

**University and College Union**

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**To** Branch and local association secretaries

**Topic** **Unconfirmed minutes, Further Education Sector Conference, Congress, 24 May 2025**

**Action** **For adoption**

**Summary** **Minutes of the decisions made by the Further Education Conference, 24 May 2025**

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**Draft unconfirmed minutes**

**FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR CONFERENCE, Liverpool/Online**

**1 Opening Business**

- 1.1 David Hunter, the Chair, introduced himself and the panel (Paul Bridge, Maxine Looby, Helen Kelsall, Richard McEwan).
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed delegates to the conference, especially first-time delegates.
- 1.3 The Chair congratulated members in Northern Ireland for winning their dispute.
- 1.4 The Chair recognised the devastating cuts and horrendous conditions Adult Ed members are facing.
- 1.5 The Chair recommended members vote YES on the ongoing consultative ballot.
- 1.6 The Chair explained the workings of the conference platform, how to speak to motions, the rules of conduct, and how to cast votes. A test vote was then carried out to ensure the system was fully operational. The Chair encouraged new delegates to speak where possible.
- 1.7 The Chair performed housekeeping duties, explaining where the emergency exits were located etc.
- 1.8 There was a suspension of standing orders vote to reduce speaking time and allow maximum participation (3 minutes for movers, 2 for speakers). The vote was **CARRIED**.
- 1.9 The FESC agenda (UCU/2173) was **ADOPTED**. The third report of the CBC was tabled as UCU2173b.

1.10 A vote was taken on whether to adopt the minutes of the FE sector Conference, April 2024. The minutes were **ADOPTED**.

1.11 The Chair noted that the meeting was quorate and called the meeting to order.

## **2 Report of the Congress Business Committee (CBC)**

2.1 The Vice-Chair of CBC, Hazel Raven, introduced herself.

2.2 The CBC Vice-Chair reported that all motions had been included in the agenda, except for Motion FE3, which had been withdrawn. She recommended that the order of motions be kept. This will help to finish the day's business, as rearranging motions will take some time.

2.3 The CBC Vice-Chair suggested the consequential for Motions FE1-FE4 be taken in a single debate.

2.4 The Chair thanked Hazel and her team for their work.

2.4 The Chair called a vote for adopting the report of the CBC. The report was **ADOPTED**.

## **3 Report from Head of Further Education, Paul Bridge**

3.1 Head of FE, Paul Bridge thanked delegates for attending on a Bank Holiday weekend. He talked about the development of the New Deal for FE campaign, and the new resources UCU has available. He said we want national binding agreements. This campaign will unify us and deliver a new settlement in FE. We are committed to winning.

## **4 Report from Jo Grady, UCU General Secretary**

4.1 General Secretary, Jo Grady addressed the Conference. She gave an overview of the events in FE over the last 12 months, touching on the success of the Northern Ireland pay dispute, UCU's political work and media appointments, meeting the Chancellor of the Treasury to talk about underfunding in the sector and pay gaps.

4.2 The General Secretary encouraged delegates to push for a good result on the consultation vote.

4.3 The General Secretary encouraged delegates to contribute to vox pops, which were filming at the conference that day.

## **5 Debate of Motions**

5.1 The Chair noted, in terms of devolution, that some of the motions moved today would not apply UK-wide, and asked speakers to specify when that was the case.

**FE1, FE pay**, was moved by The Chair on behalf of the Further Education Committee, and seconded formally.

Conference approves the report on FE England pay 2024/25 and notes the developments with pay 2025/26 and the report on the New Deal for FE campaign as circulated in UCUBAN/FE24.

**Motion FE1** was **CARRIED**.

**Build support for nationally coordinated action 2025/26** was moved by Averil Young Eastern and Homes Counties FE regional committee, Bolton College and seconded formally.

*Conference notes:*

1. *the upcoming Spending Review 2025.*

*Conference believes:*

- a. *that the ND4FE campaign must evolve in line with political and industrial developments.*
- b. *that branches are at the heart of the 2025/26 campaign.*

*Conference resolves that UCU shall:*

- i. *brief branches on Spending Review 2025 and progress on ND4FE objectives.*
- ii. *consult members, in June, on a branch-by-branch basis, on support for an England-wide coordinated disaggregated ballot in the Autumn term if ND4FE objectives are not met.*
- iii. *engage branches via regular regional briefings.*
- iv. *support branches to participate in any England-wide coordinated ballot, subject to existing policy on GTVO readiness, membership support, branch autonomy on opt in and opt out.*
- v. *ensure that branches are consulted on how best to engage in local pay claims and talks during this period.*
- vi. *organise national and regional rallies, demos and lobbies in support of the campaign and ballot.*

**Amendment FE2A.1** was moved by Richard McEwan, Further Education Committee.

*Add after iv:*

*We will have a bigger voice and more impact on the government and our employers if we all unite in action together. Conference strongly encourages branches to opt-in.*

