

Tuesday, 5 February 2019

Comment on EIS-FELA Strike Action

Colleges Scotland Employers' Association has met with the Educational Institute of Scotland Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA) on 10 occasions to try and reach agreement and end strike action.

This is the third time in four years that the EIS-FELA has gone on strike. In this latest strike, they went out on Wednesday, 16 January, and again today (Tuesday, 5 February). Further strikes are planned for Wednesday, 6 March, and Thursday, 21 March.

Finances are extremely tight in the sector and, on top of the annual three per cent annual efficiency savings all public bodies are being asked to meet, the £10 million cost to colleges for the current pay offer also has to come from making cuts.

Commenting on the EIS-FELA strike, John Gribben, Director of Employment Services at Colleges Scotland Employers' Association, said:

"It is disappointing that the EIS-FELA has not suspended strike action whilst negotiations are ongoing. We have met with the EIS-FELA on 10 occasions to discuss pay and will be meeting them again on Thursday, 7 February to try and end this disruptive strike action.

"The EIS-FELA is aware that colleges are already having to make cuts to finance the additional pay offer which they have rejected. Their unreasonable pay demands would mean fewer courses, fewer students, and fewer lecturing jobs in the college sector.

"As we have repeatedly said to the EIS-FELA, the pay increases over 2017-20 from harmonisation are directly connected to the current additional pay offer on the table over the same three-year period and cannot be separated – a pay rise is a pay rise irrespective of where it comes from. College lecturers in Scotland are by far the best paid across the UK and they have rejected a combined pay deal that would increase national average pay by over 12%, or more than £4,000, from 2017-20.

"Any deal must be affordable and sustainable for the sector and the EIS-FELA should recognise how strong the overall package for lecturing staff is. Not only are lecturers benefitting from significant pay rises, they have also seen substantial improvements in their terms and conditions, including 62 days' annual holiday, a reduction in weekly contact with students to 23 hours, and excellent pensions provision. Despite considerable increases in pay and improvements in terms and conditions, this still isn't enough for the EIS-FELA. It remains within the gift of the EIS-FELA to suspend strike action and end this unnecessary disruption to students, who are losing out the most."

Notes to Editor:

Outline of improved terms and conditions agreed for lecturing staff through National Bargaining:

On top of the 9% national average pay increase from harmonisation over the same three-year period, lecturers are also receiving annual leave increases to 62 days' holiday, a reduction in teaching hours to 23 hours weekly contact with students, salary conservation ensuring the retention for four years where a member of staff is currently in receipt of existing local salary conservation arrangements, paid provision of 150 hours remission time within existing paid hours for approximately 1,500 lecturers who don't have formal teaching qualifications to gain a TQFE, plus other terms and conditions either safeguarded or enhanced.

ENDS

For further information, please contact:

Will McLeish, Head of Communications and Public Affairs:

Tel: 01786 892063

Mobile: 07712 404 397

Email: will.mcleish@collegesscotland.ac.uk

Joanne Buchan, Communications and Public Affairs Officer:

Tel: 01786 892012

Mobile: 07590 229 707

Email: joanne.buchan@collegesscotland.ac.uk