



Higher Education Professional, Technical, Administrative
and Ancillary Staff Committee

Trade Union Side

Pay and Conditions Claim 2006

The Claim

The PTAAS unions are seeking:

- A minimum starting salary which equates to an hourly rate of at least £6.50 per hour.
- A substantial increase in all pay spine points
- A flat rate element.
- A national minimum rate of 25 days leave per annum.
- A maximum standard working week of 35 hours.
- Modernisation of the maternity leave, paternity leave, carer leave and adoption leave agreements to reflect best practice and ensure compliance with changes in statutory regulations.
- The removal of training rates and age related reductions for young people.
- The deletion of the bottom point on the pay spine.

We are also seeking a commitment from the employers that the basic principles underlying the framework agreement are upheld and not undermined. In particular the commitment to a pay and grading structure that will apply to all staff, will support equal pay for work of equal value and is consistent transparent and fair.

The PTAAS unions would also like to take this opportunity to repeat their belief that addressing the pay issues across the sector would be best served by single table bargaining and that any settlement reached should apply across all pay groups.

Pay

The PTAAS unions have welcomed the recent improvements for the lowest paid in the sector in recent pay settlements. However, as the latest UCEA report 'Recruitment and Retention of Staff in Higher Education 2005' shows, there is still more improvements required. The report highlights the fact that the group of workers that higher education institutions have most difficulty in recruiting and retaining are low paid manual staff, particularly cleaning and catering staff. The key reason given by the majority of institutions for this difficulty is 'comparative pay levels in the private sector'.

The problems are illustrated by some of the quotes from HR managers in the report. One is quoted as saying, '[We] couldn't recruit cleaners at all, [it was] virtually impossible as they can get more in the private sector'. Another is quoted, 'Catering is the main recruitment issue. It has always been difficult to recruit good general catering assistants and chefs.'

According to the recent IDS figures, in the last year, many deals in the public sector have featured a significant uplift to minimum entry salaries, of up to 12%. In most government departments the minimum salary is now above £12,000. In the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs it is £14,083 or £7.30 an hour.

Despite the headline rate of inflation remaining slightly below 3% many of the underlying costs of fundamental household expenditure have risen at above this rate. Average domestic energy bills have risen from £575 in January 2004 to over £800 by next March, Npower recently raised electricity prices for the second time in three months last week, while British Gas recently announced rises of 22% and Powergen more than 24%. Both water and council tax bills are likely to increase by over 5% in April and since 2003, the cost of petrol has risen by approximately a third.

The effect of these increases means that the real rate of inflation for many households is higher than the headline rate and has a disproportionate impact on the lowest paid.

The trade union side welcomed the commitment given by UCEA that the minimum salary in higher education would be at least £6 per hour by 2006. However we believe to deliver a living wage for the lowest paid staff and to provide for a competitive salary that the minimum rate should be at least £6.50 per hour and the current lowest point on the pay spine should be deleted.

The other key area of the workforce that institutions identified in the UCEA survey in recruiting and retaining staff was among senior support roles, particularly in HR, IT, senior technicians and skilled trades such as electricians. Again, the key reason given for this difficulty was uncompetitive salaries compared with the private sector.

The survey also reported that the retention of younger support staff was emerging as a significant problem in the sector and was getting worse. Over a quarter of institutions reported difficulties in retaining younger staff and 42% reported high turnover among this group.

Again uncompetitive salary levels were identified as a key problem in retaining young staff. Like manual workers, this group of workers are more likely to change jobs as a result of uncompetitive salary levels. It is in everyone's interest that higher education institutions are able to recruit and train quality staff for the future; they will be unable to do so if they continue to offer low pay and poor conditions of service for the lowest paid.

Young people are likely to receive the lowest rates of pay. We are seeking the removal of training rates and age related reductions for young people in all sections of the workforce. We believe this is consistent with the principles of equal pay and the legislative reform coming into force banning age related discrimination from 2006.

Conditions of Service

The PTAAS unions submitted a detailed claim last year outlining the need to create a framework of minimum core conditions for the sector and modernising many of the outdated agreements that still exist. Following this claim an equalities working party was established to review many of the existing arrangements in the sector. To date a meeting this working group has yet to be convened. This, we believe reflects the importance (or lack of) that UCEA has placed on this issue.

We recognise that many institutions have reviewed their terms and conditions of service during negotiations on the implementation of the Framework Agreement, but we still believe that a core framework of conditions as recommended by the Bett Report is still the best way forward. A national framework will protect those staff with the worst conditions and remove some of the inconsistencies and inequalities that exist within the existing arrangements.

In the UCEA survey institutions identified being recognised as a fair employer with good conditions of service as a key factor in attracting high quality staff when they are unable to compete in terms of salary. Unless the issues of terms and conditions are addressed then universities will find themselves behind much of the public sector and lose this key recruitment tool.

