

Time to Pay Up campaign launched

FE unions are calling time on the colleges that are refusing to implement the nationally agreed pay deals negotiated with the Association of Colleges (AoC). The six recognised unions (ACM, ATL, GMB, UCU, UNISON and UNITE) are committed to joint national and local campaigning and have launched Time to Pay Up, which will target non-compliant colleges.

- All colleges to undertake jointly agreed Job Evaluation exercises.

As part of our Time to Pay Up campaign we have launched a joint website to help reps organise local campaigns to persuade colleges to honour national pay deals. Visit the website today for more information on the campaign and its impact:

www.timetopayup.org.uk

Campaign aims

The Time to Pay Up campaign has three aims:

- All colleges to agree to implement the 2008/09 national pay deal of 3.2% or £550 for all staff from 1 Oct 2008.
- All colleges to adhere to the National Joint Forum-agreed national pay scale with the minimum rate of £6.91 an hour. This includes colleges that have moved onto the scale but have fallen behind by not implementing pay deals.



Victory as Sheffield leads the way

Sheffield College has agreed to introduce the national pay scales following strike action by college staff.

UNISON and UCU members held a one-day strike on 30 September 2008, following the refusal of the college to honour the 2007/08 national pay deal. As a result of this action the college agreed to enter into serious negotiations on staff pay.

The outcome of these negotiations is that college staff will move on to the FE national

pay scale from 1 March 2009. Staff will get a pay increase ranging from 6.32 per cent to 8.6 per cent. The minimum wage will also increase to £6.91 an hour. Congratulations to our colleagues at Sheffield they didn't want to take strike action but they were forced into it by the college's refusal to honour the pay award. The unions stood together and our members won the pay award they were owed.

Another pay round begins...

A bit like Christmas, no sooner is one over, than it seems the next one is round the corner. The pay claim for 2009/10 should be agreed by all unions by the end of February, after a series of meetings, culminating in a trade union side agreement.

There is little doubt that employers will try and use the economic downturn to be even more grudging than usual. UNISON, however, will argue that unlike high street shops, the income streams for colleges have not suddenly plummeted and in fact some of the measures to offset the financial crisis, like massive investment in apprenticeships, will be income generating. So listen for the news from the National Joint Forum as FE college pay talks spring into action.



Contact

Telephone:
0845 355 0845

Email:
education@unison.co.uk

City of Wolverhampton College joins UNISON in lifelong learning partnership

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”
Margaret Mead



Wolverhampton general UNISON branch has persuaded the college to sign the Skills Pledge, a commitment to support all employees to achieve at least Level 2 qualifications. No other college in our region has done this.

The signing event was attended by our local MP, Rob Marris, and educational organisations, including the regional Learning and Skills Council.

Led by a UNISON union learning rep, supported by other college unions, the college/union partnership was developed to support members and potential members with their lifelong learning. Initially, this means a focus on literacy, numeracy, IT and ESOL. But the aim is to encourage staff to take

up opportunities for vocational and personal development training – to degree level and beyond. The college is looking at ‘well-being policies’ and has actively supported staff, taking courses to encourage them to be proactive in improving college

culture. Not every manager will see the point of releasing staff for training, no matter how much we show the positive benefits. We are also in a credit crisis, which means resources are restricted and sometimes lost altogether.

We have made further progress, signing a Learning Development Agreement with the college. From January 2009 the branch is running an ESOL course (with the Workers’ Educational Association) and a basic IT course (with Wolverhampton Adult Education Service) from January 2009, for college and council staff. It is also working in partnership with the college and Wolverhampton Adult Education Service, promoting Adult Education Week.

The branch bid successfully to develop lifelong learning, which includes the use of seconded staff. This was achieved with the hard work of the branch education team (Dave Auger, Wendy Bond, and myself), the regional co-ordinator (Gurdeep Singh) and a supportive branch leadership (Adrian Turner and Sue Brealey).

With extra resources, we aim to develop partnerships to help raise the profile of lifelong learning; increase the number of union learning reps; the range of courses on offer; and have a membership recruitment drive.

I’ve been told this is something never done quite this way in UNISON before – a reason to carry on this work, despite the many barriers to success – yes, why not!

