

Further Education Branch Action Note

To: All Further Education Branch Secretaries and Chairs
Topic: FE Pay Report to FE Sector Conference, May 2025
ACTION: To note the report
Summary Branch Action Note provides a report on the FE England 2024/25 pay round, the New Deal for FE campaign and progress in the 2025/26 round
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FE pay report to Further Education Sector Conference, May 2025

1. FE Pay 2024/25

- 1.1. In March 2024, the joint further education (FE) trade unions in England (GMB, NEU, UCU, Unison and Unite) submitted our pay claim 2024/25 to the Association of Colleges (AoC). The first pay talks at the National Joint Forum (NJF) took place in May: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14381/FE-joint-unions-pay-claim-2024-25/pdf/FEjointpaycliam2024FINAL.pdf>
- 1.2 At the first meeting discussions focussed on the headline pay claim of 10% or £3,000 whichever is greater, closing the pay gap with schools, a £30k starting salary for teachers in FE, and progress towards achieving binding national agreements. The AoC made no offer at the meeting. Further to this the AoC said they could not make an offer until after the schoolteacher's pay offer was known.
[UCU - Update on England FE pay negotiations 2024-25](#)
- 1.3 The NJF process stopped at that point and resumed in October. The AoC final recommendation on pay was 2.5% or £750, whichever is the greater.
[UCU - Latest on pay recommendation](#)

- 1.4 Branches used the recommendation as a reference point for their negotiations. The demands in the claim are core elements of the New Deal for FE campaign: [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#) see section 2 below.

2. Just Transition Framework

- 2.1. The FE trade unions and the AoC reached agreement on a just transition road map for colleges. The agreement lays out a local strategy for colleges to work towards a more sustainable future.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13912/Introduction-to-the-Just-Transition-Framework-for-reps>

3. New Deal for FE

- 3.1. In February 2024, the Further Education Committee (FEC) made decisions about the national pay campaign and claim for the coming year. FEC decided to launch a new national campaign called 'Levelling up the Sector' and organise a national aggregate ballot of all branches over the summer with strike action in September.
- 3.2. In March more than 20 FE branches sent requests to call a Special FE Sector Conference (SFESC), which took place online on Saturday 13 April 2024. The business of the conference was to debate the year's pay and conditions strategy and decide whether an aggregate ballot would be called.
- 3.3. Over 90 delegates representing more than 70 FE branches participated in the SFESC. The decisions can be found here:
https://www.ucu.org.uk/fesc_13april2024
- 3.4. Alongside the motions from branches two other documents were circulated to delegates to inform the debate:
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14389/SFESC-background-docs/pdf/SFESC_background.pdf
- 3.5. Regarding the campaign strategy, SFESC rejected the FEC position and called on the union to immediately implement the 'New Deal for FE' strategy and develop the national pay claim and campaign 2024/25.
- 3.6. Regarding a national aggregate ballot, SFESC resolved there would not be an aggregated ballot this year; specifically, a ballot in June [2024] and action starting in September [2024]. Local pay claims would be developed to build branches in preparation for a future aggregated ballot. The timing

of that future aggregate ballot will be subject to branch consultation and the decision of a Special FESC.

- 3.7. In support of the New Deal for FE campaign, the SFESC approved new campaign materials to show the wide range of pay disparity in FE. Other materials such as a template claim, the importance of binding national bargaining and a petition covering pay, workloads and binding national agreements would be produced as part of the campaign. Building branch organisation and density is a central part of the campaign.
- 3.8. There was strong support for branch autonomy and decision making at the SFESC which meant branches retaining the ability to be excluded from national campaigns based on their particular local circumstances and that until binding national agreements were in place at sector level, branches will not be forced into disputes, or an aggregate ballot, or be subject to any national ratification of their local agreements if those agreements have been endorsed by their branch members.
- 3.9. The New Deal for FE campaign was rolled out in May: [UCU - A New Deal for FE](#) with a launch event in June: [A New Deal for FE](#)
- 3.10. A key part of the campaign is focused on supporting every FE branch in England in building organisation and engaging in local bargaining to bring pressure to bear on employers nationally. This is the first step towards winning binding national bargaining. Members are at the heart of this campaign, and SFESC wants every FE member to get involved. This campaign is calling for a new deal for FE workers involving:
 - a 10%/£3000 pay rise
 - parity with schoolteacher pay within 3 years
 - a minimum starting salary in line with schoolteachers
 - reform of the pay spine
 - close equality pay gaps
 - national agreements on workload
 - a new national bargaining framework
 - putting FE at the heart of a new government's plans
- 3.11. New campaign materials were circulated to branches:
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14498/A-New-Deal-for-FE---poster/pdf/ND4FE_poster_May24.pdf

