



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

24 August 2023

Cat Wayland and Sophia Woodman,
Co-presidents
Edinburgh University and College Union

By email to: ucu.president@ed.ac.uk

Dear Cat and Sophia,

National Claim 2023/24 - UCU Rejects offer from employers

I write in response to UCU's letter dated 22 August regarding the UCEA negotiations. I wanted to confirm our response to this letter, in advance of communicating to staff next week. I also wanted to confirm our current position in relation to the escalation of industrial action which UCU have communicated in the media.

Firstly, regarding the pay offer confirmed by UCEA in February 2023 and implemented by University of Edinburgh in February and August. You have asked that we instruct UCEA to make a pay offer of £4000 or RPI+2% (currently representing an 11.1% increase). I cannot in good faith instruct UCEA to do this as I know that this is unaffordable for the sector and would result in significant impact on jobs across the sector.

I have advised UCEA that we strongly support the need for agreement on sector finances to ensure all parties can be open and transparent on affordability in pay negotiations. I understand that on 4 August UCEA wrote to UCU and the Joint trade unions proposing a meeting facilitated by Acas to agree the terms of reference and membership of an independent review of sector finances and, in quick succession, further meetings to finalise the terms of reference on the other matters you have requested. To date UCU and the other sector trade unions have not responded to UCEA's letter outlining this proposal. We would urge UCU to take up this opportunity to resolve the dispute on sector finances.

Regarding the other points in the dispute, we fully support progressing the UCEA and joint unions negotiated terms of reference seeking to work towards action on pay gaps, fixed term and casual contracts and workload. I do however want to stress that the details outlined in UCU's letter do not reflect the position here at University of Edinburgh.

- On pay, we are currently undertaking a Grade Scale Review which has been conducted in partnership with the joint trade unions. This is the first full review of our scale since it was introduced in 2006 and we will share an update on this in the autumn.
- Our gender pay gap mirrors the sector at around 15%, and we know this largely is because of the imbalance of men and women at different pay grades. Our grade 10 population is 70% male, a situation we are acutely aware needs addressing. We are working hard to improve recruitment, development opportunities and academic promotion for staff at all grades, especially in all diverse groups. If grade 10 is removed from the gender pay

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calculation then our pay gap is 7.77%, which whilst halved, remains a concern and we will continue to monitor the impact of our improvements.

- We have already agreed to look at ways to reduce contract casualisation here in Edinburgh. We have had a Fixed Term Contract project underway since early 2023, with representation from our joint unions, and are now at the stage of agreeing actions. We do not have any zero hours contracts, and our guaranteed minimum hours joint statement has been used by UCU as the template for others to follow.
- We recognise the impact of workload on health, wellbeing and pay. We agree that there is action required to understand workload better and commit to look at this further in 2024.

I believe it is important to recognise the improvements that we and our trade union partners are delivering locally, and that despite the sector-wide disputes, we continue to deliver on our commitment to make the University of Edinburgh an even better place to work and study.

Moving on to industrial action. UCU stated in their letter that a further ballot is inevitable. Whilst we cannot influence the national position on industrial action, we do intend to honour our jointly agreed statement on the Marking and Assessment Boycott, as communicated on 4 August, as we believe UCU Edinburgh made the agreement in good faith. We assume that UCU Edinburgh will honour their agreement to encourage members to prioritise outstanding marking so that this marking will be complete to allow the October exam boards to run smoothly.

Our agreement stated that “the University will only review its position for the remainder of this mandate if UCU nationally or locally escalate the dispute. Escalation on both sides is taken to mean acting against either the terms or spirit of this agreement, resulting in further disruption to students”. The recent media statement from UCU suggested that there will be an escalation of action to include strike in September. We therefore reserve the right to review this position once the intentions of UCU nationally, and locally, are made clearer.

As always, we remain keen to continue our discussions locally and to work in partnership on our shared commitments.

*With best regards,
Peter*

CC: Jon Hegerty, Head of bargaining, organising, campaigns & education
Encl. letter from UCU

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