

Minute of the Meeting of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Side Table (Support), on Wednesday 18 August 2021 at 1400-1700, via video conference

In Attendance	
Jackie Galbraith	Management Side
Debbie Kerr	“ “
Alex Linkston	“ “ (Chair)
Ross Martin	“ “
Sarah-Louise Nandadasa	“ “
Derek Smeall	“ “
David Watt	“ “
Collette Bradley	Staff Side
Martin Clark	“ “
Chris Greenshields	“ “
Alison MacLean	“ “
Laura McLean	“ “
John Slaven	“ “
Heather Stevenson	Management Side Secretary
John Gallacher	Staff Side Secretary
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Catherine McCreath	Zoom Administrator

14/21 Welcome and Apologies

The Management Side was in the Chair for this meeting. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

15/21 Pay Claim 2021/22

The Chair invited the Staff Side to introduce Paper 1 – *Support Staff Pay Terms and Conditions 2021/22 Claim*. Paper 1 seeks a £2,000 consolidated flat rate payment added to all Support Staff salary points. The Staff Side referred to the increase in core funding to the college sector from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and in its view that there is a catch up required on reduced wages over the last decade.

The Staff Side discussed several terms and conditions elements that are not related to pay, also outlined in Paper 1. It was noted that the notion of the full-time working week being over four days rather than five was introduced in the 2020/21 claim and that this matter is still outstanding. It was the view of the Staff Side that this item is pertinent given the current COVID conditions which have allowed more flexible working and that there are a number of nations and employers in Scotland that are pursuing the four day working week.

The Staff Side referred to *paragraph b* of Paper 1, explaining that they are faced with additional costs due to homeworking and were disappointed to learn that lecturers are receiving £400 on top of pay settlements. In addition, the Staff Side invited urgent discussions in terms of career development days, mental health days, and an agreement on national pay and grading for support staff which, in its view, is critical due to cost of living increase.

Referring to *paragraph f* of Paper 1, the Staff Side noted there are a number of outstanding items from last year's claims and would seek immediate discussions to progress these matters. In particular, the Staff Side stated that there are a significant number of colleges in Scotland where the majority of staff have an entitlement to 49 days annual leave. In addition, the Staff Side raised its concern about staff who work anti-social hours, namely from 1800 – 0800, noting that, in its view, they are not appropriately recompensed in terms of pay.

The Management Side thanked the Staff Side for the paper and for raising its points for consideration, although it disagreed with a number of the statements made. The Management Side then presented the financial challenges facing the sector this year and beyond.

The Management Side advised that discussions with the SFC and the Scottish Government regarding medium to long term planning are still ongoing and makes financial predictions a challenge. It was noted that there is no guidance or visibility of spending plan over the span of three years and it is clear that the one-off funding stream will not be replicated, therefore creating a very volatile position from April 2022 onwards.

The Management Side highlighted that the SFC offer of grant predominantly covers aspects including digital elements, mental health, counsellors, and student support and that all colleges are facing increased costs. The Management Side further advised that colleges across the sector are facing individual challenges, noting that a number of colleges are addressing support staff pension increase. It was noted that inflation is expected to rise to 3.9% in 2022 then fall back to 2% in 2023, therefore it would be more challenging to address a one-year inflationary spike and that a longer-term plan should be considered to ensure that the college sector is financially sustainable.

After lengthy discussions, it was agreed to take an adjournment to consider the points raised.

Adjournment

Following the adjournment, the Management Side advised it would provide a verbal response to each of the Support Staff terms and conditions elements of its claim, and that a paper containing this response would be circulated to the Staff Side after the meeting, to allow the Staff Side to consider these items. The Management Side advised it would also provide the Staff Side a paper detailing the financial items discussed. The Staff Side requested the breakdown of costings of both last year's award and this year's claim. This was agreed.

Referring to the four-day week request, the Management Side advised that it is keen to engage in exploratory discussions with a view to making use of the pilot funding available through the Scottish Government. The Management Side noted that it should be acknowledged there is a need to do a considerable amount of research work on the feasibility on this project, however, it will be looking to take this forward at an early date to progress this and suggested the new strategic forum that has been established may be the best place to start these discussions. The staff side did not agree that it should be deferred to the strategic forum and stated that it would be keen to progress this quickly through a sub group or separate group of the support staff side table.

In terms of the homeworking allowance request, the Management Side reminded the Staff Side that this item is committed to be explored at the Terms and Conditions Working Group and that the group has agreed to prioritise the outstanding pieces of work which will then allow the group to focus on the new matters from October 2021.

The Staff Side expressed concern that there is little progression with the Terms and Conditions Working Group. The Staff Side then referred to the £400 funding and noted that there are 5,529 lecturers who are receiving this funding.