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14499/A-New-Deal-for-FE---leaflet/pdf/ND4FE_flyer_May24.pdf

- 3.12 A briefing paper on why we need national bargaining was circulated to branches and branch briefings took place during autumn.
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13711/The-case-for-binding-national-negotiations-in-further-education-in-England>
- 3.13 A petition on national bargaining was developed and branches proactively encouraged to sign and use the petition: <https://newdealforfe.org.uk/>
- 3.14 As part of the political lobbying work targeting the new UK government for more funding for FE resources were made available to members to write to their MPs: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14567/End-FE-neglect---draft-Labour-MP-email/txt/End_FE_neglect_revised.txt
- 3.15 A New Deal for FE 'live' event took place on 19 September:
<https://youtu.be/fcfoK9Pxn6A>
- 3.16 A range of videos highlighting the voices of FE members was produced and can be viewed on our YouTube channel including this short campaign video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8wL7JyF480>
- 3.17 A lobby and MP briefing took place on Wednesday 23 October. Over 60 members from across FE England and prison education attended as did several MPs. <https://youtu.be/Z22ZJXZ5dRw> and <https://youtu.be/ISxJZOJdU14>
- 3.18 In October the UK government announced an additional £300m funding allocation to FE. [Budget 2024: Extra £300m for FE](#)
- 3.19 In support of making the case for fundamental change in FE, UCU made a submission to the schoolteacher (Pay) review Body (STRB) in January.
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14718/UCU-submission-to-the-STRB/pdf/STRBUCUsubmissionFINAL.pdf>
- 3.20 Looking forward, the campaign will continue to build in the spring in support of the national pay claim 2025/26 and the distribution of the £300m additional funding, which needs to go on staff pay. UCU will respond to the outcome of the STRB and repeat the demand to close the pay gap with schools. and the UK government's Spending Review announcement expected in June. We need to see progress towards a New Deal in the Spending Review and a clear signal that the Budget in the autumn will provide the investment to that end.

- 3.21 The core demands of the New Deal for FE campaign are pay parity with schoolteachers, national workload agreements and fully funding national bargaining outcomes. These demands shape our engagement with employers at the national level and communications with branches and members.
- 3.22 FE branches are at the centre of the campaign and members will be consulted. The campaign continues to be built from the bottom up and represents a fundamental challenge to employers and the UK government. We need a critical mass of branches to be able to be ballot ready if we are to deliver a New Deal for FE.
- 3.23 The FE sector conference at Congress in May will make several critical decisions regarding the New Deal next steps. The motions provide branch delegates with clear choices relating to when UCU should move to escalate the campaign and when to move to a possible ballot in the autumn.

4. FE pay 2025/26

- 4.1. In April 2025, UCU reached agreement with the other further education trade unions (GMB, NEU, Unite and Unison) on this the Joint FE trade unions' pay claim (2025/26) and it has been submitted to the Association of Colleges (AoC).

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/15006/2526-FE-pay-claim-FINAL-with-logos/pdf/2526_FE_pay_claim_FINAL_with_logos.pdf

The claim is built on the core demands in the New Deal for FE campaign:

- FE pay parity with schoolteachers' pay
- national workload agreements
- a new binding national bargaining framework.

Dates for the pay talks under the National Joint Forum (NJF) are currently being canvassed with the AoC, so please look out for updates as the talks progress.