

## Pay Talks: 0.7% Offer Rejected

UCU, together with the other FE trade unions, have rejected an offer of a 0.7% pay rise by the Association of Colleges (AoC) at a meeting of the National Joint Forum (NJF) held in London on Friday 16 May.

UCU has consistently said, that after four years of pay rises, together amounting to less than 2% and a real pay cut of 16% over the same time, the credibility of national pay bargaining is being threatened. The size of the slice of colleges' expenditure on staff has fallen over the last three years by more than 3%. This shows colleges have been making deliberate choices to reduce the money spent on staff and spend it on other things.

Disappointingly, the employers' offer of 0.7% looks little different from recent years and does not address our concerns about members' falling pay. The 0.7% without strings offer was made in response to the joint trade unions' 2014/15 claim of:

- 3% or £1040 whichever is the greater
- A recommendation to colleges to become Living Wage employers
- Pay protection for a minimum of 3 years in line with school teachers (in restructures and re-grading etc).

Addressing the Living Wage part of the claim, the AoC said that while it was broadly in favour of the aims of the living wage, there were difficulties for colleges around accreditation and future affordability. The AoC offered to remove the bottom point of the FE pay scale, lifting the minimum recommended rate to £7.50 which would rise to £7.55 with a 0.7% increase. The UK Living Wage currently stands at £7.65 and in London at £8.80.

In response to the unions' claim for three years pay protection, the AoC said that they considered 3 years to be too restrictive and they were unable to make a recommendation that would restrict colleges' ability to make decisions locally. However the AoC acknowledged "*that protecting salaries after periods of restructuring can support transitional periods of change*" and suggested "*that officers of the NJF meet to scope how they may better support the sector in this area of work via a joint working group.*"

The next talks are scheduled for Wednesday 18 June.

Annual sector conference next week will no doubt express frustration with the employers' offer.