

## **Agreement between University of Nottingham (UoN) and University of Nottingham University & College Union Branch (UoNUCU)**

UoN together with the local branch of UCU (UoNUCU) have agreed to work together in support of a future strategy for ending the current disputes over

1. USS pension changes
2. Pay and Conditions (gender, race and disability pay and progression inequalities; casualisation and precarity; workload)

The following agreement outlines principles and commitments for our working together.

UoN and UoNUCU note the initiatives and steps already undertaken to address concerns related to pay and conditions (see Annex I). We acknowledge that improving working terms and conditions, as outlined in this document on pay, casualisation, workload and equalities are integral to improving all employees' wellbeing at work.

UoN is committed to working with UoNUCU and its other campus Trade Unions (UNISON and Unite) to ensure that all colleagues working at UoN do so with the best possible pay and working arrangements.

Subject to approval of its members at an emergency branch meeting, UoNUCU will call off the current marking and assessment boycott, for which it currently has a mandate.

If the boycott is called off, UoN agrees not to impose any pay deductions to UoNUCU members who have taken part in the ASOS, including the marking and assessment boycott and, in the event of the boycott being called off, will return any deductions that have already been imposed.

UoN and UoNUCU recognise that once the marking and assessment boycott is called off, all marks should be delivered by the specified deadlines or as may otherwise be agreed by the Head of School and Registry and Academic Affairs, without imposing unreasonable expectations on staff with significant marking loads. All contractual responsibilities will be met, and managers will support staff to prioritise workload to ensure marking and assessment responsibilities are fulfilled within a mutually agreed timeframe.

### **USS Pension**

Both University of Nottingham and UCU are committed to work collaboratively to advocate for a fair and affordable USS pension scheme. UoN and UoNUCU agree that:

- the continuing dispute over the USS pension is having a negative impact on students and staff at the University.
- it is important that a good quality and affordable pension is available to all of our staff.
- the USS interim report from February 2022 offered some hope that USS pension investments were performing better than anticipated in the 2020 valuation.
- there is a pressing need for a timely and sustainable resolution to this dispute that takes into account the considerations of all the relevant parties.

Therefore, to expedite an end to the current dispute, UoN, in partnership with UoNUCU would like to see progress in the following areas:

- Subject to March 2022 funding position support the improvement of member contributions or benefits (subject to consultation) without destabilising the pension scheme. This would be in advance of a March 2023 valuation.
- Call on the USS Board of Trustees to ensure that all future valuations are evidence-based and employ a reasonable, mutually agreed upon level of prudence.
- Respond to any positive changes resulting from future valuations of the scheme's assets and liabilities by committing to improving member benefits or contributions as opposed to reducing employer contribution rates. It is noted that the views of our local branch of UCU are that benefit improvement would be preferable.
- UCU and UUK working together to explore the feasibility and promise of conditional indexation as a more cost-effective means of providing inflation protection as opposed to a cap on CPI revaluation.
- UCU and UUK working together to develop a solution that addresses affordability and access to pensions.
- UCU and UUK working together to develop proposals for governance reform in advance of the next valuation to ensure that USS is more accountable, transparent and collaborative with the higher education sector.
- ensure that any future proposals of changes to benefits are preceded by a thorough analysis of their impact on women, minority groups and early career staff and are accompanied by concrete and mutually agreed upon measures to protect these groups from disproportionately negative impact.
- In order to preserve and improve benefits towards the pre - April 2022 situation in the future, the University would, subject to approval by Council, give full and serious consideration to supporting higher contribution rates as may be agreed as part of national negotiations. Approval by Council would be based on an assessment of the financial circumstances, recognition of staff benefits as a financial priority, and a view of long-term affordability.

### Pay

UoN currently engages in national negotiations for UoNUCU staff. The outcome of national negotiations, which is a result of meeting the needs of well over 100 higher education institutions, has led to a high level of dissatisfaction and dispute over recent years. We recognise the impact felt by university employees, particularly those in the lower grades, in the face of rising inflation and the increase to the cost of living.

UoN will support the highest possible pay award recognising that UCEA must meet the needs of all its members.

As a local initiative, subject to UEB approval, UoN will raise the current maximum spinal point of Level 4, Level 5 and Level 6 by one point. This will provide a 3% uplift for staff at levels 4, 5 and 6 on the maximum points of the scale (around 27% of staff at levels 4, 5

and 6) in addition to 65% who are due to receive an increment due to satisfactory performance.

In addition, UoN will remain committed to pay the Real Living Wage to all staff.

### **Gender and Race Pay Gaps**

UoN and UoNUCU are equally committed to eliminating gender, race and disability pay gaps. At UoN, mean pay gaps currently stand at 20.1% for gender and 8.5% for ethnicity. We are united in our conviction that any such gaps are cause for concern. We are committed to concrete actions to reduce the local gaps to as close to zero as possible and to do so within a delimited timeframe.

Over the next 12 months UoN, UoNUCU and the other campus unions will work together to produce a credible action plan to eliminate all inequality pay gaps (gender, race, disability), with significant and measurable improvements (milestones) whilst also noting the legal requirement to respect the need to ensure equal pay and working within the parameters of the Equality Act. In particular, UoNUCU will actively discuss accelerating the work to deliver a reduction to the race pay gap by 2024 with the PVC EDI & People and a subset of the Gender and Race Pay Taskforce.

UoN will share with UoNUCU and the other campus unions all inequality pay gaps for academic and professional services staff as well as the University by end October 2022.

