

Update on National Bargaining in the College Sector

Key Facts

- We have settled a 1% pay rise for 2015/16 with the main union in Scotland (UNISON) along with the other two support trade unions (GMB and Unite). It is only the EIS who has rejected this reasonable pay offer, which is in line with public sector pay policy.
- EIS members voted in favour of strike action, after the EIS-FELA Executive rejected the 1% pay offer.
- Colleges will be paying the 1% rise in March salaries to ensure that lecturing staff do not lose out while their support staff colleagues get a pay rise.
- Our priority is to ensure that students are as far as possible unaffected by the EIS strike action, but significant disruption will be unavoidable.
- A total of 32 strike days have been announced, with the first strike date scheduled for **Thursday 17 March 2016**.
- The majority of Scotland's 227,000 students in colleges will be adversely affected by the strike action which could be avoided if the EIS is willing to call the strike off.
- The National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) will next meet on Thursday 24 March 2016 as part of the National Bargaining process.

Ballot Results

Following the decision by the EIS-FELA Executive to reject the reasonable 1% pay offer because they believe it is not enough, the EIS balloted its members on strike action across most of Scotland's colleges (seven out of the 26 colleges are not being balloted). A separate ballot took place in the three Glasgow colleges (City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Clyde College and Glasgow Kelvin College), which the EIS is using to compel the colleges to sign up to the National Bargaining process.

The EIS ballot results on industrial action were announced on Friday 4 March 2016. Just over half of the EIS members in colleges voted in favour of strike action.

Colleges Scotland's response on Friday 4 March 2016 was as follows:

Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland said:

"We acknowledge the outcome of the ballot, where around half of the EIS membership has voted to strike. Staff at all levels in colleges were offered a 1% pay rise, which is in line with other public sector agreements, and this was accepted by three of the four trade unions in Scotland's colleges. It is the best possible offer in the current difficult funding situation, because there are simply no additional resources available to finance a deal beyond that which has already been offered – and accepted by the other three unions.

"We are working with all stakeholders to resolve this issue as soon as possible to ensure that students face minimal disruption during the EIS action. Meaningful discussion took place yesterday through the National Joint Negotiating Committee and we have agreed to meet again on Thursday 24 March 2016.

"And we will continue working with all of the trade unions to progress harmonisation of pay and conditions across the college sector in Scotland, and to develop our colleges so that they are equipped and staffed for the challenges of the future – meeting the needs of students and the economy for years to come."

Dates of Planned Industrial Action

- Thursday 17 March 2016
- Tuesday 22 March 2016 and Wednesday 23 March 2016
- Tuesday 19 April and Thursday 21 April 2016
- Tuesday 26 April and Wednesday 27 April and Thursday 28 April 2016
- Tuesday 3 May and Wednesday 4 May and Thursday 5 May 2016
- Tuesday 10 May and Wednesday 11 May and Thursday 12 May 2016
- Tuesday 17 May and Wednesday 18 May and Thursday 19 May 2016
- Tuesday 24 May and Wednesday 25 May and Thursday 26 May 2016
- Tuesday 31 May and Wednesday 1 June and Thursday 2 June 2016
- Tuesday 7 June and Wednesday 8 June and Thursday 9 June 2016
- Tuesday 14 June and Wednesday 15 June and Thursday 16 June 2016
- Tuesday 21 June and Wednesday 22 June and Thursday 23 June 2016.

We believe the EIS are planning to hold a rally outside the Scottish Parliament on the first day of strike action (1300 hours on Thursday 17 March 2016).

Mitigating Impact on Students

Industrial action can be avoided, if the EIS is willing to call off the strike, but if it goes ahead the majority of Scotland's 227,000 students in colleges will be adversely affected. Some colleges, for health and safety reasons, have indicated that they will have to close on strike days.

We the Management Side have done everything in our power to avoid a strike and all of our member colleges are committed to mitigating the impact on their students. Colleges will be taking all measures possible to minimise the disruption to learning and teaching, such as using online technology. However, there can be no doubt that the EIS action will have a serious impact on student learning at a critical time in the academic year, especially in the run up to exams.

Working with Scotland's Colleges

The NJNC will next meet on Thursday 24 March 2016 as part of the National Bargaining process. There have been no requests from the EIS for an earlier meeting.

Colleges Scotland has created an information pack for all colleges, advising them on legal responsibilities, communication to students and staff, and general advice on pay & conditions that could be affected by the strike action.

Individual colleges also will be contacting students, staff and key stakeholders about preparations for the strike.

Colleges Scotland continues to liaise with the Scottish Government, politicians and key stakeholders about the strike, to minimise its impact. A meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Angela Constance MSP has been arranged for early next week.

Colleges Outside of National Bargaining

It is up to the boards of individual colleges to decide whether they wish to be part of the National Bargaining process. For those boards who have joined the National Bargaining process, they have signed a National Recognition and Procedures Agreement (NRPA).

For governance reasons a small number of colleges have so far decided not to join this voluntary process; these include the three Glasgow colleges and some smaller colleges in the Highlands and Islands. There are ongoing discussions between Colleges Scotland (the Employers' Association) and the colleges that have not currently signed the NRPA.

As a result of the separate ballot at the three Glasgow colleges, these colleges are still facing strike action for non-signing of the NRPA. However, the Highlands and Islands colleges which are not part of National Bargaining will not be affected by the strikes.