Alan Marriott
Branch education officer,
City of Wolverhampton College,
UNISON learning rep

To find out more about setting up a learning agreement or becoming a union learning rep contact education@unison.co.uk

Let’s go to conference

UNISON has many members in further education, but if you ever go to UNISON’s local government or national delegate conference you would not think so.

Often the starting point for change is active participation at a branch level. In FE we have many issues that require discussion, therefore we need a strong presence at conferences, as they

provide us with the platform from which to air our views and concerns.

It is time to raise the profile of the FE sector: I was a new delegate to UNISON conferences in 2008 and I was disappointed to find how little further education was on the agenda. I hope this year will be different. We can make an impact on the lives of many members working in FE by giving them

a voice at conference, so contact your local branch and find out how to get along to conference.

Let’s get organised and get to conference.

Carol Warren
Castle College Nottingham,
East Midlands FE committee member

Your FE questions answered

Nixon Todd, North West rep on the UNISON FE and sixth form national committee answers questions put to him by members.



Q My college says it can't afford to pay the cost-of-living increase this year, but I am struggling to pay my increased energy bills. What can I do?

A UNISON has launched the Time to Pay Up Campaign to get colleges in England pay the national pay rise (see page 1). Get involved in the campaign.

If your college claims it can't afford to implement the national pay rise remind them that the Association of Colleges

(AoC) surveys all FE colleges on what they can afford to pay before it agrees to the national deal.

The unions will negotiate locally if a college can prove they have serious financial problems. What is not acceptable however is for colleges to refuse to negotiate.

Q I would like to take a more active role in the union, but we are so short-staffed that my manager says I can't take any time off. Can you help?

A What do the other stewards at your college say? Get yourself accredited – an accredited steward is entitled to time off – check out the recognition agreement between UNISON and your employer.

Give lots of notice and arrange some union activities on a day when your department is quieter.

Then build it up – but always give adequate warning to your manager and your colleagues – you need them on your side!

Q Why should I join UNISON as we get the pay raise regardless?

A If you get the pay rise that is good news but being in a union isn't just about pay – what if your workload is increasing and you think you should be regraded or you get ill and while you're off your manager changes your job or your department is being restructured? These are all areas where UNISON will get involved to support you – but only if you are a member.

And back to the pay question – UNISON is able to negotiate with the employer because we have thousands of members in the FE sector – if you join, we'll be that bit stronger. And you will be stronger too.

If you have a question you want a member of the FE national committee to answer then email: education@unison.co.uk

G20: Put People First demonstration

The leaders of 20 of the world's biggest economies meet in London on 2 April to discuss the way forward in tackling the global financial crisis.

On 28 March, there will be a mass demonstration in London to tell them that jobs, public services and the environment should be at the heart of that.

UNISON has joined a broad coalition of trade unions, development NGOs, environmentalists and faith groups to

make sure the right issues are put on the table – jobs, justice and climate.



The union is calling on as many members as possible to join the Put People First demonstration, which will focus on three key demands: decent jobs and public services for all, an end to global poverty and inequality, and the building of a green economy.

“Those leaders, including President Barack Obama, should be

left in no doubt that we expect a new start. Greedy bankers and financiers, who caused this mess, should not be allowed to get away with it. We expect measures that will help the jobless, the homeless and the poverty-stricken throughout the world.

UNISON has united with other unions under the TUC umbrella in a coalition that also includes Friends of the Earth, Stop Climate Chaos, War on Want and British Overseas NGOs for Development.

UNISON regional offices have been asked to coordinate transport to the event. To keep up with the plans, check www.putpeoplefirst.org.uk

Birmingham leads the way on disability equality



The commission found that there are significant barriers for disabled staff in lifelong learning and it is hoped that by getting organisations, colleges and trade union branches to sign up to the disability equality commitment these barriers can be removed.

future, and adult learning gives people the opportunity to increase their skills, gain confidence and improve their lives. It is only right that the barriers faced by disabled staff, who make a significant contribution to the enjoyment and the benefits that lifelong learning brings to many, should be removed.

By making this commitment to disability equality, UNISON Birmingham colleges branch is practising what it preaches, and addressing the needs of disabled members of staff throughout the FE sector.

Birmingham colleges branch is leading the way to ensure equality for disabled staff in lifelong learning. It is the first trade union branch in further and higher education to sign up to the Lifelong Learning UK's Disability Equality Commitment.

