

Agreed Minute of the meeting of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Side Table (Lecturing) held on Thursday 4 November 2021 at 1100 hours, via Video Conference.

In Attendance	
Donny Gluckstein	Staff Side
Anne-Marie Harley	“ “
Eileen Imlah	“ “
John Kelly	“ “ (Chair)
Charlie Montgomery	“ “
Jim O’Donovan	“ “
Sue Clyne	Management Side
Jackie Galbraith	“ “
Alex Linkston	“ “
Alan Ritchie	“ “
Derek Smeall	“ “
Evan Williams	Interim Management Side Joint Secretary
Stuart Brown	Staff Side Joint Secretary
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Catherine McCreath	Zoom Administrator

27/21 Welcome and Apologies

The Staff Side was in the Chair for this meeting. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. There were apologies from Ross Martin, Management Side.

28/21 EIS-FELA Pay Claim 2021/22

The Staff Side opened the meeting by restating its position, to the Management Side, that the current offer of £800 for all scale points was unacceptable and advised that its members’ expectations are higher than they were back in September 2021 due to rising inflation, an increase in workload and the cost of living. The Staff Side also advised it had conducted a short-scale survey of its membership and recorded over 1,000 respondents. The findings of the survey were that 70% said that workload, working hours and stress has increased, with 50% not feeling COVID safe on campuses and not feeling that they have enough support.

The Management Side reiterated that any settlement must be affordable and sustainable to the sector and noted that its offer is double that of the current Government Public Sector Pay Policy. It highlighted the increase to National Insurance and the impact this has made to the sector’s finances and contended that any increase to the current offer would require colleges to make efficiency savings.

The Staff Side stated its members are disappointed with the lack of progress on pay, as in its view, there is lack of evidence in the justification of the Management Side’s offer and that it would remain with its claim of £1,300, flat rated and consolidated, on all scale points.

The Management Side stated this is a significant increase and in its view is unaffordable to the sector and that this figure would require large scale cuts, including staffing, to be made in order to make it affordable.

The Staff Side responded that it was disconcerted by this statement, as any staffing decrease would lead to a cut in income through a decrease in teaching. In its view, telling the Staff Side that jobs could be cut was inconsequential.

The Staff Side acknowledged there is a gap between both sides and requested the Management Side make an increased offer that it could take back to its members. The Staff Side's view was that the longer it takes to settle this negotiation, then the more difficult it will be for staff, due to rising inflation.

The Management Side stated the Employers' Association has provided it with parameters to negotiate within and stated that its offer has gone beyond those parameters and, for any significant movement to happen, it would have to take soundings with its members. The Management side also restated its view that £1,300 was unaffordable.

The Staff Side advised it has looked into different sources of funding for Further Education which, in its view, has increased year on year and that this is under the settlement figure which was arrived at last year. The Staff Side requested data regarding college spending, due to its view that overall funding had increased yearly over the recent period.

The Management Side stated it is more than happy to meet with the Staff Side NJNC Joint Secretary to fully discuss its financial position, noting that this information is open and transparent, and reminded the Staff Side that each college is a charity and has to work within contractual law.

The Staff Side did not agree that the charity status of colleges is relevant to these negotiations and asked the Management Side for an explanation of its financial position.

The Management Side disagreed that the charity status of colleges is not relevant. Colleges are required to have a balanced budget and not a deficit budget, as set out in the Financial Memorandum, which has a three-year period to balance books. Therefore, the Management Side stated that it is important to maintain financial sustainability and affordability within the college sector. The Management Side advised there had been an increase of 2.4% (£11.8m) for inflationary increases for salary and other costs and that limited funding had been made available from the Scottish Government for wellbeing and support to both staff and students, including digital poverty which is an issue in many colleges.

The Management Side restated that it could meet with the Staff Side Secretary to fully discuss its figures in terms of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) income lines and where it gets 2.4%, based on publicly available documentation, and can share this wider, once discussions have taken place.

The Staff Side maintained its position that it was looking for a substantial increase for the reasons already outlined in this and previous meetings.

After lengthy discussions the Management Side requested to take a brief adjournment to consider the points raised.

Adjournment

Following an adjournment, the Management Side advised that due to the gulf between both sides, it would like to update the Employers' Association of the current position at the scheduled meeting on Wednesday 10 November 2021. From there, a further negotiation meeting could be arranged with the staff side.

The Staff Side expressed disappointment that this was the Management Side position. The Staff Side asked for further clarity in the 2.4% figure that was mentioned by the Management Side to see if there was scope to allow both sides to move their respective positions today.

The Management Side set out that the grant from SFC has been compared to previous years and that the core grant increase available for the sector, to utilise any inflationary pressures across 2021-22, is equivalent to a 2.4% increase in the core teaching grant, that goes towards covering salary and other costs. This is equivalent to £11.8m.

The Staff Side asked for further clarity and specifically what can be used for pay from the 2.4% core grant increase.

The Management Side stated that the current offer of £800, combined with the same figure offered to support staff, breaches the £11.8m fund available. The Management Side cited increased costs, including the planned rise in National Insurance contributions, that are not being covered by the Scottish Government.

The Staff Side restated it is looking for an offer acceptable to its members and advised it would be issuing a Newsletter to its members updating them of the position reached in negotiations thus far.

The management side advised that colleges would also be issuing a communication to its staff.

29/21 COVID

Paper 1 – Health and Safety Guidance to Members was shared by the Staff Side on Wednesday 4 November 2021 for consideration. The Staff Side stated it is intending to issue this paper to its members to provide advice on a number of key health and safety issues.

The Management Side stated that its position was that this was not a matter for the side table and suggested this document be issued to the Covid Recovery Group (CRG).

The Staff Side disagreed, stating that this is not the role of the CRG and that Government guidance advised of the need for sectoral level discussion regarding COVID 19. It further stated a wish to engage collegiately with the Management Side on this matter.

The Management Side repeated its position that Health and Safety is not for negotiation, therefore the NJNC machinery should not be used for considering COVID 19 matters.

The Staff Side expressed disappointment in the Management Side's position, as in its view, this is a matter relating to industrial relations and referred to its internal survey, stating that 64% of its members are not aware how to process concerns around ventilation and that staff do not feel COVID safe in the workplace.

Both sides remained with their respective positions and no agreement could be reached on this matter.

30/21 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting is Thursday 16 December 2021, although it was agreed to schedule a meeting to discuss pay prior to this date.