**Amendment FE2A.1** was **CARRIED**.

Thus the amended **Motion FE2** was **CARRIED** as follows:

*Conference notes:*

1. *the upcoming Spending Review 2025.*

*Conference believes:*

- a. *that the ND4FE campaign must evolve in line with political and industrial developments.*
- b. *that branches are at the heart of the 2025/26 campaign.*

Conference resolves that UCU shall:

- i. *brief branches on Spending Review 2025 and progress on ND4FE objectives.*
- ii. *consult members, in June, on a branch-by-branch basis, on support for an England-wide coordinated disaggregated ballot in the Autumn term if ND4FE objectives are not met.*
- iii. *engage branches via regular regional briefings.*
- iv. *support branches to participate in any England-wide coordinated ballot, subject to existing policy on GTVO readiness, membership support, branch autonomy on opt in and opt out. We will have a bigger voice and more impact on the government and our employers if we all unite in action together. Conference strongly encourages branches to opt-in.*
- v. *ensure that branches are consulted on how best to engage in local pay claims and talks during this period.*
- vi. *organise national and regional rallies, demos and lobbies in support of the campaign and ballot.*

**FE3, The New Deal for FE**, City of Bristol College Motion.

This motion was **WITHDRAWN**.

**FE4, FE pay and bargaining**, was moved by the delegate from *Merton College*, and seconded formally.

FESC notes:

- i. *Only English FE does not have national binding bargaining*
- ii. *DofE said FE teachers were excluded from the 5.5% pay rise, in part, due to not having a pay review body.*
- iii. *The gap between schoolteachers and FE lecturers is continuing to increase*
- iv. *Teachers have been offered an unfunded 2.8% pay rise and have balloted members*

FESC believes:

- a. *The only way to gain national binding bargaining on our terms, not the employers, is through demonstrating our collective strength.*
- b. *To gain greater funding from government we cannot fight branch by branch.*

FESC resolves:

- i. *Prepare an England-wide IA ballot for FE England on the New Deal claim for strike action in September 2025 to target the census date.*

- ii. *Complete an indicative ballot before the summer to engage members, prepare branches and build the campaign.*

**Motion FE4** was **CARRIED**.

**FE5, After the spending review prepare national action**, was moved by Sean Vernell, Further Education Committee, and seconded formally.

*Notes:*

1. *The April 2025 CSR will set out FE funding for the next three years.*
2. *Cuts to adult education budgets.*
3. *The NJF is in talks on a new national binding bargaining framework.*
4. *FE was not awarded the 5.5% teachers received.*
5. *The £300m allocated to the sector was not ringfenced for pay.*
6. *The government pay offer for schools next year is 2.8% unfunded.*
7. *The NEU national indicative ballot.*
8. *UCU submitted a new claim to the employers for 25/26.*

*Believes:*

- a. *To win binding national bargaining and pay parity we need to escalate our campaign with England-wide action.*
- b. *Strike action is more effective prior to the census.*

*Resolves:*

- i. *Prepare an England- wide IA ballot for FE England on the New Deal claim for strike action in September 2025.*

**Motion FE5** was **CARRIED**.

**FE6, Pay Parity with School Teachers South**, was moved by Safia Flissi, City College Birmingham, and formally seconded.

*FESC notes:*

1. *FE staff did not receive the 5.5% pay rise given to school teachers.  
Non-academised sixth form teachers won improvements through strike action.*
2. *The government's £300m funding is for young people, meaning colleges with large adult provision, such as SCCB, will not benefit.*

*FESC believes:*

- a. *FE members are angry and demand action on pay injustice.*
- b. *Pay parity requires national industrial action.*
- c. *Binding national bargaining is essential for fair pay and funding.*

*FESC resolves:*

- i. *To prepare an England-wide industrial action ballot for September 2025.*
- ii. *To coordinate where possible with sixth form staff, NEU, and other unions.*
- iii. *To campaign for binding national bargaining in FE.*

**Motion FE6** was **CARRIED**.

**FE7, Closing the Pay Gap in FE**, was moved by Saleem Rashid, The Sheffield College, and seconded formally.

*Congress notes:*

1. *Government has allocated additional funding to FE Sector for staff pay rise this year, to address the widening staff pay gap between FE Colleges and Schools.*
2. *The pay gap between schoolteachers and FE teaching staff has increased in the last 15 years and is estimated to be at least £8000 annually.*
3. *This extra Government funding is vital to addressing and closing the pay gap in the FE Sector, as well as the ongoing FE staff recruitment and retention crisis.*

*Congress resolves to campaign:*

- a. *to ensure extra Government funding to FE Sector is ringfenced for only staff pay increases.*
- b. *to petition the Government to continue additional funding to additional funding to FE Sector until the pay gap is closed between FE Sector and Schools.*

**Motion FE7** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE8, Renewed importance of national action**, was moved by Alison Gaughan, Yorkshire and Humberside FE regional committee, and formally seconded.

