

## National Bargaining Update – The View of the College Sector

### Background

Progress continues to be made to reintroduce National Bargaining to the sector following an absence of over 20 years. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Angela Constance MSP, has indicated in her recent [Letter of Guidance](#) (Monday 8 February 2016) to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that she expects “the SFC to continue its efforts to ensure the college sector maintains progress on national bargaining and its plans for modernising the college workforce”.

In October 2015, colleges made a 1% consolidated pay offer or £300 for employees earning less than £30,000 and the Living Wage. For some, this offer exceeds public sector pay policy and the support staff trade unions have confirmed their acceptance of this offer (UNISON, UNITE and GMB). The EIS are the only trade union to reject this reasonable pay offer. Unfortunately, a pay-rise for teaching staff above 1% is not possible in the current financial situation and demands for pay rises amounting to an average increase of 13%, which is neither affordable nor reasonable.

### The EIS Position

Unfortunately, the EIS-FELA executive seem determined to take their membership down the route of confrontation and are balloting their members on strike action. The 2015/16 settlement on pay should be seen as a transitional period and it is therefore disappointing that the EIS has rejected the reasonable pay offer by conflating this with their claim for harmonisation. We recognise that discrepancies in pay and conditions do exist but these cannot be addressed overnight, and we will continue to work with the trade unions to reduce differentials in pay and conditions of service. We estimate that the additional funds required to standardise pay and conditions of service would be in the region of £35m, which the sector does not have available in the current financial environment.

### Equality

Equality is a vital issue for the college sector. We recognise the need for pay equality across the sector. This is not, however, to be confused with harmonisation (see below). College employers believe that there should be equal pay and will work tirelessly to ensure that that is the case across all Scottish colleges.

### Harmonisation

The trade unions seek to harmonise pay, however, their timescales and expectations do not take account of the current context of what the sector is being asked to achieve and the financial realities. The employers’ side agrees with the EIS that this is an important issue and are confident we can address this, but this will have to be done through a negotiated position that provides the sector with a credible and sustainable model going forward. We want to ensure the highest standards of learning and teaching in every one of Scotland’s colleges. Harmonisation needs to be addressed alongside considerations of the workforce for the future and include conditions of service, not just pay.

### Financial Constraints on the Sector

The college sector welcomes the confirmation of the Scottish Government’s commitment to deliver a flat-cash settlement to the college sector for the next academic year. While finances are tight, we believe that we have robust financial monitoring systems and clear accountability to ensure that we deliver value for money.

We recognise that the sector has to live within this tight financial settlement and work in partnership with the Scottish Government as well as the private sector and other organisations to deliver courses of the highest possible quality for students. Colleges are committed to ensuring that they work in conjunction with schools, universities, employers and key stakeholders to deliver clear pathways to employment and improved skills. However, this financial settlement for the next financial year does not provide any scope for a pay offer beyond the 1% pay rise.

Colleges Scotland  
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