to issue joint guidance on this issue, either through, or independently from the contract types working group.

Workload

The trade unions wish to make it explicitly clear that actions need to be taken by employers to reduce unsafe and excessive workloads, and that such excessive workloads mean, in effect, that staff are doing more work for less pay.

The latest estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) show:

- In 2020/21 there were an estimated 822,000 workers affected by work-related stress, depression, or anxiety. This represents 2,480 per 100,000 workers. The rate of work-related stress depression and anxiety has increased in recent years.
- The number of new cases was 451,000, an incidence rate of 1,360 per 100,000 workers. The total number of working days lost due to this condition in 2019/20 was 17.9 million days. This equated to an average of 21.6 days lost per case. Working days lost per worker due to self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety shows no clear trend.
- In 2020/21 work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill health.
- In 2019/20 stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 51% of all work-related ill health cases and 55% of all working days lost due to work-related ill health.
- Stress, depression or anxiety is more prevalent in public service industries, such as education; health and social care; and public administration and defence. By occupation, professional occupations that are common across public service industries (such as healthcare workers; teaching professionals and public service professionals) show higher levels of stress as compared to all jobs.
- The main work factors cited by respondents as causing work-related stress, depression or anxiety were workload pressures, including tight deadlines and too much responsibility and a lack of managerial support (2009/10-2011/12).
- In the recent years prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the rate of self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety had shown signs of increasing. In 2020/21 the rate was higher than the 2018/19 pre-coronavirus levels. The latest year (2020/21) is not statistically different compared to the previous year. Evidence suggests this is not related to COVID-19 (see Annex 1).

Equality Pay Gaps

The joint unions are again calling for UK-level agreed action for HE institutions to close the gender pay gap and to specifically address the ethnic and disability pay gaps, taking account of ways in which intersectionality affects pay and grading.

Every year the official pay data in UK higher education shows continuing, shameful, and persistent pay inequality. UK universities promote the values of equality, yet it is more than fifty years since the Equal Pay Act and the sector still has huge and, in some cases, growing gaps in the pay of men and women.

In March 2024 HEPI produced a report for England and Wales which highlighted that the gender pay gap median is 11.9% across the HE sector. It notes that the current rate of progress is slowing and that some institutions may never close the gap on the current rate of progress. The report states that on average HE sector will take 14 years to close the gender pay gap. In one notorious case it is estimated that it will take 680 years to close the gender pay gap on the current rate of progress.

According to the ONS, the pay gap for Black UK born employees is 5.6% across the UK. For non-UK born staff this increased to 12%.

Despite 22% of staff coming from ethnic minority backgrounds, only 13% of the Professoriate come from such backgrounds, with most of this group being of Asian descent. Though we note that there was an increase of 40 black professors being appointed in the 2023/23 HESA data, much more needs to be done across the board to ensure equality of opportunity for an ethnic minority staff employed in academic roles.

According to Advance HE, ethnic minority staff are under-represented in management, director, and other senior roles in both academic, academic related and support roles

UCEA's own analysis shows that Black non-UK men, Black UK women and Black non-UK women suffer the most significant pay penalty in comparison to white-UK men.

The time has now come for universities to agree clear action plans with their unions and for joint work to be done to address the race pay gap and the impact of intersectionality on staff. New JNCHES has an important review and enabling role in this.

We expect the JNCHES working group looking at action on pay gaps to:

- Consider the relevant data available and, where possible, collect data that is unavailable through HESA;
- Examine the relevant data through an intersectional lens for gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps, where available;
- Present an analysis of the data and the issues to be addressed at a UK-wide level, broken down for academic and professional services and clinical academic staff, and by contract type where possible (including outsourced/indirectly employed staff), to New JNCHES and to HEIs, and relevant sector-level benchmarks to allow meaningful local action plans. UCEA will also recommend to its members to benchmark their results using the UCEA pay gaps dashboard;
- Explore the impact on pay gaps of direct and indirect employment strategies;
- Develop and agree principles and minimum standards which employers are able to apply in action plans to address pay gaps based upon good practice, from within and outside of the sector, timescales, and the role of trade unions in action planning. These action plans will be developed and implemented locally;
- Develop and agree guidance on positive action initiatives to address equality pay gaps within the university workforce which remove well-evidenced barriers and systemic bias;
- Develop and agree guidance on the creation of safe environments and mechanisms through which union members/employees feel comfortable declaring protected characteristics;
- Encourage union members/employees to share protected characteristics data with their employers, highlighting the value of such information and its

importance for future analysis of gender, ethnicity, disability, and other equality pay gaps and helping to address discrimination;

- Ensure that UCEA members undertake timetabled Equal Pay Audits and then share all audit data with their recognised trade unions;
- Review progress on all pay gaps at a UK level, including the proportion of HEIs making progress towards sector benchmarks, on an annual basis and report updated figures to the trade unions and UCEA members with further guidance and examples of success, prior to the annual pay negotiating round.

