

Parliamentary Briefing – National Bargaining in the College Sector

This briefing provides an update on the pay dispute between Colleges Scotland Employers' Association and the Educational Institute of Scotland Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA).

EIS-FELA Reject Generous Pay Offer and Vote for Industrial Action

The EIS-FELA has rejected a deal which would see lecturers' salaries across Scotland increase on average by **over 12%** – a cash increase of over £4,000 – over three years from the combination of pay rises from National Bargaining's salary harmonisation and the additional pay offer. Any deal needs to take full account of the continuing constraints on the public purse, be sustainable and affordable for the sector, and mindful of the considerable benefits for lecturing staff already achieved through pay harmonisation and the safeguarding or enhancing of conditions of service (and associated costs).

Some lecturers are seeing huge pay increases of over 55%, and for those who have benefitted from being the highest paid in the sector for many years and aren't receiving rises from the 'same pay' deal, the colleges' offer ensures that they will receive a minimum cash payment of £1,600 in the first two years followed by a consolidated 2.5% salary increase in the third year, bringing the minimum cash increase to £2,600.

The EIS-FELA balloted its members at the end of 2018 and narrowly met the 50% turnout requirement for a strike mandate with a 52.1% turnout. The EIS-FELA is taking its members out on industrial action for the third time in four years with the following strike days currently scheduled:

- Wednesday, 16 January 2019
- Tuesday, 5 February 2019
- Wednesday, 6 March 2019
- Thursday, 21 March 2019.

Colleges are committed to mitigating the impact of strikes on their students. They will be taking all measures possible to minimise the disruption to their students, however, there can be no doubt that the EIS-FELA action will have a detrimental impact on student learning at a critical time in the academic year.

The Employers' Final Offer

The employers' final offer to the EIS-FELA is an excellent three-year deal aimed at ending the stalemate over pay. This pay offer for all lecturers represents a cash payment of up to £1,600 over a two-year period (2017/18 and 2018/19) and then a consolidated 2.5% pay increase for 2019/20.

This three-year pay offer is **in addition** to the pay harmonisation and migration agreed between the employers and EIS-FELA in May 2017 as part of National Bargaining, which culminates with the third successive annual migration payment on 1st April 2019, which is 50% of migration salary increases.

Year 1: 1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018

All lecturers that received less than £600 during the first 25% of harmonisation will receive an additional unconsolidated payment to ensure that every employee will receive a minimum of £600.

Year 2: 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019

All lecturers that received less than £1000 during the second 25% of harmonisation will receive an additional unconsolidated payment to ensure that every employee will receive a minimum of £1000.

Year 3: 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020

Immediately following the final 50% migration payment, a consolidated award of 2.5% would be given to all lecturers.

This pay offer would **increase** the top of the lecturer salary scale to £41,027 in April 2019, with over 90% of lecturers across Scotland at the top of the scale.

College lecturers across Scotland are already receiving an excellent deal with a 9% national average pay increase from harmonisation over the same three-year period – and this final offer takes that up to a national average rise of **12.2%** – plus 62 days' holiday, 23 hours weekly contact with students, and other terms and conditions either safeguarded or enhanced.

As a sector, we value our staff and the huge contribution they make, which is why college lecturers in Scotland are the best paid in the UK and also have excellent terms and conditions.

Colleges Have No Additional Investment to Meet the EIS-FELA Demands

The colleges' additional pay offer to the EIS-FELA would cost an extra **£10 million**, and this offer already **exceeds** the level of funding available to the sector. In the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2019-20, revenue for colleges increased by £18.3 million – a modest 1.3% real terms increase – however, all that additional revenue is ringfenced for National Bargaining costs, so the colleges must finance the additional pay offer through efficiency savings. In addition, the colleges need to make 3% efficiency savings as set out within the Ministerial Letter of Guidance.

The EIS-FELA submitted a revised pay demand in December with six days of their three-week ballot remaining. Their initial pay demands were simply discreditable and, whilst they have reduced their pay demand, it remains unaffordable for the sector. On top of the costs of harmonisation, the revised pay demand would cost colleges an additional **£31.48 million**.

In total, over the three-year period, the EIS-FELA is demanding a combined pay increase of 16.2%.

Furthermore, the EIS-FELA continually refuse to participate in a national job evaluation scheme, which we have encouraged them to do.

Jobs and Student Courses at Risk

The decision of the EIS-FELA to continue with this dispute jeopardises colleges' capacity to continue providing high-quality education and training for students. The reality is that with a finite amount of money available to the publicly-funded colleges, pay deals must be affordable and sustainable, otherwise there is a serious risk of a reduction in student courses or in the numbers of lecturers being employed by the colleges. No-one in the sector wants to put jobs at risk, but unless the EIS-FELA membership accepts the final, improved offer on the table, that is precisely what they are doing. We will continue discussions with the EIS-FELA as we want to reach an agreement, however they must recognise that a pay rise is a pay rise, irrespective of whether it comes from National Bargaining or cost of living increases.

This briefing has been provided by Colleges Scotland Employers' Association for Parliamentarians' information. To discuss, or for further information, please contact: employers.association@collegesscotland.ac.uk or telephone 01786 892063.

Colleges Scotland Employers' Association
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