

**Resources and General Purposes Committee – 18th September 2023**

**Item 7 (a) NCL College Registrar Update**

**This paper provides a summary of current and planned activity in the areas above to provide an update for the Resources and General Purposes Committee. Where the approval/ratification of the Committee is required, this is highlighted at the appropriate points.**

1. **Voluntary Severance Scheme**

As part of the College’s plan to address the budget shortfall for the academic year 2023/24, a self-funded Voluntary Severance Scheme was opened to all staff from 22nd May 2023, with applications being accepted for consideration until 5th June 2023. This Scheme was recently approved at a Special Meeting of the Board of Management and separately by the Scottish Funding Council.

The Scheme was subsequently extended beyond 5th June as it became clear that some of our staff needed more time to reflect on their individual circumstances. The business case which had been approved by the SFC enables the College to consider applications until 30th September.

All 3 trade unions – EIS, Unison, Unite – have been regularly updated since the Scheme was opened.

# **College Employers Scotland (CES)**

## **2.1 National Bargaining Update – NJNC Side Table (Lecturing)**

***Pay Claim 2022/23***

The National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Side Table (Lecturing) met on 4th September, with the staff side rejecting the management side’s request to take the offer of £2,000 for 2022/23 and £1,500 for 2023/24 to its members. The staff side also stated that its members are currently being re-balloted for continued industrial action over pay.

Both sides agreed that the Joint Secretaries would consider the merits of involving ACAS with a view to having a discussion with ACAS around their ability to help with the current dispute.   It was also agreed the Joint Secretaries would draft a joint letter to the Minister for Higher and Further Education and Veterans and copy in the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, highlighting the sector's pressing funding issues and advocating for increased financial support.

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the NJNC – Side Table (Lecturing) is 21st September 2023.

## **2.2 National Bargaining Update – NJNC Side Table (Support Staff)**

The National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Side Table (Support) met on 21st July, with a request from the staff side that the meeting focus on the staff side paper presented to the NJNC – Side Table (Support) on 28th June.  The paper is seeking a no compulsory redundancy guarantee agreement for all colleges that are signatories to the National Recognition and Procedures Agreement (NRPA).

The management side reaffirmed the employers’ position, stated previously at the meeting of 28th June and restated at the first dispute meeting on 14th July, that a sector-wide guarantee is not feasible but that the commitment to job security as contained in the pay offer would apply.  It also reminded the staff side of the Scottish Government direction on this matter and that compulsory redundancies should only be used as a last resort.

The staff side chair suggested that as there was no agreement by both sides on the staff side paper that it would be comfortable recording a ‘failure to agree’ on this matter.  This was agreed.

***Pay Claim 2022/23***

The staff side requested the management side consider a proposal on the current pay offer. The proposal was for the employers to agree to a one year offer only, which included the £2000 pay element for 2022/23, and a commitment to develop a guidance document for the sector to help avoid redundancies by 1st October 2023.

There were no proposed changes to the current wording on Terms and Conditions or Job Evaluation.

Following an adjournment, the management side advised it was unable to agree to a one year deal.  However, it was supportive of the 1st October 2023 date to develop guidance to help avoid redundancies or aid when college are facing a redundancy situation.

The staff side indicated that members were seeking an enhancement to the monetary amount for year two and that job security was equally important.  Unison and Unite also stated it was unlikely the two year pay offer would be accepted if the offer was put to members.

It is anticipated that a formal NJNC – Side Table (Support) meeting will be scheduled in September 2023.

1. **Industrial Action**

As a result of no agreement being reached on the 2022/23 Pay Claims, a rolling programme of strike days has been announced by EIS-FELA, Unison and Unite across the FE sector. All FE colleges were impacted on Thursday 7th September, and NCL has been additionally affected on Monday 11th September. The decision was taken to close all of our campuses on both days.

EIS-FELA has also notified CES of its intention to continue with Action Short of Strike (ASOS).

# **Joint Negotiating Committee Update**

## **4.1 JNC Academic**

A meeting of the JNC Academic was held on 5th September 2023.

Draft policies discussed included CCTV , Armed Forces Reservist and Artificial Intelligence, which are with the trade union for review, and the Drugs & Alcohol policy which is being finalised.

The trade union provided feedback on the recent student induction activities and the lack of involvement of Academic staff in the planning of events which had led to some disruption to timetables. It was agreed that planning for the January starts induction should begin after the October break, and should be more involving of Academic colleagues.

There was discussion around promotion of the benefits of EIS-FELA membership to new staff, and how this could be highlighted through signposting by Comms & Marketing to specific pages on The Clan for this purpose. Although there is no longer any regular face to face induction programmes for new staff, with most activities being facilitated online, it was agreed to aim for twice yearly in-person sessions for trade union membership promotion events.

Other topics included lecturer contract wording and an update on Voluntary Severance. The trade union also requested a meeting with Finance so that they could be updated on the College accounts, budget and forecasting information.

Finally, the trade union informed the JNC that the new EIS-FELA Area Officer is Stephen McCrossan, who took up his post on 1st August 2023.

The next meeting of the JNC Academic has been scheduled for 24th October 2023.

**4.2 JNC Professional Services**

There has been no further meeting of the JNC Professional Services since it was last convened on 30th March 2023.

Meanwhile, the Recognition and Procedure Agreement template is the subject of ongoing discussions between management and Unison and Unite representatives.

# **5. Employment Tribunal Update**

There are six claimants in total and the claims remain sisted.

**6. LGBT Youth Scotland**

In July, NCL was awarded the LGBT Charter, Foundation level, demonstrating the College’s ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive environment for both staff and students and ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion remain integral to our values. To achieve the Charter, an external assessor reviewed the relevance of our training activities, our policies, practices and resources to ensure compliance with legislative requirements as well as everyday evidence of a genuinely inclusive environment.

Elaine Turkington

**College Registrar**

September 2023

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