



11 May 2018

Dear David,

On 1 May 2018, at a National Joint Forum (NJF) officer level meeting, the trade union side were informed that the Association of Colleges (AoC) were not minded to consider a joint trade unions' claim for the 2018/19 round while members of UCU remained in dispute over the 2017/18 round at any AoC member colleges. On Friday 4 May 2018 the chair of the AoC's Employment Policy committee wrote to UCU formally confirming this position.

You also appeared to confirm the AoC position when you wrote to the trade union side officers on 8 May 2018.

It is unacceptable to the joint trade unions that the AoC is attempting to put pressure on some members of one union by refusing to consider a joint trade unions claim for 2018/19 until their disputes are settled. We regard this course of action to be extremely unhelpful to industrial relations in the sector. The joint unions are united in solidarity with FE staff currently in dispute in pursuit of improved pay and conditions in a number of colleges. We defend the right of all union members to enter into disputes and take action in pursuit of their claims.

At a time when there is unanimous agreement across the further education sector that pay for staff is too low, it is hard to understand why the AoC would refuse to consider a claim from the joint trade unions on pay. The position you are taking appears to be at odds with your acknowledgement that last year's offer of 1% wasn't enough.

No matter how difficult the discussions may be, attempting to avoid dialogue with the unions on pay for 2018/19 will not make the issue go away. Indeed it could increase the likelihood of greater and more widespread industrial action and disruption in the sector.

The joint trade unions are committed to meaningful national bargaining, but faced with the AoC's refusal to consider a joint unions' claim for 2018/19 the trade unions will now consult members on how to respond to what we regard as an unnecessary provocation which could undermine the credibility and relevance of the AoC to the sector.

In the absence of a change of heart by the AoC, we will have no choice but to consider alternative approaches with a view to achieving progress for our members.

Yours sincerely,

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