*Conference notes:*

1. *One of the first actions of the new government was to make substantial pay offers to junior doctors, train drivers and school teachers, workers who had taken national action. Labour is afraid of significant industrial action.*
2. *The NEU strikes by non-academised sixth forms have led to a promise of no more two-tier pay, but FE is now almost ten thousand pounds a year behind!*

3. *By the time this motion is heard, the NEU will have balloted for national action in response to a below-inflation pay offer for next year.*
4. *Although we do not have national bargaining, it is funding decisions at government level which determine FE pay, for example the 6.5% deal in 2023.*

*Conference resolves:*

*Given the above, it is now imperative that UCU calls a national ballot for strike action on pay and workload in FE.*

**Motion FE8** was **CARRIED**.

**FE9, FE Pay campaign - Call for escalation**, was moved by Lubna Khan, Bradford College, and seconded by Richard McEwan.

*Conference notes the positive gains of the New Deal for FE Pay campaign. Unfortunately, the Labour government are struggling to recognise the importance of better pay and funding in FE especially to support some of their stated aims. The cuts to Adult Education must be reversed and actually enhanced.*

*This conference resolves to build on the New Deal for FE campaign and escalate the campaign to organise within branches and between branches in regions to support work on coordinated industrial action to see better pay and conditions across the whole of further education and adult community education.*

**Motion FE9** was **CARRIED**.

**FE10, FE Funding Now**, was moved by a member of the Southern FE regional committee, and formally seconded.

*FE has faced some of the deepest funding cuts across the education system in England. The Institute for Fiscal Studies reports that between 2010 and 2020 funding per student in colleges dropped by 14% in real terms. While funding has increased in recent years, the real term spend is below 2010 levels. Even with the £300 million cash boost for colleges allocated for 2025/2026, rising student numbers and inflation mean that any gains are wiped out. (IFS: "Why 2025 is a critical year for FE Funding").*

*Conference recognises the extremely important social role played by Further Education in the UK and instructs the FEC to call on the UK Government to dramatically increase its investment in the education sector and to place a balanced emphasis on the importance of Further Education.*

**Motion FE10** was **CARRIED**.

**FE11, Holiday entitlements of staff and returning in August**, was moved by Alia Chaudhary, Southern FE regional committee, and seconded by James Kirkup.

*Conference notes that FE college staff have binding Terms and Conditions of Employment that state their annual leave entitlement. Despite this, many colleges now insist that staff return from summer leave as early as mid-August, in contravention of such agreements.*

*Conference believes:*

- 1. That such demands make it difficult for many staff to take their full leave entitlement, thereby eroding staff well-being and morale.*
- 2. They create a lack of trust between staff and management, as well as precedents for further breaches of contract.*

*Conference calls on the FEC:*

- A. To monitor return dates from summer leave across the FE sector.*
- B. To campaign for a minimum of four weeks' continuous leave during July and August, with a compulsory return date for staff no sooner than the Tuesday after the Late Summer Bank Holiday.*

**Motion FE11** was **CARRIED**.

**FE12, Deficit budgets**, was moved by Sean Vernell, City and Islington College (Camden Road), and formally seconded.

*Notes:*

- 1. CEOs and senior management teams use college finances entering a deficit as an excuse to not award pay increases or cut provision.*
- 2. The pursuit of non-deficit budgets as the main driver behind 'balanced' college budgets.*
- 3. The questioning of the validity, within some FE leadership circles, of pursuing a non-deficit budget.*

*Believes:*

- a. *Cuts in staff pay and provision are the way management attempt to maintain non-deficit budgets.*
- b. *Those within the sector that argue setting non-deficit budgets make it harder to convince government that the sector needs more funds, are correct.*
- c. *Growth and not cuts to pursue non-deficit budgets is the way to secure the sectors future.*

*Resolves:*

*FEC to demand that colleges pursue a growth strategy rather than a non-deficit budget through cutting wages and provision.*

**Motion FE12** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE13, Climate action in FE**, was moved by Elaine White, Bradford College, and seconded by Richard Coyle.

*Conference welcomes the motion passed at the 2024 TUC conference calling for a year of trade union climate action including engagement with community and campaign groups.*

*Conference recognises the urgent need to cut emissions with mass retrofit of homes, including high quality insulation and installation of low energy heating systems.*

*Conference notes:*

1. *the severe shortage of skilled labour for energy efficiency retrofit.*
2. *insufficient long-term funding for retrofit schemes presents a barrier to training*
3. *further barriers include the low status of retrofit training and difficulty recruiting experienced trainers due to low pay in FE.*

*Conference resolves:*

- a. *to campaign for funding for a mass retrofit training programme in the FE sector, and to ensure that this campaign features prominently within the year of trade union climate action.*
- b. *to support campaigns for a joined-up government strategy on training and delivery of energy efficiency retrofit and low-energy heating.*

**Motion FE13** was **CARRIED**.

**FE14, Best deal for members from the new prison education contract**, was moved by Brian Hamilton, Novus Prison Education, and seconded formally.

