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National Negotiations 2012-13

The joint trade unions have now met with the employers twice under the New JNCHEs machinery to consider the joint trade union national claim for 2012-13. At the second meeting on 20 April, the employers' representatives marginally improved their pay offer from 0.5% to 0.8%. The trade union side unanimously rejected this offer.

The joint trade unions are in discussions regarding the development of a joint campaign in support of the claim, given the lack of movement from the employers. HEC was updated on the negotiations at its meeting on 27 April 2012 and was supportive of the need for a joint campaign. A report on the negotiations has been circulated as UCUHE147. See:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE147.rtf

A briefing on issues surrounding the national claim can be found here.

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/r/3/heclaim2012_memberupdate.pdf

Members are encouraged to feed back comments and ideas through their branches.

The next meeting with the employers will take place on 22 May. There will then be a report from the national negotiators to HE Sector Conference on 8 June.

Research Careers

As members hopefully know, we use every possible opportunity to lobby the government and Ministers about our agenda and have recently been in correspondence with the Higher Education Minister, David Willetts MP on the issue of research careers.

The Minister has shown some interest in this issue and has been speaking to Science is Vital about the concerns of UK researchers. On the Minister's advice we are currently trying to arrange a meeting with BIS to highlight the problems associated with insecure employment and lack of career progression for our research members.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) – updated guidance

Updated guidance for branches/LAs in relation to the REF was circulated at the end of March in HE circular UCUHE141. See:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE141.rtf

Branches/LAs should refer to this guidance in seeking to influence the development of institutional codes of practice on REF submission, and seeking no-detriment agreements to protect staff excluded from REF submissions.

The deadline for HEIs to submit their codes of practice on the submission of staff to the REF is 31 July 2012. Branches should be seeking to ensure that these codes are equality proofed, and that they set out consistent and transparent internal decision-making procedures on submission across schools/ departments within institutions, together with adequate appeals procedures.

In addition to the UCU guidance, the Equality Challenge Unit has developed a range of materials on the REF – including guidance on conducting equality impact assessments and on the disclosure of individual staff circumstances – to which branches should also refer: See:

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/ref-materials>

Research Environment and the REF

The HEC meeting of 27 April 2012 agreed new guidance in relation to the 'research environment' element of the REF assessment criteria. While UCU remains opposed to the REF and believes that the definitions of 'research-only' staff within the assessment criteria are deeply problematic, the 'research environment' criteria refers to a 'people' element which provides an opportunity for branches/LAs to advance UCU's agenda in relation to job security and career development for research staff.

The 'people' element requires that institutions demonstrate the extent to which they supports research staff (not just those being returned), including early career

researchers and those on fixed-term contracts.

UCU guidance on this has now been issued as UCUHE151, setting out suggested actions that branches/LAs should take in referring to the 'people' element in order to secure better treatment and career development opportunities for research staff: See: www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE151.rtf

Grade Drift

New UCU guidance was issued in March on the issue of Grade Drift: the practice whereby staff are required to perform roles associated with a higher level grade when employed on a lower grade.

Grade Drift occurs in a number of ways: local role profiles deviating from the national examples, promotion criteria inflating grade expectations and performance management expectations for particular roles going beyond those implied by the agreed role profiles.

Such grade drift should be regarded as a breach of your local framework agreement and branches should respond accordingly. The new guidance, setting out suggested actions, has been circulated as UCUHE136. See:

www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/UCUHE136.rtf

HEFCE consultation on mergers and collaborations

HEFCE has launched a consultation on collaborations, mergers and alliances (CAM) in Higher Education with the aim of developing further guidance for HEIs on the basis of 'lessons learned' from the sector's experience of such activity. A number of particular case studies are identified, and outcomes, evaluations and lessons learned are identified from them – the report states

that the wording of these case studies has been agreed with the institutions concerned.

The consultation report can be found here:
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2012/12_06/

The basic principles of UCU's response to the consultation were agreed at the HEC on 20 April 2012. Our response will emphasise the need for early engagement with trade unions prior to decisions being taken. Any decisions need to be based on careful and rigorous consideration of evidence. We will also stress the need for agreements on redundancy avoidance and the protection of terms and conditions, and outline our concerns regarding the impact of outsourcing and collaborations with private providers (which we oppose).

Comments and suggestions from branches and members (particular where collaborations and mergers have taken place) will be welcome as we finalise our response. Please send these (by 25 May) to Stefano Fella, National Industrial Relations Official:
sfella@ucu.org.uk

Seminar on HE Governance - 25 May 2012, 1030 -1330, London

Branches/LAs are encouraged to send a representative to attend a half-day seminar organised to consider the recommendations of the recent report on the Review of Higher Education Governance in Scotland. The seminar will focus on actions UCU should take to for press for their full implementation in Scotland and encourage the rest of the UK HE sector to follow suit.

The deadline for registration has been extended to 18 May. Follow this link to register:
http://www.ucu.org.uk/seminar_hegovscot

National HE briefings: 13- 27 June 2012, various locations

The national HE team is running a series of Higher Education briefings in June at six locations across the UK that are open to all branches/LAs to attend.

The sessions will cover the following issues:

- Workload issues
- Academic role profiles/grade drift
- Professional development/Performance Management
- Research Excellence Framework
- Equality update
- Pay slippage/national claim

The sessions will provide an opportunity to find out what is happening across the UK in these areas and UCU's response and to share your experiences.

For further information and registration details follow this link:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/hebriefings2012>

Health Educators

The HEC meeting of 27 April approved the Health Educators' Advisory Group's recommendation to amend the Workload Protection Local Negotiating Guide to improve its relevance to health educator workload issues and reflect the requirements of health profession regulatory bodies.

The amendments should help local negotiators in HEIs where health educators are present to press for workload agreements that recognise the effect of multiple student intakes; ensure health educators can engage in scholarly activity and professional development; and include time to practice and update their clinical skills.

Teacher Educators: can you help?

UCU has received two requests for help with regard to members working in teacher education.

NUT each year run a programme of popular regional one-day events for student teachers just qualifying from PGCE/B.Ed. courses (known as Start Right). Could any teacher educator working with PGCE/final year B.Eds students pass this information on to them?

The dates and places for the meetings are
London - 29 June; Durham - 2 July;
Manchester - 4 July; Nottingham - 5 July;
Birmingham - 5 July Cambridge - 10 July;
Southampton - 11 July; Bristol - 12 July;
Cardiff - 13 July; London - 16 July.

The cost to the student is £15 and further details can be obtained from:

<http://www.teachers.org.uk/cpd/startright>

The National Association for the Teaching of English is running a survey of educators' views of the government's agenda to prescribe specific methods for the teaching of

reading. It appears that this is now likely to affect later phases of education. The National Association for the Teaching of English wishes to understand educators' views on the government's agenda for the teaching of reading in the early years. They would like to know responses to these issues. The questionnaire is short and responses will be anonymous, but opinions will help to shape our joint engagement with these crucial developments. The link to the survey is:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NA_TE_phonics

The UCU Policy Department has an electronic network with the contact details of UCU members in all parts of teacher education. This enables us to seek your views on issues affecting teacher education. If you are interested in being part of this network, please contact Diana Hendry:

dhendry@ucu.org.uk