The Chairs of the Gender, Race, LGBTQ, Carers, Disability staff networks will be given reasonable paid time (or workload allocation) for these roles.

UoN and UoNUCU agree to undertake a joint review of how issues related to EDI are addressed in the promotions process for teaching-track staff, research-track and teaching and research-track staff.

### **Casualisation**

UoN and UoNUCU recognise the progress made as a result of the Principles for Working with Teaching Affiliates introduced in 2019, as well as the new Graduate Teaching Assistant model, which will be extended next year. All Faculties (Arts, Engineering, Medicine & Health Sciences, Science and Social Sciences) within the University will have adopted the model in full by the end of the 2022-23 (by September 2023) academic year.

During 2022-23, UoN and UoNUCU will jointly develop principles governing the use of Unitemps or other agencies, with a view to address:

- The need to minimise the use of temp-agency engagements and adopt direct contracts of employment as the preferred solution.
- Restricting the use of temp-agencies for example to urgent situations, where direct recruitment is not practicable on a reasonable timescale.
- Determining an appropriate length of temporary engagements via temp-agencies with the objective to restrict the length of these engagements.
- Determining an appropriate minimum length of direct employment with the University at postdoctoral level for teaching and/or research engagements.
- Introducing measures to ensure all hours of work, be it teaching, marking, preparation or administration are included in allocated workloads.

In addition, UoN will share data with UoNUCU and the other campus unions regularly on positions filled via Unitemps or other agencies in order to facilitate the monitoring of progress in this area.

### **Workload**

UoN has recognised for some time that workloads within the University are high and require attention, and is committed to working with UoNUCU and the other campus unions to reduce it to more manageable levels.

UoN will invite UoNUCU representatives to meet every six months with the PVC for EDI and People in order to share and discuss the implementation of the actions/recommendations from the Workload Taskforce. UoN will consult UoNUCU as part of the ongoing project supported by Registry and Academic Affairs to improve the teaching timetable.

UoN and UoNUCU agree that workload modelling needs to be realistic in terms of how much time is allocated to individual tasks, that major changes and the introduction of new policies, systems and procedures need to be assessed for their workload impact and that spare capacity needs to be built into workload models to absorb these. Furthermore, staff / student ratios for both academic and professional services staff should be reviewed and adjusted appropriately on a regular basis to accommodate for increases in numbers of staff and students to be supported. Staffing levels in all areas should be sufficient to allow for temporary disruptions without colleagues instantly becoming overworked.

## Annex I – Initiatives underway at UoN in areas covered by this statement

### *Gender Pay Gap*

UoN has created a comprehensive action plan to reduce the gender pay gap at Nottingham. Our trade unions were represented on the Gender and Ethnicity Pay Working Group which developed the action plan that was endorsed by EDI Committee in 2021.

The gender pay gap is mainly due to the nature of our workforce and distribution of men and women across the pay quartiles. We have more lower-graded roles than other universities of a similar size and, unlike many other universities, we only outsource a very small number of our lower-graded roles. Whilst we have always believed this was the right ethical choice for our University, it contributes to our gender pay gap as we have a higher proportion of female and BAME staff in those lower graded-roles, (which is not reflected in the reported data of Universities that outsource more of these roles).

We will continue to work constructively and collaboratively in this area, and we welcome all suggestions of how we can reduce our gender pay gaps. Work is underway that will contribute towards reducing both gender and ethnicity pay gaps, including:

- reviewing Level 1-3 terms and conditions to increase pay for colleagues on our lower grades.
- continuing the increase in the number of women promoted to senior roles following revisions to our academic promotion processes, reviewing progress and sharing data with UoNUCU as part of ongoing work in this area.
- pursuing actions identified in our Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter action plans which support the development and inclusion of under-represented groups (for example, the recent change in policy to enable the accrual of bank holidays and University Closure Days during maternity, adoption, shared-parental and paternity leave)

A meeting will be held with our campus unions to discuss progress against the action plan.

### *Race Pay Gap*

UoN voluntarily chose to publish our ethnicity pay gap data for the first time in 2021 alongside our gender pay gap reporting. We identified actions to improve our ethnicity pay gap through the Gender and Ethnicity Pay Working Group (referenced above) which included contributions from trade union colleagues.

In addition, the University has a Race Equality Charter (REC) action plan, overseen for delivery by the REC Self-Assessment Team which focuses on inclusion and should contribute to changes which also enable the reduction of our ethnicity pay gap. Overall delivery of these action plans is overseen by EDI Committee.

### *Casualisation*

In March 2021 the People & HR Committee approved the recommendation to pilot a new model of engaging PGRs to deliver teaching-related activity. This involved replacing the current model of hiring PGRs as Teaching Associates engaged as Casual Workers, with a model of employing Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (PGTAs) on a fixed-term, part-time, annualised hours contract. The School of Politics and International Relations was selected to pilot the new approach during the academic year 2021/22.

In March 2022 the People & HR Committee reviewed an evaluation of the pilot and approved the adoption of this approach, to be implemented across the University in a phased approach to enable outstanding operational considerations to be addressed. The next step is for the sequence and timing to be agreed under the oversight of an implementation group.

### *Workload*

A task group was created to consider workload led by the PVC for EDI and People and included a sample survey of staff to ensure staff experience was represented. During the pandemic a set of Workload Principles were published to help support staff and recognise the challenges being faced. The recommendations produced by the task group are now being reviewed and developed into an action plan overseen by the Director of Getting in Shape.