

# REJECT THE OFFER

## We need national action against lockouts

### The offer

On 15 April UCEA (the employers' organisation) made a 'full and final offer' of 2 percent (plus £30 for those on point 1 of the pay scale) to the UCU, Unison, GMB, EIS and UNITE unions.

The Higher Education Committee (HEC) met on 16 April to consider the offer.

UCEA has offered *nothing* in addition to the 1 percent that was imposed by university managements for 2013-2014.

UCEA has just offered 2 percent for 2014-2015, when there is no clear idea what inflation will be next year, and when a claim for 2014-15 has not even been determined by delegates at the HE Sector Conference.

Yet this offer is being put to members in an electronic ballot without a recommendation to reject it from the HEC.

That ballot has already started, and will finish on the 1 May.

The result will be considered by the HEC on the 2 May, and the marking boycott would be delayed to 6 May.

*It is vital that we go all out to win the vote to reject the offer.*

### Reject the offer

It is certainly the case that the 2 percent offer for next year would not have been achieved without industrial action this year – and it does break through the 1 percent public sector pay freeze.

The offer represents something of a shift from the employers who were claiming that there was 'no money' and represents a modest gain for low paid campus workers.

However, the 1 percent imposed this year represents another 2 percent cut in real incomes, and the 2 percent for next year is also below the current RPI (at 2.7 percent) – *and therefore is likely to represent another cut in pay for next year.*

None of this does anything about 'catch up' for the year-on-year pay cuts, which have meant a real loss in salaries of 15 percent since the 2006-2008 settlement.

### No recommendation by the HEC: an abdication of responsibility

After six days of strike action, with some facing the loss of a full day's pay for two-hour stoppages, members expect some leadership from the people that they elected to the HEC.

However, the majority of the HEC voted against recommending rejection, and agreed that the argument should be put in a 'neutral' way.

Not only is this an abdication of responsibility, but it is disingenuous. If they think that this is the best that we can do, then they should say so.

### Paying the price for backing off in January

We are paying the price for the disastrous decision by the same majority group on the HEC to back off from a marking boycott in January.

Many members and activists were confused, angry and frustrated that the momentum of the Autumn strikes was lost.

The most powerful weapon we have was postponed and replaced by two-hour strikes. Those strikes had a very mixed and uneven success.

In some places, they mobilised some members who had previously not been involved in picketing activity, but they also represented a retreat by the UCU.

This signalled a hesitation and gave the employers confidence that the dispute could be seen off and enabled them to regroup and prepare themselves.

### National action against lockouts

Members at many institutions have now received notice that there will be 100 percent pay docking for 'partial performance' if the UCU implements the marking boycott.

In the year that commemorates 30 years since the miners' strike – when employers and the government broke the NUM and weakened the whole of the trade union movement – it is ironic that vice chancellors and the employers are using unprecedented punitive and aggressive tactics against academic and non-academic staff.

The UCU needs an equally robust response.

The HEC agreed that a national 'response' is necessary to pay docking, and that branches should not be left to fight alone. However, this is simply not good enough.

The proposal by the UCU Left for escalating national strike action across the sector in response to the draconian tactics of employers was voted down.

The lockout of UCU members could break the union as a national force, and seriously weaken the bargaining position of local branches.

## Fighting alongside other workers

At the time of writing health workers have rejected their pay offer and are moving towards a sector ballot for strikes this autumn.

The NUT conference is set to vote at their conference for more national strike action in July, and next week local government workers will get the result of their consultation on the 1 percent pay offer – they too could be on strike this summer.

If we accept this deal it closes down the dispute for 2013-2014 and ties us to a deal for 2014-2015, with no possibility of fighting alongside other workers, despite the rate of inflation.

## The stakes could not be higher

The dispute is now much more than about pay – it is about the ability of the UCU (and other unions) to organise on campus to defend working conditions and against rampant managerialism and imposed metrics for teaching and research.

If the employers put a gun to our heads every time we try to take action this undermines our ability to fight.

Although national bargaining is preserved for the time being, its erosion is a real and present threat.

If national pay offers are low, there is the possibility of local deals on wages and conditions of service.

Already we know that some employers are offering above 2 percent for selling off conditions of service.

## What we need to do

- Get a meeting of the branch committee organised now to support a position of rejection and circulate this recommendation to members with the arguments
- Organise branch meetings now to allow members to debate the issues immediately after the holiday period
- Make sure it is on the agenda of regional meetings and encourage attendance from branches
- Organise meetings with students – the national NUS line is one of support
- Pass the following motion in the box on this page

# MODEL MOTION

## This branch:

- Notes that the current offer represents no increase for 2013-14, and that the imposed 1 percent for this year represents a further loss of 2 percent on the value of real incomes
- Believes that the 2 percent pay offer for 2014-15 demonstrates the gains that can be made from taking industrial action
- Rejects the pay offer of 2 percent for next year as likely to be below the RPI for next year, and therefore would constitute another pay cut
- Supports the marking boycott starting on 6 May
- Condemns the aggressive and provocative threats of VCs for 100 per cent pay docking
- Believes that national and escalating strike action is necessary in the face of draconian and disproportionate pay deductions
- Demands that the HEC implement the decisions of the national HE Sector Conference, and organise a campaign for 'keep up and catch up', using all of our resources and tactics in a timely fashion

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