

9 February 2016

The Editor
The Scotsman
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Ref: SS/JB
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Dear Sir

Lecturers Pay Rise

Regarding your report on the EIS union rejecting a pay deal on offer for college lecturers (Scotsman, 5th February 2016 – EIS calls on minister to intervene in college staff pay row), I should like to set out the facts for your readers. The EIS is the only trade union out of four involved that has not agreed to the proposed pay increase. The other three union represent some half of the staff involved, most of whom are paid less than EIS members.

The EIS position now threatens students' learning, in order to secure what equates to an average 13% rise in salaries for teaching staff in our colleges. This is neither affordable nor deliverable in the transitional year when the college sector returns to National Bargaining after an absence of over 20 years.

The pay rise of 1% on the table (and the one fully accepted by all the other trade unions) is in line with public sector pay policy and above the CPI rate of inflation.

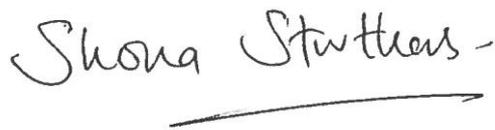
To counter some of the claims being made by the EIS in your article; the recommendation to award the pay rise was not taken lightly and was taken with the best financial interests of college staff and the sector in mind. We want to ensure lecturing staff do not suffer any detriment in comparison to other staff across the sector. The three support staff unions have accepted the same pay rise of 1%. Our preference would have been to reach a negotiated settlement with the EIS as we have with the support staff to ensure we bring the sector together with the same pay deal. However, the EIS did not wish to reach a settlement, they have simply stated that 1% is not enough.

The EIS want equal pay, however they fail to recognise that pay differentials exist across the sector due to more than 20 years of local negotiation, and different roles, responsibilities and conditions of service from place to place as a consequence. We are committed to pay equalisation, but clearly this will take time and will be more difficult to achieve equal pay if the EIS continue to refuse to discuss conditions of service at the same time as pay.

It is disappointing that the EIS have rejected the reasonable pay offer by conflating this with their claim for harmonisation. We recognise that discrepancies in pay and conditions do exist but these cannot be addressed overnight, and we will continue to work with the trade unions to reduce differentials in pay and conditions of service. We estimate that the additional funds required to standardise pay and conditions of service would be in the region of £35m, which is simply unaffordable all at once in the current financial climate of public sector cuts.

We urge the EIS to follow other trade unions which have fully accepted the pay deal and continue to work with Colleges Scotland to resolve this situation for the benefit of their members, students and colleges.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shona Struthers -". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a horizontal line that ends in an arrowhead pointing to the right.

Shona Struthers
Chief Executive