

Unite Press Release

29 July 2010

The five trade unions within higher education have accused higher education employers of refusing to engage in meaningful national negotiations in response to the first-ever joint union claim.

Yesterday (Wednesday, 28 July), the employers made a final offer to the trade unions of a 0.4 per cent pay increase.

With the retail price index running at 5.0 per cent, the trade unions complained that the employers' offer represented a real-terms pay cut for the second year running.

Unite, the largest union in the country, was particularly bitter that nothing had been done to address the position of the low-paid within the sector.

With fears that over 22,000 jobs are at risk, Unite branded the employers' refusal to negotiate around job security as unacceptable and irresponsible.

Unite also complained that the employers had failed even to address many other aspects of the claim, including measures to improve equality in the sector.

No union accepted the employers' offer and would be referring the matter back to their constituent bodies.

Unite's national officer for higher education, Mike Robinson, said: "The employers refusal to negotiate around job security shows that vice chancellors and senior professors are safe, but are not prepared to engage nationally on a sensible process for staff in the future.

"The average pay for a vice-chancellor is about £250,000 and last year's pay rise for professors came in at 7.1 per cent.

"The 0.4 per cent offer represents a miserly £1 a week increase before tax and national insurance to the lowest paid employees working in higher education at a time when inflation is affecting low paid workers especially hard.

"University vice chancellors, deans and senior professors who have already pocketed substantial increases are showing a BP-like insensitivity from their Tuscan villas, whilst ordinary staff struggle to cope.

"Unite predicts that the current austerity measures could result in 22,000 jobs being lost in the higher education sector over the next few years. This will seriously dent Britain's position as a world leader in education and research."

ENDS

Note to news editors:

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The figure of 22,000 for job losses is based on the income for the sector, against the demand from ministers of 25 per cent cuts in public sector expenditure, including education, and the overall number employed in higher education.

The other unions are UCU, Unison, EIS and GMB.