

Comment on Day Three of EIS-FELA Strike Action

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

"Lecturers in Scotland are by far the best paid across the UK and are already benefitting from substantial pay increases from harmonisation. The EIS-FELA has taken its members out on strike for the third time in four years after rejecting a national average overall pay increase of £5,000 in three years, which is more than 12%.

"Most people would jump at the chance to gain a £5,000 pay rise and to benefit from the extremely generous terms and conditions lecturers enjoy in Scotland, including 62 days' holiday a year, a reduction in class contact time to 23 hours per week, excellent pensions, and a commitment from colleges to pay for those lecturers without formal teaching qualifications to gain TQFEs within existing working hours.

"The sixth offer colleges have made to the EIS-FELA is a flat cash payment in years 1 and 2 of £625 and then either 3% or 2% in year 3, in line with Public Sector Pay Policy, which is on top of the significant pay rises from harmonisation.

"Not only is the EIS-FELA damaging the college sector with their constant striking and stating they will prevent students from progressing to other college or university courses by withholding assessment results from colleges, they haven't even provided accurate details of what colleges are offering. They consistently misrepresent the offer and balloted their members for strike action on a pay offer which was never even put to them. The EIS-FELA should share colleges' actual offer with their members and ask them whether they want to accept it or not.

"We will continue to engage in meaningful dialogue and urge the EIS-FELA to end this unnecessary strike, but it appears as though they have no interest in compromising, making any concessions or ending the strikes."

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

This is the third time in four years that the EIS-FELA has gone on strike. They have been out on strike this year on Wednesday, 16 January, Tuesday, 5 February and today, Wednesday, 6 March. They have a further scheduled strike day on Thursday, 21 March 2019.

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.

Comparison with Support Staff:

In October 2018, after negotiations and compromises by both sides, colleges reached agreement with the support staff trade unions (UNISON, Unite and GMB) and signed a two-and-a-half-year pay and conditions of service deal.

As part of that deal, support staff – who receive 45 days' annual leave compared to 62 for lecturers – will go through a job evaluation process to consider issues of pay equality and, while lecturers have harmonised pay, the EIS-FELA has repeatedly refused to agree to job evaluation for lecturers, or negotiate pay alongside support staff.

The overall investment in lecturing staff from 2017-2020 is £65.8m and the overall investment in support staff over the same period is estimated to be £37.1m

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