

8 June 2022

Dear UCU Committee

Following our positive and constructive meeting on the 8 June 2022 which focussed on finding a resolution to the mandate for industrial action, including a marking and assessment boycott, I provide below a final proposal detailing our position.

This proposal is subject to:

1. UCU calling off the current action short of strike including the boycott of marking and assessment processes and notified strike days 20th– 24th June at Newcastle University.
2. UCU instructing its members to return to normal working duties and arrangements with immediate effect.
3. The completion of all marking and assessment work not undertaken thus far due to the boycott, prioritising final year students, in time for all students to graduate and/or progress in the normal published time frames (with an understanding that in some circumstances there may be local flexibility as agreed with the Head of Unit).

In return, the University agrees not to deduct pay from any member of UCU who has taken part in the boycott of marking and assessment processes from 23 May 2022 to date, and who completes the marking and assessment activity that has been disrupted.

UCU Request	University Offer
A joint statement to USS and UCEA	The university will seek to agree joint statements with the local UCU branch for USS in relation to the current pensions dispute and agree a statement in relation to the Four Fights
A timeline for action on pay inequalities	<p>The University is committed to improving pay equality at Newcastle. We have agreed that we will work with all our Trade Unions via a Single Table JNC to approve mechanisms to reduce the pay gap year on year. The single table JNC will be set up in the new academic year 2022/23.</p> <p>Recognising that the composition of the workforce at Newcastle has an impact on our pay gap we will undertake work by occupational grouping with a clear aim to eliminate the pay gap within those groups by 2030.</p> <p>Occupational groupings will be agreed at the first JNC and are expected to align to our current colleague categories i.e. non clinical academic.</p>

<p>A covid recovery plan (appointment of 150 T&R and PS colleagues on 3-5 year contract)</p>	<p>We are unable to commit to this level of additional investment and increasing our numbers of fixed term colleagues is not aligned to our policy or our objective to reduce casualisation. We will continue to promote and embed our work which is already detailed in the covid impact statement, and has enabled numerous colleagues to continue with their career progression using our pay and promotions processes.</p> <p>Through considered workplace planning we will seek to invest in new open-ended colleagues, across all job families. This will reflect continued growth in FTE of up to 3% which will equate an investment of up to £10 million per year, or just under 200 posts, over the next 3 years. This investment will be subject to the normal budget and planning processes and will address workload as a priority.</p>
<p>A 35-hour week</p>	<p>Whilst we are not able to offer a move to a 35-hour-week we have agreed to undertake some preparatory work on costs and impact. A scoping exercise will commence in the new academic year, and we will involve our trade unions in these discussions. As part of this scoping exercise, we will review potential different options for working hours.</p> <p>We are committed to finding workable solutions to reducing the working hours for all colleagues, without a reduction in pay. As a first phase of this work and through joint working with our trade unions, we will aim to reduce the working week to 37 hours for all colleagues. Due to the complexity of the proposed changes, involving negotiation with our trade unions; modifications to our terms and conditions; review of all part-time colleagues; equality analysis and structured workload planning across all our different colleague groups, we will aim to achieve this by 2025/26. Where possible we will deliver these changes earlier.</p> <p>Reducing the working week is not in itself a solution to workload which is why we remain keen to find other ways to ease and improve workload across the University.</p> <p>As an extension of the workload task and finish group UEB will undertake to meet different colleague groups to explore long term solutions to workload. As part of a future all colleague survey which is expected to take place next academic year (22/23), we will seek views on workload. We are committed to the implementation and reporting of the Workload Planning Policy including the implementation of agreed actions, with consideration of the required resource to operationalise actions, within 12 months.</p>

<p>Workload as a standing item at all Health and Safety meetings with employer</p>	<p>We are committed to addressing workload and the University has the following mechanisms to address workload:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload task and finish group (with UCU membership) • UCU Joint Negotiation Committee • Wellbeing committee (sub-committee of the Health and Safety committee) <p>UCU are also able to also raise workload at the standard Health and Safety Committee. To note that the Health and Safety Committee do not have any remit to deal with resourcing of colleagues.</p>
<p>Contracts for PGRs</p>	<p>We are committed to agreeing principles and thresholds (with 0.2 as a starting point and consideration of 0.1 in line with other examples in the sector) for the use of employment contracts for PGRs who teach, by the beginning of the next academic year (22/23). During semester one we will begin to negotiate appropriate terms and conditions to use for the purposes of engagement, with an expected implementation date of February 2023.</p>
<p>Further commitments on open-ended contracts</p>	<p>We have made significant progress in the reduction of the number of colleagues on fixed term contracts since the introduction of the new policy (from 26% to 16.5% of our regular colleagues). Existing policy commits to converting to open-ended after 4 years' service and we will now commit to work with managers to review colleagues who have between 3- and 4-years' service to seek conversions to open-ended contracts. This will take us beyond our current policy commitments.</p>

I very much hope we are able to reach an agreement and I recognise that this will take a significant investment of time and resource on behalf of the University and our Trade Unions. This offer will set out our joint work for the coming years and I hope this will create an ongoing supportive and strong employee relations environment, that will be required to achieve these positive changes.

Yours sincerely



Professor Chris Day
Vice-Chancellor and President