

Thursday, 28 February 2019

Comment on EIS-FELA Strike Action

Following the twelfth pay dispute meeting today (Thursday) between Colleges Scotland Employers' Association and the Educational Institute of Scotland Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA), colleges have expressed frustration that a new, improved offer – our sixth – aimed at ending the EIS-FELA strike action has not been accepted by the trade union.

This is the third time in four years that the EIS-FELA has gone on strike. They went on strike on Wednesday, 16 January and 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 £12.6 million cost to colleges for the improved pay offer also has to come from making cuts.

Commenting on the EIS-FELA's decision not to accept the latest offer, John Gribben, Director of Employment Services at Colleges Scotland Employers' Association, said:

“Colleges have now made six offers to the EIS-FELA but, once again, they have decided not to accept a great deal. The overall pay rise from harmonisation and the additional pay offer on the table represents a national average increase of £5,000 – or more than 12% for college lecturers.

“All of the money being offered for the additional pay offer has to come from colleges making cuts. The colleges' previous offer cost £10.1 million, while the pay demand from the EIS-FELA would cost £14 million. Colleges have now made an improved offer costing £12.6 million, which more than meets the EIS-FELA's demands in the middle, so it's extremely disappointing that it hasn't been accepted.

“The EIS-FELA has demanded parity on pay with support staff workers, so we have extended the pay deal to run until September 2020, in line with the support staff deal, but they are cherry-picking from the deal and won't agree to job evaluation, as support staff have. The overall costs of lecturers' pay and improvements in terms and conditions from 2017-20 is £65.8 million compared to £37.1 million for support staff over the same period.

“In addition to these substantial pay rises, all lecturers' terms and conditions have been improved or safeguarded, and they now have 62 days' holiday each year, a reduction in class contact time to 23 hours per week, excellent pensions and a commitment from colleges to pay for those without formal qualifications to get their TQFEs in their normal working hours, but this still isn't enough for the EIS-FELA.”

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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.

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