

EDUCATION SECTOR

Our Ref: MJR/VT/HE/29/09

27th November 2009

To All Workplace Reps and Branches

Dear Colleagues

Pay, related items negotiations and Unite Education Sector emergency motion.

Several important matters have been going on over the last few days that now make it imperative for our members to reconsider where we are going on the 2009 pay claim and the redundancy avoidance and job security process for the sector.

Over the last few weeks there have been several meetings with UCEA and New JNCHES trade unions on the two issues mentioned above.

Job Security

Through the work of ACAS a joint document on job security and redundancy avoidance have been considered. In fact there have been at least 5 drafts, each attempting to breach the gap between UCEA's position and that of the NEW JNCHES unions.

The latest attempt has resulted in a document entitled "Digest on job security: a reference document for Higher Education institutions with input from UCEA and the HE trade unions". The important factor for Unite is that the Digest is an ACAS badged document and carries the weight and support of ACAS in its content and eventual application. For UCEA their important factor is that the document is not a full agreement.

Unite believe that it is a useful starting point but that it does not prevent local groups from expanding on the Digest or from reaching local agreement around the original draft agreement on job security and redundancy avoidance sent to representatives in recent weeks.

I also attach for your information a copy of the Digest and the agreed Communication with UCEA following the ACAS talks as well as a copy of the Press Notice that Unite issued at the time that the ACAS negotiations concluded.

2009 Pay

On pay despite your negotiators hardest and best attempts we have been unable to move the figure on offer beyond 0.5%. This is despite many ways we have approached the low offer including seeking a lump sum for low paid members of staff or reopeners should inflation increase over coming months.

It is the view of your New JNCHES negotiators that the latest position is the best we are likely to achieve by across the negotiating table without a strong and severe dispute.

Emergency motion

These points were discussed at the Unite Education Sector conference which took place this week in Brighton on the 26th November.

An emergency motion on the issues was considered and voted on by Unite delegates from over 30 higher education institutions present in Brighton.

The emergency motion is attached with this Circular. The most important part in my view is that the conference reluctantly recommended acceptance of the offer of 0.5% "as the best that can be achieved by negotiation". Those attending the conference were all seasoned union representatives who know we either have to be prepared to take strike action to move the matter forward or to regroup for 2010.

Local vote

Local groups are now asked to consider the matter. I would be grateful if you can call a meeting of Unite members preferably as joint meetings of all Unite members ask them to consider the content of this Circular and the attached emergency motion from the sector conference and decide the following question.

Do you wish to accept or reject the offer from UCEA of a 0.5% increase in pay for 2009 (now backdated to August 2009) and the proposed document from ACAS on job security.

Accept..... Reject.....

Please note any vote for rejection of the offer should be made on the basis that such a rejection nationally could be followed by a formal ballot for strike action.

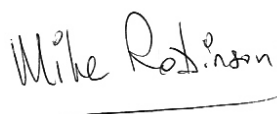
For your assistance I attach a draft ballot paper that members may wish to use to record their decision.

I would be grateful if votes can be counted locally and one person in each University or College take responsibility to notify my office no later than Friday 11th December 2009 of the total number of members voting for and against the question in each University or College.

Contd/...3

I will end by reminding members that often in the long and extended battle between employers and employees there are often temporary truces whilst we regroup in order to press the case at a later date that is better suited to our members. Such truces are often only a pause in the constant battle to win more for our members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike Robinson'.

Mike Robinson
National Officer
Education