In signing up to the pledge, Birmingham colleges branch is committing to 11 recommendations and encouraging the nine member colleges within our branch to follow our example.

The commitment is part of the disability equality implementation work plan that has arisen out of the Commission for Disabled Staff findings.

The Disability Equality Commitment is a big step forward in ensuring disabled staff have the same opportunities as their non-disabled counterparts and learners. Education is crucial to building a stable economy for our country in the

This is an important issue. Improving working environments and enhancing career opportunities for all workers in the further education sector is key to what the Birmingham colleges branch of UNISON does for members.

George Day
Birmingham colleges branch

Race equality – staff consultation

It has been seven years since the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education published recommendations on ways to improve the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic staff in FE, and nearly seven years since the Race Relations (Amendment) Act came into effect. How have the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic staff changed as a result?

Lifelong Learning UK, in consultation with UNISON and UCU, is holding a series of staff consultation events. As well as giving a concise guide to rights and responsibilities under the law, these events will allow staff to share

information about their experiences in key areas of work.

The events run from 1–3.30pm with lunch and refreshments provided:

- 11 March – London
- 13 March – Sheffield
- 23 March – Birmingham
- 30 March – Manchester.

Places are limited and the events will operate on a first-come, first-served basis.

To register for a place contact Pamela Newbould: pamelanewbould@lluk.org

LGBT Forum conference

The Learning and Skills Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum's first national conference takes place on 24 March in Birmingham. The day will offer practical guidance and problem-solving with speakers and breakout sessions. It will look at key steps to promote LGBT equality and there will be a practical session on using the forum's guidance on trans equality.

To find out more email: education@unison.co.uk

Cymru/Wales pay claim settled



UNISON and the trade union side of Fforwm, the negotiating body for FE in Wales, have reluctantly accepted an increase in pay of 2.45% for 2008/9.

In a ballot of the 2,000 UNISON FE members in Wales, members voted 2:1 to accept the employers' final offer. The 2.45% increase will be backdated to 1 August 2008 and there is a clear commitment from the employers' side that all 21 FE colleges in Wales will apply the increase. Pay arrears should be included in February salaries.

UNISON and the trade union side are still pursuing a common set of terms and conditions for all Wales. The employers have rejected this proposal, insisting that holidays, the working

week and other conditions are down to individual colleges. But the unions believe that their attitude will change as political pressure is brought to bear from the Welsh Assembly Government.

There is a big black cloud over the 2009/10 pay negotiations, however, with reductions in the Welsh Assembly funding settlement for FE in 2009/10. The overall budget has been cut by 1.06% – more than £3m – with some colleges facing cuts of up to 7.5%. This will inevitably lead to cuts in education provision and staff redundancies.

The situation will be compounded by the UK government's reduction of £5 billion in public expenditure in the pre-budget report, which will result in the

Welsh Assembly having to cut existing public service budgets in Wales by a further £500 million in 2009/10.

Paul Elliott, head of local government for UNISON Cymru/Wales said: "The Welsh Assembly Government's decision to slash FE Wales' budgets at a time of recession and rising unemployment when there will be an increasing demand for retraining amongst the Welsh workforce, is nonsensical."

The FE trade unions are seeking urgent meetings with John Griffiths, Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Skills, and launching a political campaign to reverse these cuts. More details to be announced shortly.

Organising for the future in Scotland

For some years the UNISON members working in FE colleges have felt like the poor relations. Assigned to the local government branches, which have their own problems as a priority, and part of the local government service group where the issues get lost – and worst of all members get isolated from each other with no structure to feed into.

The rot first set in in the 1990s when national bargaining was abolished and each individual college became a separate entity. They had to do their own pay negotiations and we are now at a point where 42 different colleges have different pay scales, grading structures, and terms and conditions.

But hopefully that's all changing. The Scottish government has indicated its intention to consult the sector on a



possible return to national bargaining and we are working closely with the STUC and the other FE unions to campaign for this.

Luckily we are in a good position to run such a campaign. As part of Meeting the Organising Challenge UNISON Scotland has created an organising team for FE and has set up three local networks for people to come together and discuss common issues. The networks have elected a Scottish FE

sector committee, which stands separate in its own right and is not a part of the local government service group.