*Conference notes the successes recently on pay and terms and conditions, we are growing in branch organisation, reps and membership. However, the time is now*

*for more co-ordination and resources. We need to raise the profile and make sure our strategic demands get more awareness and support. A national campaign is therefore needed.*

*Conference notes that success was due to:*

- 1. Working with the National Organisers*
- 2. A targeted political lobbying campaign and involvement of JUPG and JUPA*
- 3. Being as close to ballot ready at all times.*

*Conference believes:*

- a. That the future of Prison Education lies within the DFE*

*Conference resolves:*

- i. To continue organising and campaigning to secure a better future under PES*
- ii. Prioritise work on the New Fair Deal*
- iii. Continue the campaign for a single contract for Prison Educators*
- iv. Advocate for wider curriculum*
- v. Train all reps in TUPE process.*

**Motion FE14** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE15, Protect casualised staff amid budget cuts and redundancies**, was moved by Kevin Daws, City of Bristol College, and seconded formally.

*Conference notes that:*

- 1. Colleges have announced voluntary and compulsory redundancy schemes, alongside budget cuts.*
- 2. Invisible or hidden redundancies of staff on fixed-term, open-ended with review dates and hourly contracts are already happening, with contracts not renewed or hours reduced, dramatically increasing the precarity of casualised staff and increasing the workload of those who remain.*

*Conference believes that:*

- a. Threats of redundancies affect all staff independent of their contract type.*
- b. Solidarity means protecting all workers from redundancies.*

*Conference resolves to:*

- i. Ensure that any actions opposing voluntary or compulsory redundancies does not disproportionately affect casualised staff who could be used as "buffers" to shield others from redundancy.*
- ii. Ensure that any campaigns against redundancies must also protect and defend the roles of casualised staff.*

**Motion FE15 was CARRIED.**

**FE16, Recruitment and retention of casualised members in further education**, was moved by Kevin Daws, Anti-Casualisation Committee, and seconded by Cecily Blyther.

*FESC calls for the setting up of a member group to explore how to increase UCU membership and activity from casualised members across FE.*

*Members of the working group should be drawn from casualised members in FE and should be geographically representative and include members from FE, ACE and prisons.*

*The final membership of the group will be decided by the FEC in consultation with ACC.*

*The group will be tasked to look at recommendations to increase membership and participation by casualised members, looking at: improving data collection, targeted communications, how to use H&S legislation, how casualisation and equalities intersect, how casualisation impacts on overall recruitment and retention, how to network anti-casualisation reps, training and CPD, holding online events, learning lessons from HE casualised members.*

*The group will report to the ACC and FEC and bring recommendations to the ACC annual meeting and to UCU Congress in 2026.*

**Motion FE16 was CARRIED.**

**FE17, Composite: Campaign to reverse cuts to the adult skills fund**, was moved by Safia Flissi, South and City College Birmingham, London FE regional committee, and seconded by Pete Bicknell.

*FESC notes:*

- 1. The DfE has cut the Adult Skills Fund, limiting access to adult education. In the early 2000s the adult education budget stood at £5.1 billion; it is now £1.7 billion.*
- 2. This cut will negatively impact both the FE college ASF and Adult*

*Community Education. It is a direct cut on classes, jobs and communities. This instrumentalist approach will reduce a broad adult curriculum.*

*3. Providers such as South & City College Birmingham (SCCB), where adult learners outnumber 16–18 students, will be severely impacted.*

*4. The government's recent £300m funding announcement is targeted at young people, excluding many FE colleges reliant on adult provision.*

*FESC believes:*

- a. These cuts threaten adult education and staff jobs.*
- b. A broad-based curriculum, not just skills training, must be protected.*

*FESC resolves:*

- i. To launch a Campaign for Adult Education to reverse the cuts.*
- ii. To organise lobbies, demonstrations, and media alerts.*
- iii. To work with WEA, TUC, ESOL campaigners, and other unions.*
- iv. To campaign for a broad, inclusive, fully funded curriculum.*

**Motion FE17** was **CARRIED**.

**FE18, Composite: To seek realistic funding for ACE from the Labour**

**Government**, was moved by David Filer, West Midlands FE regional committee, Coventry Adult Education Service, Further Education Committee and seconded by Pratiba Patel.

