

15 March 2016

The Editor

Ref: SS/JB
Direct: 01786 892008

Dear Sir

The EIS Industrial Action in the College Sector

The prospect of college lecturers across the country walking out on the EIS strike on Thursday (17 March 2016) is hugely disappointing.

It is the last thing we want and believe that it will be hugely disruptive to Scotland's 227,000 college students as this is the first of 32 strike days planned by the EIS over the next few months.

On the eve of the industrial action we want to underline our ongoing commitment to National Bargaining and to continue discussions with the EIS.

The re-introduction of National Bargaining on pay and conditions was one of the Scottish Government's policies as part of the college sector reforms and this is the first year of its return after a 20 year absence.

We have settled a 1% pay rise with the main public sector union (UNISON) and also with Unite and GMB. It is only the EIS who has rejected this reasonable pay offer. It is important to underline that this is the best possible offer in the current financial situation. The EIS's unrealistic demands equate to an average 13% pay increase.

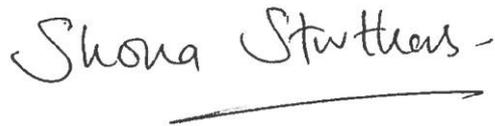
Over the coming days you are likely to hear about the differences in pay across different college regions. We are fully committed to harmonisation of pay and conditions but that will take time. We are in the first year of National Bargaining and want to prioritise the route to harmonisation during our discussions for 2016/17.

To make sure that college teaching staff do not miss out on a pay rise now we took the difficult decision to award the fair and reasonable 1% increase now before the end of the financial year.

The fact remains – lecturers still intend to strike. This will disrupt students' lives and preparations for their all-important exams.

We will do everything possible to reduce the impact on students and remain committed to the ongoing negotiations with the EIS. We will continue to work with all the trade unions to reduce differentials in pay and conditions of service and we urge the EIS again to suspend the planned industrial action.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shona Struthers". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a horizontal line that ends in an arrowhead pointing to the right.

Shona Struthers
Colleges Scotland

On behalf of the following college employers:

Ayrshire College
Borders College
Dumfries & Galloway College
Dundee & Angus College
Edinburgh College
Fife College
Forth Valley College
Inverness College UHI

Lewis Castle College UHI
Moray College UHI
New College Lanarkshire
North East Scotland College
Perth College UHI
South Lanarkshire College
West College Scotland
West Lothian College