This section of the pay claim comes under section 9 of the New JNCHES Agreement, 26 March 2013. Additionally, section 6, second bullet point references the Framework Agreement which has a section on Equal Opportunities and Pay.

Terms of reference

UCEA and the joint unions made progress in the 2024/5 pay negotiation on agreeing terms of reference for working groups to develop joint agreements on: workload, contract types/casualisation, pay spine reform, and action to tackle equality pay gaps.

The offer to take this work forward was subsequently withdrawn by UCEA. We believe that these issues still need addressing and that the proposed working groups should be reconvened at the earliest opportunity.

Pensions

Inequalities in Higher Education Pensions

Research across pensions provision in the UK shows that gender differences in pension entitlement are significantly larger than gender pay differentials.

(<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9517/>)

The average pension pot on retirement for women in DC schemes in 2021 was £69,000, whereas for men it was £205,800.

Although pension differentials are typically smaller with defined benefit schemes, the pensions of women are still, on average far smaller than those of men. The Government Actuaries Department examined the Local Government Pension Scheme in 2023 and reported that the average pensions entitlement of an active woman member was 35% lower than that of her male equivalent, with larger differentials for deferred and retired members.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gender-pensions-gap-report>.

Many higher education institutions have reformed their pensions schemes for their lower paid workers, putting these staff in inferior DC schemes, while maintaining DB schemes for higher paid staff. This typically disproportionately affects women and other historically disadvantaged groups of staff. It can also affect the portability of pensions for staff as they progress through grades and do not have the benefit of early service membership of a DB scheme.

There are practical measures that can be taken to reduce these differentials. For example, continued employer contributions during periods of extended maternity leave, and minimum levels of employer contribution mitigating the impact of lower levels of accrual, due to scheme design, for part-time workers (most of whom are female).

Although there is less data in this area, there is evidence that there are similar pensions gaps in the HE workforce between white British people and those of ethnic minority, and those with and those without disabilities. Across the whole workforce, the People's Partnership (<https://peoplespartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Measuring-the-ethnicity-pensions-gap.pdf>) found that people of ethnic minority had significantly lower pensions.

We call upon the JNCHES Pensions Forum to form a working party to gather data on the extent of pensions gaps in the schemes for HE workers, with the aim of producing concrete proposals which would act to reduce gender and other inequality pension gaps in the sector.

35 Hour Week

As in previous claims, the joint unions believe that the sector needs to address the differential pay rates between universities.

Each year the higher education pay offer is made with reference to HE staff being employed on a 35 hour per week contract. In years prior to 2019/20, the Foundation Living Wage has been achieved as a minimum level of pay but only for those employed on a 35-hour contract. UNISON's 2020 FOI showed that, in fact, the majority of universities in the UK issue standard contracts which are higher than 35 hours, meaning that the FLW isn't achieved even for staff directly employed by universities if they are paid on the lowest few spinal column points.

Our latest data shows that:

- 55 universities employ staff on 35 hours per week as standard,
- 28 universities employ staff on more than 35 hours and less than 37 hours per week as standard,
- 49 universities employ staff on 37 hours per week or more as standard,
- Approximately 10 HEIs use a combination of standard contracted hours depending on grade.

The joint trade unions believe that New JNCHES can show leadership for the sector in response to this claim by developing national guidance on moving staff onto 35-hour weekly. Addressing this will go a significant way towards eliminating poverty pay in the sector as well as impacting on workloads.

This section of the pay claim comes under section 8 second bullet point of the New JNCHES Agreement, 26 March 2013.

The number of hours in the standard weekly contract directly impacts on the amount that salaries are worth per hour. This comes into sharp focus for those working on part-time, hourly paid or zero hours contracts as well as for those on the lowest pay points. Whilst contracts are issued locally by each employer this point in the agreement states that discussions can place on remuneration matters ‘...where the detail is determined locally in the context of the Framework.... allowing consideration of practice...across the sector as a whole...’.

Additionally, the New JNCHES pay agreement 2006-09 section 4 “The Standard Working Week” states that “...the sub-committee jointly recommends HEIs with a longer working week explore actively ...a reduction in working hours”.