The organising team is led by regional organiser Nancy Kelly and consists of Kevin O'Neil (area organiser) and Jane Fielding (local organiser). Kay Sillars from UNISON Scotland's policy and information team, who will work on the national bargaining campaign.

The sector committee has developed a work plan for the year, which includes a job evaluation briefing for all Scottish reps and a development weekend for the committee to identify recruitment and organising targets.

For more information contact Nancy Kelly: n.kelly@unison.co.uk

Green your workplace this spring



Have you ever wondered how to put green issues on the agenda in your college? UNISON has developed a new branch development and organising toolkit to help you.

Organising Around Climate Change and Other Environmental Issues includes straightforward suggestions on greening the workplace, tips for organising on green issues, a model green agreement with an employer, a branch development guide, a poster and a guide to green staff travel.

The toolkit can help your branch to think about how to make your workplace greener and a more pleasant environment to work in.

It has been developed as a response to growing concern among members

that employers are not taking their environmental responsibilities seriously enough. Over half of all CO2 emissions, which are the major cause of climate change, are work-related. Scientists now tell us that we need to cut back emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 if we are to prevent environmental catastrophe.

Although employers are getting better there is more to do. UNISON members can play an important role in ensuring that changes that enable workplaces to reduce energy use, waste and travel are fair and reasonable. The toolkit can be downloaded from the UNISON green pages of the website: www.unison.org.uk/green

Branches that want to run the toolkit activity should contact their regional education officer, who will provide assistance.

Come to the further education and sixth form college seminar

The further education and sixth form college seminar will be taking place from 2pm Friday 27 March until 5.30pm Saturday 28 March 2009 at the lovely Robinson College, Cambridge.

The seminar is an annual opportunity to discuss the work issues affecting college staff members. As well as updates on national negotiations and policy developments, there will be workshops and presentations on the UNISON structures review, equality,

health and safety, job evaluation, the machinery of government changes coming into force in 2010, mergers and 14–19 services. There will be regional meetings and a meeting specifically for sixth form delegates.

The event brings together seasoned activists with those who are new and their interaction, be it formal or otherwise, makes the seminar zing. If you would like to attend, register by the 13 March by contacting your branch.

Sixth form colleges are a new legal entity

The new education Bill establishes sixth form colleges as a separate legal entity. It is anticipated that this will have a limited impact as they are likely to retain their current independent status, although as part of the 'local authority family'.

The precise relationship between

the colleges, their local authority and the new Young People's Learning Agency has yet to be fully established and further details and guidance will emerge as the Bill proceeds. The new regulations will come into force in September 2010 and further advice about potential changes will be circulated. It is expected that national

pay and conditions of service will continue to apply. In the meantime, college reps should ask their principals whether they have any intention of changing the designation of the college from a sixth form and if so, let us know by emailing: b.thomas@unison.co.uk

Migrants' contribution celebrated

Many of our public services could not cope without the contribution made by migrant workers. They fill around

UNISON believes migrant workers should be treated with fairness and dignity at work and in society, and works to counter the right wing media portrayal of migrants as a drain on our public services.

We have commissioned a series of photos to celebrate the work of migrant staff in the UK's public sector and the exhibition is available to lend out to regions. The pictures feature care home workers from overseas at work in residential care homes looking after our elderly and vulnerable. The

photos are accompanied by compelling stories told by the migrant workers themselves.

The exhibition is mounted on 6' x 2'6" pull-up, double-sided banner stands, so are very easy to set up and take down. It is accompanied by postcards of the images with details of how to find out more about UNISON's migrant workers participation project and how to join.

If you would like to host this exhibition in your college, contact Adam Rogalewski: A.Rogalewski@unison.co.uk



one in 10 public sector jobs, yet continue to face discrimination, exploitation and abuse.



Join UNISON — your friend at work

PLEASE FILL IN THIS FORM IN BLOCK CAPITALS USING BLACK INK AND GIVE IT TO YOUR UNISON REP OR SEND TO THE ADDRESS BELOW
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| £384.62–£480.76 | £20,001–£25,000 | £3.23 | £14.00 | H |
| £480.77–£576.92 | £25,001–£30,000 | £3.98 | £17.25 | I |
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It is important that you indicate a choice of fund by ticking one of the boxes below.

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