*Conference notes:*

*Government funding for ACE is currently stagnating at about 60% of its 2010 level; consequently, learner numbers have decreased by around 60% since 2010.*

- 1. The average monthly cost of rented accommodation in Coventry has now hit £1000. More learners are trapped in the gig economy, working unpredictable shift patterns.*
- 2. Coventry ACE, lost half of its managers in the 2024 restructure. Remaining staff are feeling the impact of an increased workload. Learners are now entitled to free bus tickets if earning under £32,000 annually: many of our tutors earn well below that amount, as teaching full-time is unsustainable.*
- 3. Many staff are leaving the sector, remaining staff have increased workloads, wages are low and casualisation is rife.*
- 4. Despite this, the government has recently told the combined authority mayors to expect a reduction in skills budgets of 2 to 3 per cent for the 2025-26 academic year.*

*Conference believes that a properly funded and resourced ACE will contribute significantly towards social mobility, upskilling the UK workforce towards secure, well-paid employment.*

*Conference resolves*

- a. To call upon the UCU to lobby the Labour government to reverse this year's 2% ACE funding cuts and increase funding to a realistic level.*
- b. To organise a lobby of Parliament, in conjunction with other organisations where possible, to promote ACE, call for adequate, sustainable funding for the sector and the immediate withdrawal of the threat of funding cuts.*

**Motion FE18** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE19, Fair Pay for Institutes of Adult Learning**, was moved by Julia Williams, City Literary Institute, and seconded by Jill Kennedy-McNeill.

*Institutes for Adult Learning (IALs) hold a unique position within Further Education (FE) and Adult & Community Education (ACE). Despite falling within the FE sector, IALs were excluded from additional FE funding in 2023 and 2025, the 6.5% FE pay award, and the £300m funding in the 2024 Autumn Statement. While other ACE employers are represented by HOLEX, IALs' body is the Association of Colleges (AoC). Funding and pay within IALs (and the ACE sector) should align with FE. UCU must ensure pay negotiators are aware of IALs' issues and campaign for sector-wide improvements.*

*Congress resolves:*

- 1. To recognise ACE funding cuts alongside the long-term decline in Adult Education funding.*
- 2. To ensure pay negotiators address IALs' funding issues and that UCU campaigns for fair pay.*
- 3. To raise the profile of IALs by organising an IAL Forum to foster solidarity.*

**Motion FE19** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE20, FE Staff Safety in the age of AI**, was moved by Sharon Core, Bolton College, and seconded by Josh Spiers.

*Conference notes:*

- 1. The alarming rise in inappropriate behaviour towards staff in FE*
- 2. The increasing misuse of mobile phones including the malicious recording and manipulation via AI-generated content.*
- 3. The lack of clear, nationally set guidelines on the use of mobile phones and AI.*

*Conference believes:*

- a. FE staff have the right to work in a safe and respectful environment, free from the threat of personal and reputational harm.*

- b. *Employers have a duty of care to equip staff with the skills to protect themselves from personal and digital harassment.*

*Conference resolves FEC shall:*

- i. *Call on the AOC, DfE and employers to develop robust, nationally set regulations and guidance*
- ii. *Demand that employers provide comprehensive training for staff on dealing with this issue.*
- i. *Advocate for the implementation of stricter institutional policies that outline consequences for students who engage in inappropriate conduct or misuse technology to target staff.*

**Motion FE20 was CARRIED.**

**FE21, Working towards tackling workload**, was moved by Kathryn Sherry, Trafford and Stockport College Group, and seconded formally.

*This conference notes*

1. *excessive workload is a significant issue that many members cite as their main workplace concern.*
2. *workload policies vary across the FE sector in its wide range of institutions that have different ways of working.*
3. *this multitude of structures, and the fact that there is currently no forum to exchange ideas, make it more difficult to effectively tackle excessive workload.*

*This conference resolves an FE Workload conference will be held with the aim of:*

- a. *building links between branches in FE institutions.*
- b. *gathering ideas, strategies and resources that have worked.*
- c. *building a menu of these and making it available to branches.*
- d. *focussing on offering branches practical solutions to help reduce workload and build the union.*

**Motion FE21 was unanimously CARRIED.**

**FE22, Stop the erosion of hours for delivery of FE programmes**, was moved by Helena Palombo, UCU Cymru FE, and seconded by Chris Jones.

*Members are constantly bombarded with communication and strategies related to improving quality, while at the same time facing the cut of contact time for the delivery of programmes. Learners are increasingly struggling to complete and achieve programmes, due to a rapid rise in learners with mental health conditions and additional learning needs. Cutting delivery time for programmes will increase the likelihood more learners will fail. As lecturers struggle to get learners through qualifications in less time, they are seeing their contact hours decreasing, resulting*

*in being given more programmes to teach to make up the shortfall in contact hours. This is not an option we see as acceptable.*

*Conference calls upon our officers to make clear to examination bodies, college principals and political representatives the consequences of cutting delivery time for FE programmes, in terms of the effect on quality, the learner experience and increased lecturer workloads.*

**Motion FE22** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE23, Disclosure of relevant and confidential background information with staff**, was moved by Caroline Healy, UCU Cymru FE, and seconded by John James.

