

AUT Newsletter

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You Are Worth More Than This!

All QUB trade unions have received a common pay offer from James O'Kane. None of them are enthusiastic about it. There are nine pay scales to cover all type of staff below professor. **For academic and related staff the pay scales and the career progression offered are worse than any deals concluded in any other UK university.** In the last *Newsletter* we set out in a 6-row table a comparison of the pay deals concluded elsewhere. QUB's offer says nothing about professors or ALC Grade 6's, so that factor can be set aside. Of the remaining five rows, QUB's offer is worse than any other in two rows and joint worst in the other three. **As regards the main parts of the various pay scales, QUB's offer is worse than the offer being discussed at UU.**

Although we have been given oral assurances about the Memorandum of Understanding there is nothing in the written offer which indicates compliance with this national agreement. This would require both the skipping of a few spine points on some scales and an improved method of pay assimilation for existing staff. **Your Committee has resolved that we will not negotiate until we have a detailed written assurance of compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding.**

The offer states that staff in levels 1-6 of the new grade structure will be members of the Retirements Benefit Plan (RBP — QUB's pension scheme for non-USS staff). New grade 6 is the likely grade for Research 1B's, teaching assistants, and ALC1's and **this is in clear violation of the new rules of USS.** These say that someone employed in an academic, research or related post, or paid in the same salary band, must be in USS. **We are not prepared to put in jeopardy the USS membership of QUB staff by being party to a proposal that could lead to the expulsion of QUB from USS.** This proposal is detrimental to all concerned; the employers contribution to RBP will be at least as great as that to USS and the benefits to the individual are worse than in USS.

James O'Kane proposes 1 August 2005 as the implementation date for the new pay structure. You remember how last year all the employers' publicity showed the financial benefits starting in August 2004. **We know how strongly you want backdating to 1 August 2004, and the other unions share that view.**

It is also proposed that new grades 1-6 work a 37 hour week and grades 7-9 work the hours required to complete their role. Most academic and related staff will be in the latter group. However, some members (mainly academic-related) have specified hours at present and we would like to hear their views on this. The management also wishes to negotiate a change to leave entitlement without saying what they want. We have been told that they want a common leave entitlement for all types of staff, similar to that for academic and related staff. However, our members have a variety of leave entitlements, and we will report on this when we hear the proposals.

To see the full financial picture we need to know how jobs map onto the new pay scales. This is done using job profiles and job evaluation. For academic and research staff we have been assured that the mapping will be straight forward and that virtually all of these will benefit from a slight pay rise on assimilation. QUB has been slow to produce job profiles even for academic and research staff for which there were national models. It could be months before we see role profiles for academic related staff and it will only be then that we can evaluate how the pay and grading offer affects them. In addition, the grading of those affected by the restructuring will not be decided until they have settled into their new jobs, so they may have to wait some time to see the financial outcome, although they are promised back-dating.

Once we have secured the assurances mentioned above we intend to embark on negotiations with vigour because you have waited long enough for your money. Some aspects of the offer apply to

several groups of staff and there will be a joint trade union meeting on 20 May to decide what they are and how they will be handled. It is our aim to conclude negotiations before the summer break, but practicalities may prevent this. When negotiations are approaching a conclusion we intend to hold a General Meeting to hear your views. We promise at least an interim report at our AGM on 29 June. **Eventually the decision on the final package will be made in a ballot of our members. We hope that we have by then secured a package that we can recommend to you. However, the possibility remains that we do not get adequate improvements, and then we would be saying that if you want more you will have to be prepared to take industrial action.**

You cannot build a world class university by offering bottom-of-the-class pay.

Belfast AUT Officers

AUT Rejects Another 'Insulting' Pay Offer

On 11 May leaders of AUT and NATFHE united to reject a national pay offer of just 5% over two years from 1 August 2005 made by the university employers. The offer does nothing to address the long term decline in academic salaries. Despite the income from top-up fees which comes on stream next year, plus substantial extra funding from the funding councils for rewarding and developing staff, the employers are once again pleading poverty.

