

CENTRAL OFFICE

16th June 2025

To: Unite Members in Higher Education

Dear Member,

National HE Pay Negotiations 2025-26 – Member Consultation

The JNCHES unions submitted a pay claim for 2025-26 of **RPI + 3.5%** or a flat rate of at least **£2,500** (whichever is greater). The pay claim also called for a new minimum pay rate of £15 an hour, all institutions to become Foundation Living Wage employers and the deletion of pay points below the Foundation Living Wage (FLW). In addition, the claim calls for the progression and resolution of four pay related issues including a comprehensive review of the national pay spine, which is a Unite priority, due to the compression issues at both the bottom and middle points of the pay spine resulting from successive bottom weighted pay awards.

UCU requested that the claim included a request that we develop advice to Higher Education institutions on how to handle redundancies and the protection of national agreements on contracts in post 1992 HE institutions. The claim also restated two historic claims by the JNCHES unions for the introduction of a 35-hour week and to establish the Scottish sub-committee of New JNCHES.

We have held three negotiating meetings with UCEA on 29th March 16th April and 15th May 2025 in an attempt to reach agreement on the range of issues in the pay claim.

The initial pay offer from UCEA was 1% which the JNCHES unions indicated was unacceptable. UCEA then increased the pay offered to 1.2% and then at the final meeting on 15th May 2025 UCEA confirmed an improved pay offer of 1.4% and the deletion of Points 5 and 6 on the national pay spine. The impact of the offer on each scale point can be seen in the attached revised JNCHES Pay Scale.

UCEA has agreed to commence negotiations on the four pay related issues with negotiation on a revised national pay spine and contract types being prioritised. *However, UCEA has restated its position that if any JNCHES union moves to ballot for industrial action those negotiations will not proceed.*

We have agreed with UCEA to continue discussions on developing a common position regarding the future funding of the Higher Education sector which we hope can also be agreed with Universities UK and Guild HE with a view to persuading the UK and devolved governments to address this important issue. We also agreed to continue discussion on a Digest on Job Security to provide good practice advice to HE institutions on handling the current jobs crisis in the sector.

The JNCHES unions met on Monday 2nd June 2025 to consider the UCEA pay offer and we have subsequently informed UCEA that we are activating the JNCHES disputes procedure which requires two dispute meeting to be arranged. The JNCHES unions will use these meetings to seek a higher pay offer and to remove the UCEA condition on continuing negotiations on the four pay related issues particularly negotiations on the national pay spine which in its current form is not fit for purpose.

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Unite Education National Industrial Sector Committee (NISC) met on Tuesday 27th May 2025 and decided to launch a branch and workplace consultation of members in co-ordination with similar consultation exercises by other JNCHES unions. **Education NISC is recommending you vote YES to rejecting the 1.4% pay offer.** All other JNCHES unions will be recommending rejection of the pay offer to their members.

The pay offer does not meet the claim submitted by the JNCHES unions and does not meet any measure of inflation including the most recent Retail Price Index (RPI 4.5% April 2025). The offer is also below the pay offers made to public sectors worker of between 3.25% and 4% by the pay review bodies in May 2025 , Unite negotiators do not think there is the prospect of increasing the current pay offer without members taking industrial action so **we are recommending that you also vote YES to being balloted on industrial action** as this will increase the pressure on UCEA to improve the current pay offer.

If members reject the pay offer and want to be balloted for industrial action the JNCHES unions have agreed that we will move forward with industrial action ballots and any subsequent industrial action on a common timetable with a view to taking industrial action together in the new academic year.

We are now asking you to vote in a consultative ballot on the 2025-26 UCEA pay offer so that Education NISC can determine next steps, including any need to arrange industrial action ballots.

Yours sincerely

Andy Murray

National Officer Education Sector