

22 August 2023

Dear **Vice Chancellor or Principal**,

National Claim 2023/24 - UCU Rejects offer from employers

I write to seek your assistance in attempting to resolve the existing trade dispute with your institution. The dispute relates to the 2023/24 joint HE trade union national claim, specifically:

- A pay uplift of RPI + 2% or £4,000, whichever is greater, on all pay points;
- Nationally agreed action, using an intersectional approach, to eliminate the gender, ethnic and disability pay gaps;
- Agreed framework to eliminate precarious employment practices and casualised contracts, including zero hours contracts, by universities;
- Nationally agreed action to address excessive workloads and unpaid work, to include addressing the impact that excessive workloads are having on workforce stress and ill-health. For the standard weekly, full-time contract of employment to be 35 hours, with no loss of pay.

UCU members employed by your institution are in dispute with their employer because the final offer made by your representatives at the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) on 26th January 2023 will mean another year of real terms pay cuts for higher education staff. The offer goes nowhere near addressing the current cost of living crisis and will see staff pay further lose its value relative to inflation.

With regard to the gender pay gap in higher education the offer means that the gender gap remains at around 15%, far greater than in the wider economy and the rest of the public sector, and the offer fails to address the urgent action needed to tackle the intersectional issues that create the gender, ethnic and disability pay gaps.

Furthermore, the offer does not address widespread precarious and casual employment within the sector in the form of a UK level agreement.

The offer does not recognise the levels of increased workloads undertaken by staff in recent years and in response to the pandemic, and the need for a national agreement on workloads.

The UCU Higher Education Committee (HEC) met in March and rejected the UCEA final offer. UCU (and the other trade union members of JNCHES) have met UCEA representatives in negotiations both via ACAS and through the New JNCHES framework. UCU entered these talks in good faith seeking to resolve the dispute. However, the talks proved unable to resolve the dispute and a statutory ballot for industrial action of UCU members at your institution is now inevitable.

UCU members are regrettably in dispute with your institution over the 2023/24 National Claim as set out in the bullet points in this letter. We would urge you to instruct your representatives at the UCEA to agree to the following things in relation to national terms and conditions:

- A pay uplift of RPI + 2% or £4,000, whichever is greater, on all pay points;
- Nationally agreed action, using an intersectional approach, to eliminate the gender, ethnic and disability pay gaps;
- Agreed framework to eliminate precarious employment practices and casualised contracts, including zero hours contracts, by universities;
- Nationally agreed action to address excessive workloads and unpaid work, to include addressing the impact that excessive workloads are having on workforce stress and ill-health. For the standard weekly, full-time contract of employment to be 35 hours, with no loss of pay.

For the avoidance of doubt the trade dispute will continue until such time as the dispute and any matters arising from the dispute, including out of any industrial action called for by the union in furtherance of the dispute, have been resolved to UCU's satisfaction.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Hegerty', written in a cursive style.

Jon Hegerty
Head of bargaining, organising, campaigns & education
University and College Union