The three unions: AUT, NATFHE and the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), are seeking an 11.2% across-the-board increase to current pay scales for the coming academic year. This reflects both an increase that takes account of the cost of living and the need to catch up some of the ground lost due to low settlements in recent years. www.aut.org.uk/circulars/html/la7607.html gives the details. The unions also sought a minimum hourly rate in both university sectors of £35.34 for teaching. Many hourly paid lecturers are paid only for lecturing time, not preparation or marking, so an hour's pay is usually inadequate reward for several hours of work.

The unions are also concerned that the employers' response fails to address equality issues including the opportunity to undertake work recognised for career advancement and promotion, measures to support working parents and the achievement of effective work-life balance.

The universities cite the cost of implementing the pay modernisation agreement reached last year as one reason for a lack of funds for pay. But when the deal was struck in 2004 they claimed that assimilation would cost only an extra 1.2%. Currently only a handful of universities have reached agreement with their unions to implement last year's Framework Agreement.

AUT General Secretary, Sally Hunt, said: 'The Prime Minister himself accepts that there has been "practically no increase" in real terms salaries for university staff over the past two decades. Yet, despite a generous financial settlement and the prospect of billions of pounds in top-up fee income coming into the sector, the employers continue to plead poverty. One reason why the universities told government that they wanted top-up fees was to increase academic salaries. It is now time they put their money where their mouth is.'

Based on AUT press release

A New Debate on Israel and Palestine

When it met on 20-22 April, the AUT Council (the delegate body) had much important business to debate such as our national pay claim for 2005/6 and the possible merger with NATFHE (which was approved subject to a membership ballot). Thus little time was set aside to debate what most people considered to be a side issue, the relationship between some Israeli universities and Palestinians. After the motions were proposed and the view of the National Executive had been given, there was no time for debate on the floor. To the National Executive's surprise two of the motions were narrowly passed against the Executives recommendation. Political advocates on both sides of this issue ensured that these decisions got widespread media coverage and the debate has continued in the press. Some AUT members have threatened to resign or have done so. Sufficient ordinary members of AUT Council were concerned that they were able to call a Special Council to

consider the issues more fully on 26 May. John Lynch (ext 3985) will be leading the delegation and you are welcome to give your views to him.

The attitude of the Belfast AUT Committee is that the great majority of people join AUT in order to have their working conditions safeguarded in the workplace, to have their salaries negotiated regularly, to have an advocate in UK higher education policy, and to have representation if they become a personal case. Belfast AUT wishes to concentrate on what unites us. We will need that unity if we are to achieve a decent local pay agreement.

Belfast AUT Officers

Dispute at Brunel

In response to their V-C's plans for compulsory redundancies in order to remove 60 academic staff, Brunel AUT held a successful strike on 26 April. They are now engaged in a long-term struggle in which they are taking actions short of a strike including boycotting assessments and examinations.

The AUT has asked the government conciliation service ACAS to step in and help resolve the dispute. This was after Vice-Chancellor Steven Schwartz refused to reopen negotiations. AUT General Secretary, Sally Hunt, said: "Steven Schwartz is fuelling the dispute further by stating that staff will not be paid at all for the duration of the action short of a strike, even though our members continue to perform a range of duties which the university accepts and takes the benefit from."

More details are available on the national AUT website or from Paul Hudson (ext 3157). We understand that AUT will be launching a fighting fund to support out Brunel colleagues.

AUT's National Women's Meeting

Lynne Press and Maureen Alden attended the Annual Women's Meeting of AUT on 24th February 2005 as voting representatives, carrying two motions:

requesting AUT to commission a survey of female members to identify individual experiences of disadvantage and discrimination, to determine why such difficulties persist and how they can be overcome.

A request to monitor the experiences of women in the introduction of performance-related pay and market-driven recruitment.

Later in the day, both were carried, with some alteration to the wording of the second.

The opening address by Jean Harrison (Chair) emphasised the need for AUT to maintain a focused campaign agenda at a time when members are tired and stressed. AUT has adopted the "Charter for Women."

