



Pay matters in higher education

******* UNISON Press Release *******

Urgent please cascade to HE members

University strike dates announced

First UK-wide joint strike between higher education unions 31 October 2013

Universities across the UK will be brought to a standstill later this month by strike action unless a row over pay can be resolved in the next few weeks.

The University and College Union (UCU), UNISON and Unite trade unions announced today (Wednesday) that their members working in higher education will take strike action on Thursday 31 October in an increasingly bitter row over pay.

Staff have been offered a pay rise of just 1% this year, which means that staff have suffered a pay cut of 13% in real terms since October 2008. A situation Will Hutton highlighted this weekend as one the most sustained cut in wages since the Second World War - <http://tinyurl.com/n2ryom>

The squeeze on staff pay comes at a time when pay and benefits for university leaders increased, on average, by more than £5,000 in 2011-12, with the average pay and pensions package for vice-chancellors hitting almost £250,000, according to the annual Times Higher Education–Grant Thornton pay survey. More on that here <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6568>

UNISON National Secretary, Education and Children's services, Jon Richards said:

“Our members are upset and angry – this measly 1% offer is simply not good enough. The work of members is essential for the smooth running of universities and they play a vital role supporting students, but many are struggling to survive on low pay. The gap between prices and pay has widened since this Government came to power and trying to feed a family and heat a home is a daily worry. The fact that members are willing to



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take strike action shows how desperate they feel. The employers should take note and come back with a more realistic offer.”

UCU head of higher education, Michael MacNeil, said: “Staff have suffered year-on-year cuts in the value of their pay. Quite simply, enough is enough. We urge the employers to reflect on the fact that they are about to face their first ever strike by three unions at the same time and come to the negotiating table to resolve this dispute. The suppression of academic pay is one of the most sustained pay cuts since the Second World War and, while strike action is always a last resort, the fact that staff are prepared to take this step demonstrates just how angry they are.”

More on the UNISON ballot result can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/mwcnblb>

The cumulative operating surplus in the higher education sector is now over £1 billion and many higher education institutions have built up cash reserves. Overall staff costs in higher education, as a proportion of income, have fallen from 58% in 2001/02, to 55.5% in 2011/12.

Detailed information on pay dispute and the reasons for the call for action can be found on the higher education pay web pages on the UNISON website via the following link:

<http://unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/key-issues/higher-education-pay-ballot-2013/home/>

Members and branches can also follow us on Twitter @UNISONinHE or on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/#!/> where the latest up to date information will be posted.

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UNISON branches and regions will be in workplaces across the country so that members can ask about the pay offer, and related issues. Make sure that you are informed by attending a meeting or rally , keeping up to date with newsletters and bulletins, follow us on Twitter @UNISONinHE, or on the UNISON website <http://www.unison.org.uk> and keep in contact with your branch for the latest developments.

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