*Conference notes we are facing dangerous situations where information is withheld by colleges on individuals, either by disclosure or by a risk assessment. This leads to putting both staff and learners at risk of violence or death. This is evident by the attempted murder of the assistant head in Ysgol Dyffryn Aman. For example, recently in Coleg Sir Gar, staff have been subjected to students with violent backgrounds and behaviour issues, and were not given any information owing to the college not disclosing this under GDPR. Staff are feeling exposed to risk and unsafe in the classroom.*

*Conference proposes UCU to lobby UK Government to seek to make changes in legislation and issue guidelines to all members so that information can be disclosed to staff with regards to violent behaviour, police investigations and Prevent.*

**Motion FE23** was **REMIITTED** to FEC for further discussion.

**FE24, Renewing UCU's Objection to OFSTED in FE**, was moved by Kate Ferguson, Luminate Education Group Leeds (Leeds City College), and seconded by Peter Evans.

*FESC notes OFSTED inspections of FE institutions:*

- 1. Cause unequalled stress for leadership and members, creating anxiety and impacting performance and wellbeing – especially where harsh judgements are passed*
- 2. Focus on data over teaching quality and create an environment that favours short-term fixes over long-term solutions*
- 3. Increases workload of FE colleagues exponentially through fear of negative judgements affecting everyone.*
- 4. Give unrealistic results due to brief snapshot and the "window dressing" carried out by employers*

*FESC resolves that FEC:*

- a. publicly back the NEU's "Abolish OFSTED" campaign*

- b. call for increased scrutiny of the way OFSTED works, including risk assessing the inspections themselves, and surveying staff and organisations to gather a true reflection of the impact and value of these inspections*
- c. organise national events to highlight the negatives of OFSTED inspections*

**Motion FE24** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE25, Resisting Reform UK's racist ideology in education**, was moved by Juliana Ojinnaka, Black members standing committee, and seconded formally.

*Conference expresses concern over Reform UK's racist rhetoric, which harms Black members and students in UK colleges. We call for collective action to counter its impact across education sectors.*

*Conference notes:*

- 1. Reform UK's divisive rhetoric fuels racism and undermines racial equality.*
- 2. Black members and students face micro-aggressions, discrimination, and inadequate institutional support, impacting their success.*
- 3. Government inaction enables a toxic climate in education.*
- 4. Colleges must strengthen anti-racist policies and protections.*

*Conference resolves to:*

- a. Demand institutions reaffirm commitment to racial equality.*
- b. Ensure anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion training.*
- c. Work with policymakers to challenge racist ideologies.*
- d. Support Black members and learners with resources and advocacy.*
- e. Hold political parties accountable for harmful rhetoric.*
- f. Provide support for members facing racial harassment or discrimination*

**Motion FE25** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE26, Building anti-racist colleges**, was moved by Regine Pilling, Westminster Kingsway College, and seconded formally.

*FESC notes:*

- 1. The rise of Reform UK and the growth of far right on our streets led by Tommy Robinson*
- 2. The attacks by Trump and his Presidency on equality.*
- 3. Many staff and students are impacted or influenced by these ideas.*
- 4. The lack of equality in our workplaces*

*FESC believes*

- a. Our colleges should be places that celebrate multiculturalism, diversity and all the progressive gains that have been won.*
- b. As educators we must engage with our students about these issues*

- c. *Our employers should reflect these ideas in their policies and procedures, not tokenistic gestures.*

*FESC resolves*

- i. *To call on branches to carry out a student and teacher led Themed Learning Week on celebrating multiculturalism and diversity.*
- ii. *To create and share resources for branches to support equality education for our students*
- iii. *To update UCU resources on tackling racism in the workplace*

**Motion FE26 was CARRIED.**

**FE27 Combatting far right in FE**, was moved by Peter Evans, LGBT+ members standing committee, and seconded formally.

*Conference notes*

1. *the work of Reclaim in fighting political moves to the far right and its impact on young people*
2. *that LGBT+ lives are often a primary focus point for far right hate. This has an impact on young people who are finding their identity and those who support them, including staff in FE.*

*Conference believes that the impact on young people will be felt all the more by the Labour Government freezing the level of investment in FE.*

*Conference calls for*

- a. *promotion of the work of Reclaim and others in fighting the far right in FE and national and branch level*
- b. *guidance similar to Educators against the far right for FE staff and for branches to contribute including what actions can be taken by UCU within institutions. This work should include contributions from FE members across the UCU equality groups.*

**Motion FE27 was CARRIED.**

**FE28, Women and the new deal for FE**, was moved by Pat Roche, Women members standing committee, and seconded formally.

