UCEA UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION

Facilitating transformational change,
Enhancing the employee experience

UCEA Strategic Plan

2024 - 2027



About UCEA

The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) represents higher education institutions in their role as employers. UCEA is the leading voice on employment and reward matters in the UK Higher Education sector. We support our members to be employers of choice through collaboration, advocacy and expert advice.

We seek to do this in a way that:

- is responsive and sensitive to our members' diversity and differentiated aims and needs
- uses a collective sector voice effectively and appropriately
- is alert to the challenges and risks of the wider environment
- makes efficient use of resources and delivers value for money.



UCEA's core values

UCEA's work is underpinned by five core values which, as our behavioural compass, guide our actions at an individual, organisational and sector level:

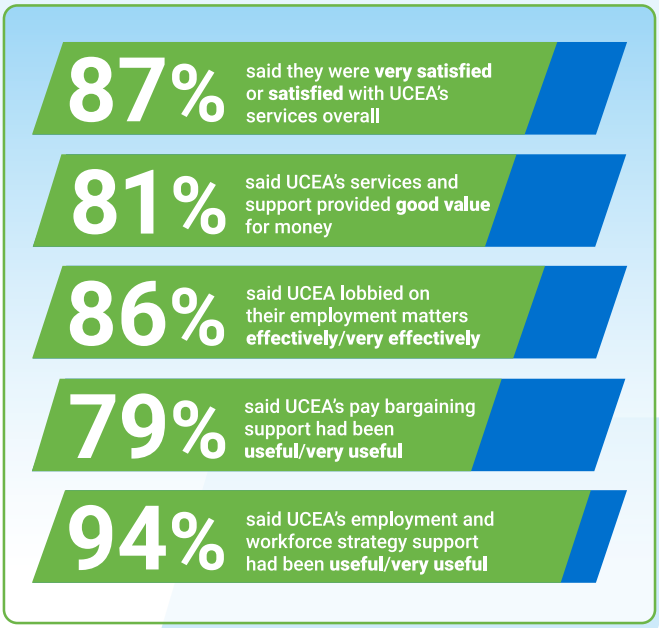
- **Leadership** - We consult, challenge and provide thought leadership
- **Expertise** - We develop and share our knowledge, information and evidence-based insight
- **Inclusivity** - We respect differences and utilise the benefits they offer
- **Integrity** - We demonstrate and promote what is right to uphold the highest standards
- **Aspiration** - We encourage learning, innovation and forward thinking

UCEA's aims

As a membership body, UCEA aims to:

- contribute to excellence and effectiveness in human resource management, anticipating, listening and responding to the shared needs of members
- enhance knowledge from within and beyond the sector and facilitate dialogue and learning
- represent the collective interests of our members

Our latest member survey, conducted in 2023, shows that UCEA has been successful in meeting each of these objectives:



Higher education is a sector with an important mission delivered by dedicated people, but it is also a sector which faces unprecedented challenges. The UCEA Strategic Plan covers the academic years from August 2024 to July 2027 and attempts to build on our previous successes, while further enhancing our services to members and our leadership role on employment and workforce matters.

The strategic plan is structured around five themes:

- Continuing to be **the expert voice in employment policy and reward**, articulating and promoting good employment practice, while respecting the diversity of institutions and providing a foundation for local solutions.
- **Negotiating fairly with our trade unions** to achieve the best for society, students and staff. This includes building relationships and fostering constructive dialogue on the HE workforce and financial challenges.
- Supporting employers to **set the terms of the debate on the sector's pension schemes**.
- **Working in partnership** with members, trade unions and sector agencies to promote a positive agenda for employment in the sector.
- Ensuring that **UCEA continues to develop and adapt as an organisation** exemplifying good practice as an employer whilst **providing effective support** and value to members.

Strategic priority 1: Supporting employer aspirations to enhance the employee experience

- Working with the sector to **promote good employment practice,** supporting employer reward strategies and promoting the development of total reward and the employee value proposition, both at individual HEI and sector level.
- Helping HEIs to foster a whole **workforce approach to employee voice**.
- **Promoting inclusion** and sharing the steps HEIs can take to **reduce the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps**.
- Working with sector partners to promote good employment practice in the areas of **learning and development, safety at work and physical, mental health and wellbeing**.
- **Supporting employers in their transformation and organisational change agendas**, helping them to build flexibility into their workforce models to meet the business needs.

Strategic priority 2: Promoting constructive employment relations

- Facilitating **constructive employment relations** at a local and national level with trade unions.
- Working towards a **shared understanding with the trade unions on sector affordability**.
- **Keeping New JNCHES under review and monitoring sector developments** which may affect single table bargaining, aware of the sector's growing divergence; developing alternatives where relevant.
- **Exploring opportunities to reach a negotiated settlement with our trade unions**, to bring stability to the sector within its financial ability.
- Where agreement is not possible, preparing for and **supporting members through disputes and industrial action**.

Strategic priority 3: Providing leadership on sector pensions

- **Working with the sector to develop principles in relation to retirement savings**.
- Facilitating activity to help the sector develop its pension arrangements to ensure it meets the changing needs of employers and employees.
- Progressing work on **stability, low-cost and flexible options** and **the governance of USS**, and developing an employer consensus as we move towards the 2026 valuation.
- **Providing practical and strategic support** to employers in **the LGPS and TPS**.

Strategic priority 4: Supporting members through our influence and engagement

- **Influencing effectively** on behalf of our members on **employment policy and pensions matters** relevant to the whole HE sector.
- **Strengthening our strategic alliances** with other sector agencies and mission groups, to avoid duplication, better pool resources and expertise, and provide value for money for the sector.
- Using UCEA's convening power to **facilitate networks of employers to share experience and expertise**.
- **Managing** the sector's reputation in response to **political and media scrutiny, particularly during episodes of industrial action**.
- **Continuing to develop our networks** within our members' leadership teams to ensure we effectively represent the sector.

Strategic priority 5: Taking forward UCEA in support of our members

- Ensuring that UCEA **role models good practice as an employer**, clearly articulating its Employee Value Proposition.
- **Effectively integrating USS employer representation** to enhance UCEA's offer to the sector.
- **Developing a new financial strategy** to reflect UCEA's changing responsibilities and resource levels and exploring new ways to add member value.
- **Monitoring our governance and decision-making arrangements** to ensure the UCEA Board reflects institutional diversity and our expanded responsibilities.
- Ensuring that UCEA's organisational structure **makes the best use of resources**, meeting the changing needs of members while **providing value for money**.
- **Continuing to adapt and develop**, harnessing member feedback, new technology and the potential of AI to support our events, member services and our communications strategy.



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