

UCU Calls for Joint Union Pay Campaign

As we reported previously, UCU has been consulting members on the final national pay offer for 2012/13 through local branch meetings. In the event, over 60% of branches met to discuss the offer.

The results of this consultation indicated that while the majority of branches took the view that the 0.7% offer was unacceptable, they did not wish the union to pursue industrial action over the issue at the moment. The Further Education Committee of the UCU national executive (FEC) met last Friday and suspended plans for a ballot for industrial action and discussed how best to take forward a campaign over continuing low pay levels in the sector.

It was clear from several branch reports that members wanted, and were prepared to take action on pay, alongside other trade union members in the FE sector, and that the issue of workloads also continues to be a major priority. In addition, policy adopted at the TUC congress in September called for the maximum co-ordination of campaigns in the next round of pay negotiations.

Taking the above into account, the FEC decided to meet as soon as possible with other trade unions in order to agree an early pay claim for 2013/14 and establish a clear campaign programme, including joint union industrial action which can be co-ordinated with other campaigns across the public sector. The intention is to make sure we are in a position to join others to take action against continuing pay freezes and cuts in the public sector.

Tackling Workloads

FEC identified this as an important priority and will urge other unions to consider the possibility of campaigning on this alongside pay in the next round. Meanwhile, however, FEC has also agreed that a plan of action over workloads start immediately.

It has two main elements:

First the national union will write to every FE college in England asking them to confirm that they will adopt the national agreement on "Guidance for the Regulation of Working Hours". This sets out a recommended procedure for dealing with excessive working hours through a Health and Safety approach and would provide a means by which local UCU branches could start to tackle issues of excessive workloads.

Colleges will be asked to respond by the end of this academic term and those who do so negatively will be informed that we would consider ourselves in dispute and may therefore organise industrial action short of strike. Further information on this process, including the precise form of industrial action, will follow at a later date but it would involve a ballot of members following consultation with the branches concerned.

The second element of the campaign will involve particular branches across the country receiving additional support from the national union to pursue specific local workload issues.