*Conference notes:*

1. *Growing inequality since incorporation of FE colleges*
2. *Fragmented pay and conditions in FE, prison, and adult education*
3. *Encouraging progress in employment conditions bargaining in devolved nations*

*Conference believes:*

- a. *New, binding, national conditions of service are essential for all oppressed groups: our sector needs a new 'silver book'*
- b. *We need a clear yardstick of national, enforceable pay and conditions, including parity of esteem regarding pay, equality and working conditions.*

Conference agrees:

- i. *UCU must ensure that all FE, Adult Education, and Prison Education bargaining agendas feature strong, intersectional equality demands*
- ii. *UCU Equality Committee will include national bargaining on the agenda at every meeting and will provide regular advice and guidance to negotiators and relevant committees*
- iii. *UCU will make clear, consistent demands for the government to acknowledge and address the equality deficit in the current complex, uneven conditions of service across our sectors*

**Motion FE28 was CARRIED.**

**Note:** The Equality Committee is a sub-committee of the NEC, which FESC is unable to instruct. The motion will be redrafted to make it work.

**FE29, Protecting migrant workers: Fair visa support and workplace rights in FE,** was moved by Claudia Regan, Migrant members standing committee, and seconded formally.

FESC notes:

1. *The high costs of visas, Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), and the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) disproportionately affect migrant staff in Further Education (FE)*
2. *Many FE colleges do not offer visa fee support, unlike Higher Education (HE) institutions*
3. *Migrant staff in FE face increased job insecurity, workplace discrimination, and vulnerabilities linked to their immigration status*

FESC believes:

- a. *The government's hostile environment exacerbates workplace discrimination, and the fear of losing sponsorship prevents many from challenging poor working conditions*
- b. *These issues contribute to a lack of representation in FE governance and decision-making*

FESC resolves:

- i. *For UCU to campaign for sector-wide visa fee support in FE*
- ii. *To demand mandatory anti-racism training in FE and workplace protections for migrant staff*
- iii. *To lobby for greater representation of migrant workers in FE governance structures*

**Motion FE29** was **CARRIED**.

**FE30, Recruitment and retention of disabled workers in the FE sector**, was moved by the Disabled members standing committee, and seconded by Helen Kelsall.

*This conference calls for the setting up of a working group to explore how to increase UCU membership and activity from disabled members across FE. Applications to the working group shall be invited from any disabled members working in FE and should be geographically representative and include members from FE, ACE and Prisons. The final membership of the group will be decided by the disabled members standing committee.*

*The group will be tasked to look at recommendations to increase membership and participation by disabled members, looking at:*

- 1. improving data collection, targeted communications, how to use health and safety legislation, how casualisation and disabilities intersect,*
- 2. how equalities, especially disabilities impact overall recruitment and retention, how to network equalities reps, training and CPD, and holding online events.*

*The group will report to the DMSC and FEC and bring recommendations to the Annual Conference for Disabled Members 2026.*

**Motion FE30** was **CARRIED**.

**Note:** The Disabled members standing committee is a sub-committee of the NEC, which FESC is unable to instruct. The motion will be redrafted to make it work.

**FE31, Increasing the visibility of young LGBT+ people in FE**, was moved by Peter Evans, LGBT+ members standing committee, and seconded formally.

*Conference notes with concern*

- 1. Very vocal opposition to trans rights is spearheading a new fear*
- 2. associated lack of action to support young LGBT+ people further impacted by the Cass report and actions of both this government and its Tory predecessor*

*Conference welcomes examples of good practice such as the LGBTQ+ Student Support Group established at West London College should be shared with UCU equality strands and UCU FE branches.*

*Conference believes UCU members should be equipped with information and knowledge about helping create a positive environment for LGBT+ students and staff.*

*Conference calls for*

- a. *Lobby of the government to get an LGBT+ positive approach toward support for and education of young people.*
- b. *UCU regions and nations to organise LGBT+ CPD sessions across each year to enable FE staff to develop positive environments for LGBT+ people and combat the growing fear.*

**Motion FE31** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE32, Equality data in FE**, was moved by Pay Roche, Disabled members standing committee and seconded formally.

*Conference notes equality reps:*

1. *face barriers to accessing equality data about staff in FE institutions*
2. *are having to resort to Freedom of Information requests to obtain equality data, as they're not readily available in the sector.*

*Conference believes:*

- a. *lack of agreed standards for equality data about staff obscures the extent and impact of gender, LGBT+ identities, disability and ethnicity inequalities in FE*
- b. *data about inequalities in pay, progression and retention are crucial to collective bargaining and fighting inequality within FE.*

*Conference calls on FEC to:*

- i. *develop a standardised data request for colleges, adult education institutions and prisons to acquire equality data about staff pay, progression and retention*
- ii. *work with AoC - or any relevant body - and FE institutions to ensure that all equality data are provided, as part of their responsibility to declare information for collective bargaining.*

**Motion FE32** was **CARRIED**.

**FE33, FE college pay: Investigate senior management excess salaries**, was moved by Marco Tesei Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College and seconded formally.

