

New JNCHES pay negotiations 2022-23 – a summary of UCEA's offer

21 April 2022

A succinct background

UCEA is representing 145 HEIs in the 'New JNCHES' pay negotiation round for 2022-23. The negotiations began on 30 March 2022 with employers and trade unions seeking to reach an agreed outcome by the third and final meeting on 5 May 2022.

The core remit of New JNCHES negotiations is to determine the uplift to the pay spine. The trade unions' [detailed claim](#) includes a number of items that do not relate to pay and several that are outside of the scope of New JNCHES, [UCEA responded to the unions' claim to](#) highlight employers' priorities and constraints in the negotiations, acknowledging that while some of the items sat outside of the parameters of the negotiation, a number of the items are important areas where UCEA could provide thought leadership and support to the sector, and UCEA's offer outlines proposals for doing so. There is an understanding and joint concern relating to inflationary costs, with acknowledgement that inflation disproportionately affects lower paid staff and this is reflected in UCEA's opening offer. This sits alongside current inflationary pressures for HEIs and the increasing variation in individual institutional finances across the sector.

Employers entered the 2022-23 round with the intention of making this offer at an appropriate point that would still leave time for proper negotiation over pay, as well as making real progress on the other items.

What the employers are proposing

Full details of UCEA's offer, made to the trade unions on 21 April, are available on UCEA's [2022-23 New JNCHES pay round](#) page. The elements of this offer are to be read in conjunction with each other as no single element of this offer will be agreed until all elements are agreed and the pay round is concluded.

Pay and pay-related proposals:

Pay uplift

Employers recognise a number of the trade unions' concerns, from the effect of high inflation, which falls disproportionately on the lower paid, and a need to review the pay spine compression, together with pay rates at the lower end of the spine. **We propose** an uplift of up to 6% for those on the lowest points of the pay spine, with a minimum uplift of 2.75% for all those on or above Spinal Column Point 20. While this is a fair and reasonable offer in the current financial climate, it is very close to the limits of affordability across the sector and it is recognised that the offer will stretch finances for some HEIs.

Pay spine review

We propose a commitment to the establishment of a New JNCHES working group to examine the drivers, impact and potential recommendations in respect of the compression of the pay spine. The group would examine this issue to see what costed recommendations can be made jointly for the next two pay rounds.

Pay-related allowances and London weighting

We propose that all Post-92 HEIs that have retained separate London weightings also increase these by the same percentage uplifts.

‘Other items’ proposals:

Gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps

HEIs and UCEA have always shared the commitment of the sector trade unions to taking action to reduce the gender, ethnicity, disability and intersectional pay gaps so **we propose** the creation of a New JNCHES time-limited task and finish group, with a clear timeframe and terms of reference to gather and examine voluntary intersectional data, promote good practice and principles, and provide recommendations to reduce all such gaps.

Workload, mental wellbeing and Covid-19

The sector strives to provide leadership on positive support for staff health and wellbeing with the pandemic placing an increased emphasis on its importance. Although this does not fall within the scope of New JNCHES, UCEA will make several recommendations in these areas to our members and will continue discussions with the trade unions on approaches to stress and workload through the existing structure of the Higher Education Safety and Health (HESH) Forum.

Contract types

We propose to communicate a number of expectations to HEIs. These include minimising the use of hourly-paid employment to situations which are genuinely unpredictable or mutually agreeable to all parties and arrangements to pro-actively identify staff who have held a fixed-term contract or succession of fixed-term contracts which meet the statutory threshold of 4 years for conversion to ongoing employment. Also, for Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) contracts, **we propose** joint work to establish information on the nature of GTAs and similar roles and related issues.

35 hour working week

The trade union claim seeks the establishment of standard full-time working hours of 35 hours per week. National working hours do not fall within the New JNCHES remit and UCEA is aware that as many HEIs operate a 37-hour week as a 35-hour week. To reach a better understanding of the main aim of this claim **we propose** research on the variation between HEIs which can be promulgated to institutions to discuss with their local trade unions.

Scottish Sub-Committee of New JNCHES

It remains inappropriate for negotiations on the pay uplift to be conducted at a devolved administration level given the existence of, and support for, a UK-wide process for collective pay bargaining. There are arrangements already in place in Scotland to discuss matters of joint interest outside of pay. As such, **we believe** that it is not appropriate to pursue this element of the unions’ claim.

Career development, training and progression opportunities

We propose the establishment of a joint working group to examine good practice, career development and training opportunities including, but not limited to, technicians and the Technician Commitment and academic-related staff.

Redeployment

Although redeployment is not within the scope of New JNCHES, **we propose** joint discussions to explore examples of best practice and mechanisms which could be promoted to HEIs and further improve visibility of opportunities at different institutions.