The Management Side advised that the £400 funding initiative was introduced by the Scottish Government and that it is only for lecturing staff who are directly involved in the assessment of SQA qualifications and does not include HNC and that this covers approximately less than 5% of teaching staff across the college sector.

In terms of the item on unsocial hours, the Management Side advised that the 2018 Agreement had debated this issue at great length. The current agreement is that unsocial hour's allowances will apply between the hours of 2100 and 0600. However, the Management Side would welcome evidence from the Staff Side in terms of the extension on unsociable hours.

The Staff Side agreed that it will provide evidence of this.

The Management Side then provided the headlines of their response to the terms and conditions items as there is likely to be further detailed discussions on each of the items and noting that this will be confirmed to the Staff Side in writing.

In terms of career development, it stated that, as per the 2018 Agreement, a commitment was made by both employers and trade unions to work together with the College Development Network to explore new national training programmes for support staff and that this should be resumed. The Staff Side view is that this was an entirely different matter to that being raised.

Referring to the item on mental health, the Management Side advised that individual colleges are responsible for the wellbeing of staff and all have initiatives in place to ensure this.

The Management Side advised that a dedicated Pay and Grading Working Group along with an independent expert in pay and grading is committed to continuing to work in partnership with the support staff trade unions on the area of Pay and Grading.

In terms of annual leave, the Management Side highlighted that the standard 45 days is the most generous leave entitlement in the public sector for this staffing group. The Management Side advised that annual leave is already under discussion at the Terms and Conditions Working Group and should continue to be discussed at that forum. It was also noted that flexible working would be treated as high priority at the Terms and Conditions Working Group and that discussions should include the staff side request for a national flexi-time scheme.

Referring to green travel schemes, the Management Side position remains that many colleges already operate such schemes, and these can be encouraged through the sector without a National Agreement being in place.

Responding to the item in relation to mental health first aiders, the 2020/21 Agreement was reminded by the Management Side which includes a commitment to explore the outstanding Terms and Conditions elements within the 2020/21 claim at the Terms and Conditions Working Group. The 2020/21 claim stated that Mental Health would be treated as high priority.

Following discussions, the Management Side tabled the following offer and requested the Staff Side take it to their membership for consideration.

A consolidated Pay Award equivalent to Public Sector Pay Policy (PSPP) for 2021-22 for all unpromoted and promoted lecturer scale points. PSPP is as set out below:

- *a cash underpin of £800 for those earning £25,000 or less*
- *a two per cent pay increase for those earning more than £25,000 and up to £40,000*
- *a one per cent pay increase for those earning more than £40,000 and up to £80,000*
- *a maximum pay increase of £800 for those earning £80,000 or more.*

The Staff Side requested a brief adjournment for initial reflections on the offer.

Adjournment

Following the adjournment, the Staff Side advised that the offer and response provided was not acceptable and it would not take it to their members. The Staff Side advised that it welcomed a 'package deal' that included other elements of their claim.

The Staff Side suggested that the meeting be reconvened in a few weeks to allow work to take place offline on areas within the claim. This was agreed.

16/21 Close

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

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Action Monitoring Log

Wednesday 4 December 2019		
Action	Owner	Completion Date
Circular 05/18 – Staff Side to share results from FOI request on Permanency.	Staff Side	Overtaken /Complete
Wednesday 10 June 2020		
Action	Owner	Completion Date
Pay Claim – full costings to prepared and then verified by SFC prior to the commencement of negotiations.	Management Side	On resolution of 1 st April Pay Increase dispute.
Wednesday 2 December 2020		
Action	Owner	Completion Date
Joint communication to be issued to mark the sector achieving Living Wage accreditation.	Joint Secretaries /Comms Teams	In Progress – March 2021
Facilities Time – Staff Side to supply the detail requested to allow Management Side to prioritise work.	Staff Side	Complete
Wednesday 17 March 2021		
Action	Owner	Completion Date
Issue joint communication on Living Wage Accreditation.	Joint Secretaries	June 2021 – In progress
Short paper to update the Side Table on Scope.	Management Side	June 2021
Provide an update on branch recognition at two new signatory colleges.	Management Side	June 2021
Staff side will issue 2021/22 Pay Claim in advance of the next Side Table.	Staff Side	June 2021 – Complete
Set up a schedule of meetings for the Terms and Conditions Working Group.	Management Side	April 2021 – In progress
Wednesday 18 August 2021		
Action	Owner	Completion Date
Provide a detailed paper containing the response to the terms and conditions requests.	Management Side	August 2021 – complete
Provide a paper detailing the financial items discussed	Management Side	August 2021 – in progress
Provide evidence in terms of unsociable hours	Staff Side	August 2021