

Professor Bill Wakeham
Chair
UCEA
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LONDON
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8 January 2009

Dear Bill

2009 Pay Claim

Thank you for your letter of 12 December. UCU has sought further discussions with UCEA for a number of months now to resolve the substantial issues between us. I therefore welcome your agreement to our request to involve ACAS in the facilitation of these discussions.

I have already said that the issues at dispute between us are substantial. Let me now set out for clarity what UCU believes those issues are:

1. UCEA's refusal to agree to a distinct national negotiating sub-committee to discuss issues directly germane to academic and related staff; the committee's staff side composition being reflective of trade union membership within the relevant grades.
2. UCEA's refusal to agree to amendments to the proposed annual negotiating timetable to provide effective and timely negotiation and to allow UCU the freedom as an independent trade union to take industrial action should it be appropriate.
3. UCEA's refusal to withdraw the 'opt out' arrangement which allows individual institutions to decide on an annual basis whether to honour any pay agreements we make nationally. The 'opt out' facility endangers the stability of national bargaining and further undermines the credibility of the so called New JNCHES.

4. UCEA's refusal to discuss with UCU our 2009 pay claim. Our members are determined to protect the value of the hard won increases from 2006 and have listened with increasing anxiety to media reports of 'pay freezes' and 'zero offers' sourced from institution heads, finance directors and employer interest groups. In this climate, UCEA's unwillingness to even 'formally' consider pay until the end of March and your refusal to meet with UCU at all unless we sign up to New JNCHES is creating instability in the sector and real worry among staff in your members' institutions.

I have viewed with increasing concern UCEA's unwillingness thus far to even discuss any of these four issues with UCU. As you will be aware, I am mandated by UCU's Higher Education Committee to ballot our members to take industrial action at the end of January should satisfactory progress not be made on these issues. However my hope is that your commitment to engagement with UCU and to the involvement of ACAS is serious and will render this ballot unnecessary.

In order that we can make progress let me also correct what appears to be a misapprehension from some within the employers' side. UCU is in dispute with UCEA as the national representative of the employers. We are not in dispute with our fellow trade unions. Therefore while we welcome any opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest with our colleagues and while the process of ratification of any agreement we reach is currently a matter for you within the New JNCHES structure, our expectation is that negotiations will be between the two parties in dispute - namely UCEA and UCU.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce Michael MacNeil as the new UCU National Head of HE. Michael is a skilled and experienced negotiator and will be working alongside me to reach an agreement that provides the stability the sector and its staff desperately wants at this difficult economic time.

Yours sincerely

Sally Hunt
General Secretary

Cc: Ed Sweeney, Acas
Brendan Barber, TUC
Chris Kaufman, National Secretary, Unite and Chair of the unions' side
Michael MacNeil, UCU National head of higher education