A national Green New Deal Agreement on a Just Transition for the sector which will include a Just Transition Commission in Higher Education

A 'Just Transition' means moving to a more sustainable economy in a way that's fair to everyone. Popular understanding and government policy often focuses on people working in polluting industries, such as heavy manufacturing, but change will need to happen in every sector.

The public education sector should lead the re-skilling and training of the workforce for low-carbon industries. The transition must, in no way, become another private enterprise venture that reproduces existing economic, racial, and gender inequalities by restricting access to the majority through exorbitant tuition and fees. The fight against privatisation must continue in the transition to a low-carbon world. This is why we would seek to implement a National HE Strategy to transition to net-zero.

We need to establish the foundations of collective bargaining for tomorrow, today, if we are to fairly address the impacts of climate change on the working conditions and future prospects of the education sector, rather than reacting when it is too late. Research has shown that where changes are felt to be fair, they tend to have greater workforce buy-in, less opposition, lower costs, and better outcomes. Collective bargaining ensures that workers' voices are part of that process.

Finally, funding models in post-16 education need to change if we are to meet the demands of net-zero. There is a need to transition away from fossil fuel funded research, investment and innovation whilst protecting jobs and academic disciplines.

The joint trade union claim sets out the framework to do just that.

- To establish a working group with the joint trade union side to agree a proposal to present to the government for a JTC for Higher Education for review and approval through the April JNCHES structures.
- To work with the trade union side to develop a proposal to present to the government for a JTC for Higher Education to be developed for agreement in the Autumn JNCHES negotiation cycle, with public release and communications by November 2024.
- Ethical AI and right to human review.
- Review of e-publishing.
- Facilities time for Environmental Reps at Institutional level.
- In line with DfE Climate Strategy. Encourage partnerships to support children to learn more about the environment and sustainability, for example universities linking with schools to share green spaces and climate expertise.

UCEA to commit to the protection of national agreements relating to terms and conditions of employment including the Post-92 national contract and HE2000

There is growing evidence of individual employers moving beyond the terms and conditions laid down in the Post-92 Contract, accompanying Framework Agreement, and HE2000. In particular, the employment of staff on inferior terms and conditions and inappropriate pay grades.

We call on UCEA to call on its members publicly to support the agreed terms and conditions of HE staff laid down in the Post-92 Contract, accompanying Framework Agreement, and HE2000 and to ensure that HE employers abide by these agreements.

To establish the Scottish sub-committee of New JNCHES as set out under the New JNCHES agreement

The New JNCHES Agreement expressly acknowledges the reality of the establishment of devolved HE sectors for the devolved administrations within the UK, and that a subcommittee of the NEW JNCHES Committee may be formed to look at HE issues for any of the devolved administrations. There is clear evidence that there are some diverging trends and structures emerging in Scotland relative to the rest of the UK. The Fair Work Convention is Scotland specific, and a Scottish JNCHES would need to ensure that this is embedded within Scottish HEI's and is beyond the scope of the full JNCHES. A Scottish JNCHES subcommittee would provide the appropriate forum for legitimate discussion and engagement on this and other issues.

For this reason, the trade unions seek the activation of the Scottish New JNCHES Subcommittee to look at Scottish issues. Continued failure to implement this part of the New JNCHES agreement in blocking the formation of the Scottish New JNCHES Sub-Committee is a clear indication of bad faith by the employers side.

Over recent years, the importance of having a Scottish sub-committee has become more pronounced. The ways in which Brexit has affected Scottish universities is different from HEIs in England given the different funding and tuition fee regimes. The Higher Education Governance (Sc) Act 2016 has been implemented, with dialogue taking place on this, and other key sectoral employment issues, in Scotland out-with New JNCHES. The Covid 19 pandemic also demonstrated the need for an effective bargaining body in Scotland to discuss issues specific to the sector in Scotland that affect the workforce.

The trade union claim is to establish the Scottish Sub-Committee of New JNCHES as set out under the New JNCHES Agreement. The main purpose of the sub-committee would be to deal with matters not currently being dealt with at the New JNCHES Committee and to inform NEW JNCHES where best practice is being established in Scotland so it can be considered at the UK level.

Migrant salary threshold and associated visa costs

The joint unions want to work together with UCEA to undertake the following work:

Call upon universities to reimburse all visa application and application-adjacent fees (e.g. Immigration Health Surcharge, biometrics fees, Life in the UK test fee) for migrant staff and their dependents on all visa categories.

Ensure that any review of the pay spine is appropriate for the new government-mandated pay thresholds for skilled worker visas. The minimum salary points for jobs eligible for sponsorship should be above the new thresholds.