

Tuesday, 20 April 2021

Comment on the EIS-FELA Strike Action

To the disappointment of colleges, members of the EIS-FELA are taking part in further strike action this week (Tuesday, 20 April 2021 and Wednesday, 21 April 2021).

Talks continued on Monday, 19 April 2021 and, although some progress was made, the EIS-FELA refused to call off the unnecessary action.

National discussions between the Colleges Scotland Employers' Association and the EIS-FELA have been going on for many months. The trigger for these discussions was an unfounded allegation from EIS-FELA that colleges were attempting to replace lecturing roles with other roles like assessors or instructors. This has never been the case, and the EIS-FELA have accepted this. The ongoing industrial action is therefore completely unnecessary.

There is only one outstanding issue still to be finalised. This is around the wording of a national role profile for lecturers, which both sides are supportive of. During earlier negotiations on the national role profile for lecturers, the Employers' Association requested that discussions continue to gain further clarification on how the role profile would be used. This is an entirely normal part of the negotiation process. It is not true that the Employers' Association didn't "ratify the deal" as the discussion is ongoing. A consensus position is not a deal until both sides reach a final agreement.

Colleges are working extremely hard to ensure students can achieve their qualifications this year and will do everything they can to minimise the disruption caused by the EIS-FELA.

To our further disappointment, the EIS-FELA last week opened a further ballot for its members to take additional industrial action – this new ballot asks its members to take action short of strike action, such as working to rule. Again, colleges believe any escalation of this dispute is entirely unnecessary.

A spokesperson for the Colleges Scotland Employers' Association, said:

"We know students are worried however colleges are taking steps to ensure that disruption for individuals will be at an absolute minimum at this critical time in the academic year.

"The EIS-FELA has refused repeated requests to suspend the strikes while meaningful discussions carry on – national industrial action is wholly unnecessary."

The college sector is not unique in using a variety of different roles to deliver services. Different sectors and professions also have a range of support staff roles which are required such as teachers and classroom assistants, solicitors and para-legals, dentists and hygienists, nurses and nursing assistants.

Colleges value lecturers, they play a critical role in inspiring and enabling success for students. The sector is working in partnership with the trade union and the General Teaching Council Scotland to ensure that all lecturers can become professionally registered and developed. At the same time, Colleges must align their provision to the needs of students, employers, and the wider economy and this requires a range of roles and skillsets in the workforce. Tutors, assessors, and instructors have worked alongside lecturers for decades. These staff are fully qualified to perform their jobs and complement the delivery of learning and assessment in relevant subject areas.

Colleges will continue to deliver the very best vocational education and training built on the foundations of the rich and diverse skillsets of all staff who motivate students and help them achieve their ambitions.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

Turnout on the three days of strike action to date in 2021 has been low - **42.1%** of lecturers have taken part in strikes (out of the total headcount of lecturers in Scotland). Of lecturers balloted, **53.4%** have taken part in the strike action.

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