Angela Roger (AUT President) referred to the widening pay gap (university women earn on average 85p for every male pound), the abuse of fixed term contracts, the effects of a 'macho' research culture, and downgrading of teaching and pastoral work.

Sally Hunt (AUT General Secretary) drew attention to 'A Catalogue of Failure' (AUT's submission to the Women and Work Commission) and 'The Unequal Academy' (which reveals the average salary for women in QUB in 1995 was £3,930 less than the average salary for men: by 2002-3 women earned on average £6,697 less than their male counterparts.) She insisted that employers must respect women – and pay them.

The Director of the Equality Challenge, Joy Hill, spoke of employers' positive duty (under legislation effective from October 2005) to promote good relations in respect of race, disability, and gender, and to eliminate discrimination. Universities need an action plan indicating who is responsible for each stage of this process, and how progress is monitored. Institutional action plans for the RAE need to be in the public domain, she said, so that staff can understand what the intended outcome is supposed to be, in what timeframe, and who is responsible for each stage of the process. She stressed the need for open and transparent allocation of work within departments (and clear understanding of the status of the tasks allocated), and for open criteria for progression and promotion. She called for action plans to ensure equal opportunities at departmental level, and for a

gender pay audit within each grade.

Lynne Press attended the workshop on Gender and Equality, chaired by Stephen Court, senior research officer with AUT and author of 'The Unequal Academy'. Explanations offered for the pay gap were direct discrimination, subject type and institution (some dominated by science), and starting point on pay scale. Men were 1.5 times more likely to be awarded discretionary points and 1.6 times less likely than women to be considered 'research inactive' in the RAE. Recent developments to redress this situation include the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act, 'It's Time to get Even' (the code of practice produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission), and the Women and Work Commission (to produce recommendations by autumn 2005). In institutions of higher education, the Framework Agreement includes job evaluation aimed at improving equality: 45 institutions out of 107 have carried out an equal pay review in the past two years. (Academic-related staff were not covered in the report.) A possible 'generational' gap (39% of those currently entering HE are women, as against 32% eight years ago) was considered, but the actual pay gap has increased. Suggestions for action included an enquiry on senior staff salaries (professor, pro-vc and upwards), and the creation of a single league table of all the statistics contained in the report.

Maureen Alden attended the workshop on the discriminatory effect on women of the RAE, chaired by AUT's research policy officer, who explained how the RAE reflects and exacerbates existing gender inequality: women are 1.6 times as likely as men to be deemed research-inactive. Hence admit the problem, which seems to stem from a number of causes:

- Women are more likely to be on fixed-term contracts.
- Pastoral work and advising students tend to be allocated to women, diverting their efforts.
- Women interpret the criteria for grants more strictly than men, and are less likely to apply.

Institutions need to publish their code of practice on how people are included in the RAE: the workshop was very much in favour of the inclusion of all staff in 2008, a point Joy Hill has made earlier. In a context of wholesale closure of departments, AUT is giving evidence to a governmental select committee on the importance of an appropriate regional and national spread of subjects, with particular concern for languages. As a union, we are opposed to the RAE, and will propose an independent commission to examine research funding. In the meantime, AUT is concerned at how universities use the RAE as a means to 'discipline' and bully staff: it will distribute leaflets at local level to explain the legal issues for staff excluded from the RAE.

The workshop on Casualization and Women recommended exposing the myth of the benefits of fixed term contracts: flexibility is always in the interests of the employer.

Lynne Press and Maureen Alden

Future Pension Changes

The 2004 Finance Act legislated for a number of important changes to pension provision. From April 2010 the minimum age for early retirement will be raised to 55. Most other changes become effective from April 2006. These include:

- Provision for drawing pension benefits without the need to retire;
- The ability to increase personal pension contributions from the current maximum of 15%;
- The introduction of a lifetime allowance which will allow for an increase in benefits above the current maximum of 2/3 of final remuneration.

We understand that USS is currently giving consideration to the implementation of the various changes. The changes will also have implications for the implementation of any early retirement and severance packages the University may wish to provide. We will keep you posted as and when information becomes available.

Renee Prendergast