

Mike Robinson
National Officer
Unit 1 Kings Chambers
Hertford Place
Coventry
CV1 3JZ

Tel: 02476 227522
Fax: 02476 228036
Email: mike.robinson@unitetheunion.com



EDUCATION SECTOR

Our Ref: MJR/vt

14th August 2009

Ms Jocelyn Prudence
UCEA Chief Executive
3rd Floor Woburn House
20 Tavistock Square
London
WC1H 9HU

Dear Jocelyn

JNCHES 2009 Pay and related negotiations

As you will be aware Unite and other unions involved at JNCHES decided to consult their respective members on the final offer made by UCEA at the last JNCHES meeting on the 15th July 2009.

Unite had formally rejected the offer at that JNCHES meeting with representatives verbally submitting a "failure to agree" with UCEA.

Unite took the disputed issues to meetings of Unite national representatives on the 21st and 23rd July for further guidance. Those meetings overwhelmingly decided to put the disputed issues out to consultation seeking guidance from Unite's higher education membership whether members wished to accept or reject the offers from UCEA representing its subscribing higher education institutions.

That consultation process has been taking place over the period 27th July to 12th August.

The result of the consultations was considered today by another national meeting of senior workplace representatives drawn from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

I can advise that the consultation has resulted in a massive rejection of the UCEA offer of a 0.5% uplift in salary scales applicable from the 1st August and overwhelming opposition to the refusal of UCEA to sign up to a formal job security/redundancy avoidance agreement as submitted by the joint unions at JNCHES.

I will be writing to Unite representatives today informing representatives of the outcome and further details including this letter. I will also contact the other JNCHES unions to relay the content of this letter and the results of consultation as well.

Unite regrets the limitations placed on UCEA by its subscribers. UCEA came to the JNCHES negotiation table with a poor offer on pay and the inability of UCEA to negotiate at all on any job security/ redundancy avoidance agreement.

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The job security/redundancy avoidance agreement is considered a vital component by many members and as a means to avoid further job losses, understand as well that for Unite's lowest paid members the offer of 0.5% amounts to less than £1 a week increase after tax and other deductions. Unite low paid members suffer disproportionately from such items as fuel inflation and transport costs.

You will also be aware that the joint unions presented a very detailed claim to UCEA in April 2009 covering many and varied aspects from seeking a removal of the lowest spine point, an extension of the pay scales above the current ceiling, to on call payment changes and other items. The vast majority of the items have had little or no negotiations at JNCHES having been met with a rejection by UCEA who advised they had no remit to negotiate on many of the items raised.

Any bargaining process is by necessity a two way street. The refusal of UCEA subscribers to properly allow UCEA to negotiate has in my view led to UCEA appearing hamstrung and has seriously weakened the relationship with Unite and possibly other unions. I do not believe your subscribers understand the damage they are doing to collective bargaining within the sector by refusing UCEA a remit to negotiate.

Clearly following the rejection of the UCEA offer by Unite members there is now a serious dispute between Unite and UCEA including its subscribing Universities, Colleges and Institutions.

The New JNCHES agreement makes clear that if a dispute exists the parties in dispute should meet within 7 days of notifying the other to seek to resolve the disputed matters between the parties.

Accordingly this letter is a formal request for UCEA to meet Unite negotiators within the agreed timescale to seek to find a resolution.

I would be grateful for UCEA's response as soon as possible in order to progress matters and I can be reached by phone, email or letter.

I shall be writing today in similar terms to Prof. Sir Bill Wakeham Chair of UCEA.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Robinson".

Mike Robinson
Unite
National Officer
Education

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Copy to: John Richard Unison
David Belsey EIS
Rehana Azam GMB
Michael McNeil UCU
John Toner - Unite
Dave Jones - Unite
Tony Britton - Unite
Hugh Lewsley - Unite
Prof Bill Wakeham - Chair of UCEA