*This Conference notes the widening pay disparity within Further Education colleges, with senior management salaries significantly outpacing those of teaching and support staff. This disparity undermines morale, devalues classroom expertise and diverts vital funds from frontline education. We believe this constitutes a systemic failure of governance and resource allocation.*

*This Conference believes the Education Secretary should launch an immediate, independent investigation into senior management pay structures in all publicly*

*funded FE colleges across England. Publish detailed findings, including salary bands, performance-related bonuses and expense claims. Implement clear, transparent pay ratios between senior management and teaching / support staff, ensuring fair and equitable remuneration.*

*This Conference resolves to campaign to establish a national framework for FE college governance that prioritises educational outcomes and staff welfare over excessive executive pay.*

**Motion FE33** was **CARRIED**.

**FE34, End VAT inequality for FE colleges**, was moved by Josh Spier, Darlington College and seconded by Suzi Toole.

*Conference believes:*

- 1. Further Education (FE) colleges, training providers, and prison educators have been unfairly subject to VAT for decades, unlike most of the education sector.*
- 2. The imposition of VAT on FE institutions diverts critical funds away from teaching, resources, and capital projects.*
- 3. Bridget Phillipson's dismissive stance on VAT for FE colleges highlights a damaging lack of understanding of the sector's financial challenges.*

*Conference resolves:*

- a. To call on UCU to launch a national campaign highlighting the VAT inequality faced by FE institutions.*
- b. To urge the General Secretary to advocate with the government for VAT exemption for FE colleges, training providers, and prison educators.*
- c. To collaborate with other education unions and stakeholders to build public awareness of the VAT disparity and its impact on FE funding.*
- d. To ensure the national FE campaign actively highlights this issue in the media, raising awareness of the injustice faced by FE institutions.*

**Motion FE34** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE35, Palestine and the war in Gaza – freedom to discuss**, was moved by Rolf Fruin, Merton College, and seconded formally.

*FESC notes:*

- 1. Israel's war in Gaza and attacks in the West Bank, the humanitarian abuses of Israeli & Palestinian citizens and genocide*
- 2. UCU members at colleges and ACE have participated in the Stop The War Days of Action*

3. *FE college management have used DofE guidance to argue that colleges must be apolitical*

*FESC believes:*

- a. *To prevent abuses they must be discussed and publicised*
- b. *Our students need to be critical thinkers and some want to engage in discussions about Palestine - these debates should not be shut down*

*FESC resolves:*

- i. *UCU to support branches in an ability to twin with colleges / schools in Palestine*
- ii. *To provide guidance on challenging college management who try to silence discussion about Palestine*

**Motion FE35** was **CARRIED**.

**FE36, Participation in regional FE committees**, was moved by Alison Gaughan, Yorkshire and Humberside regional FE committee, and seconded by John Clay.

*Conference notes*

1. *The increasing workload affecting members in FE.*
2. *There are a number of barriers to FE members taking part in union activities during working hours, including workload, lack of facilities time and inflexible timetables.*
3. *College SLTs meet regularly on a regional basis and there is evidence of regional coordination by employers and it would benefit UCU to do likewise.*

*Conference calls*

- a. *For UCU to undertake a piece of research to understand how regional FE meetings can best be organised to allow for maximum participation.*
- b. *For a publicity campaign within UCU promoting the work of regional FE committees and helping FE members better understand the structures within their union.*

**Motion FE36** was unanimously **CARRIED**.

**FE37, FE conference democracy**, was moved by Regine Pilling, Westminster Kingsway College, and seconded by Brian Hamilton.

*FESC notes:*

1. *we are a UK wide*
2. *FE Sector conference is the sovereign decision-making body in UCU*
3. *the role of the FEC is to take responsibility for implementing sector conference decisions*
4. *a majority vote determines which motions become policy*

5. *local branches decide what action to take over local issues.*

*FESC believes:*

- a. *an effective union discusses and debates. Once decisions are reached, we must act in unity and decisions must be implemented*
- b. *when a decision is made by sector conferences in relation to national action it is incumbent on all branches involved to implement that decision*
- c. *local branches cannot override decisions made by sector conference over national action.*

*FESC resolves:*

- i. *once decisions are reached, we must act in unity. Officers to ensure decisions are implemented.*

**Motion FE37 was CARRIED.**

## **6 Election of National Pay Negotiators**

6.1 Their Chair let members know that the election results would be known in due course.

## **7 Any Other Business**

7.1 Conference was asked to adopt the FEC chapter of the NEC report to Congress. The paper was **ADOPTED**.

## **8 Close of Business**

8.1 Helen Kelsall thanked David Hunter for chairing.

8.2 It being the end of business, the Chair thanked delegates for a successful FESC and closed the Conference at 16:45.