The unions believe that terms and conditions of service should remain as negotiating issues within the ambit of JNCHES. We believe that the support staff claim on conditions of service needs to be revisited and given serious consideration by UCEA.

Commitment to Equality

The PTAAS unions are seeking a commitment from UCEA to try and ensure that all settlements under the terms of the Framework Agreement meet the principles of the agreement set out in Appendix A of the agreement. Unfortunately, the experience of the support staff unions is that many employers have failed to ensure that the principles of equality and fairness run through institutional implementation agreements.

We are most concerned that some settlements are using differential agreements for different groups of staff which both perpetuated existing inequalities and in some cases created new one. Regretfully some of these arrangements have arisen from some local interpretations of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' between UCEA and the AUT that has created a climate of confusion and misinterpretation across the pre-1992 institutions.

At a time when employers are being faced with increasing litigation in the field of equal pay we believe that a renewed statement is required from UCEA, not just to protect institutions from legal jeopardy but to protect the spirit and integrity of the Framework Agreement. The statement should clearly outline the implications for equal pay along with clear guidance on some of the unacceptable pay and grading arrangements that are being introduced in the name of the Framework Agreement that have nothing to do with the spirit or the of terms of the agreement. The PTTAS unions are therefore seeking a joint statement with the employers covering these issues.

Conclusion

The introduction of top up fees in England has created a new funding stream for the sector and it is vital that a significant element of this funding goes towards addressing the historical underpayment of staff in the higher education sector. It was seven years ago that Sir Michael Bett recommended in his review of terms and conditions of employment in higher education that there should be a minimum wage of £11,000 per year in higher education. Whilst we welcome the fact that this milestone is finally going to be achieved this year, it is long overdue.

This year's settlement needs to create the foundation of a way forward for the sector. We need substantial increases to all points on the salary spine, underpinned by increases for the lowest paid, a commitment from UCEA to address both terms and conditions of employment and commitment to the principles of the Framework Agreement.

The trade union side looks forward to a swift resolution of the claim.

Appendix A

London Weighting

The Trade union side is calling for the introduction of a standard rate of £4,000 for London weighting for all staff currently covered by London and fringe area allowance payments. This is particularly important to end the recruitment and retention difficulties in the capital. Some London institutions have reported turnover rates of between 40 and 50% among manual and other low paid staff.

The need for a rate of payment of £4000 was recently identified in a report by 'London First' an organisation supported by 300 leading employers in the capital including virtually all of the capital's higher education institutions. The report recognised the housing crisis in the capital and the need for an increase in London weighting to meet the additional needs of the workforce.

In a speech in June 2003, the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, indicated that he was aware of the dissatisfaction caused by differential rates of London weighting. He said: 'it makes sense to recognise that a more considered approach to local conditions in pay offers. In London and the South East where professionals have benefited from increased London weighting, many lower paid workers have missed out.'

The differentials in London weighting create a barrier to harmonising terms and conditions across the sector and perpetuate the binary divide. The equalisation of London weighting across institutions should be prioritised.

The increase in house prices throughout the capital now mean that the grounds for differentials in inner and outer London weighting and between different groups of staff can no longer be justified.

In a league table of public sector London weighting, the higher education sector comes bottom. Police officers currently receive an allowance of £6,276, an allowance rate that has enable the Metropolitan Police to stem the flow of staff away from London, Nurses currently receive £4,668 and teachers receive £6,090, firefighters receive £4,458 and civil service awards are approaching £4,000. Unless there are serious efforts to address the issue in higher education, the current recruitment and retention problems suffered by London institutions will only get worse.

Once again higher education, particularly in the pre 1992 institutions is being left behind by the rest of the public and private sector in regard to London weighting. The freeze in London weighting payments in pre-1992 universities payments and the failure to address the issue merely stores up problems for the future.

The PTAAS unions strongly believe that it is essential to maintain the flat rate element of the allowance. The London weighting allowance was introduced to address a range of additional London costs such as housing, travel, commuting and the higher stress of living and working in London, these costs remain the same regardless of grade or position and should be the same for all. In fact, the element of London weighting for lower paid staff has always been of greater importance since it is such a significant element of pay, accounting in some cases for as much as 25% of salary, than for higher paid staff.

In fact, one of the key recommendations of the Pay Board when introducing London allowances in 1974 was, 'If London weighting is to be based on considerations of equity and the need to put London employees on a par with those working elsewhere, it is essential that it is an across the board payment.' Any recommendations to move away from principles of equity will be rejected.

The London Consortium has failed to deliver its remit following its establishment as part of the 2003 pay settlement. There needs to be a serious review of the negotiating machinery for the negotiation of the London weighting and the management of the impact that harmonisation through implementation of the Framework Agreement is going to have in London.