

Joint Statement by Heriot-Watt University and Heriot-Watt University UCU in relation to the Pay and Working Conditions Dispute.

Pay and Working Conditions

Preamble

Heriot-Watt University, in partnership with the local branch of UCU (HWUCU), has developed this statement in support of a potential resolution and exit strategy from the current Pay and Working Conditions dispute.

This follows ongoing constructive dialogue at a local level between Heriot-Watt University Senior Leadership and HWUCU and builds on an agreement reached in December 2020 about future partnership working. We reaffirm our commitment to partnership working with the unions including early consultation on proposed change programmes, prior to decisions being made.

This statement addresses the Pay and Working Conditions Dispute, and a separate statement has been developed to cover the USS Pension Dispute.

The Cost-of-Living crisis is affecting all individuals and organisations and we are committed to doing what we can to assist all staff to manage in such challenging economic times. This statement lays the foundation for further negotiations on the details of the high-level commitments below. We are committed to working with all the recognised trades unions to make real differences to the working conditions of staff within the next year.

Introduction

We recognise that there are sector wide concerns regarding Pay, casualisation, workload and equality in UK Higher Education. Retaining staff, preserving institutional memory and maintaining Heriot-Watt as an attractive employer is important to the whole University community.

We are committed to the National Collective Bargaining Framework and whilst not all aspects fall within the formal national bargaining arrangements, we will work with the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and University and Colleges Union (UCU) nationally along with the other Higher Education unions within NEW JNCES to support improvements within these areas at a sector level. Where appropriate we support the creation of sector level frameworks and guidelines that draw from examples of existing good practice from within and beyond Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Pay

Heriot-Watt University is committed to National Pay Bargaining being conducted in a spirit of respect and in good faith by all parties and will continue to feed into the current process to seek an agreed settlement. We recognise that the current national pay negotiations will not fully address the increases in costs of living.

We additionally commit to working with the recognised trade unions to agree a revised mapping of our grade structures to the national pay spine. Such an exercise will take into consideration any work initiated at a national level and will include specific consideration of the use of contribution pay points and any potential impact these have on equal pay and pay gaps. We recognise that this will necessarily take some time to carry out but aim to have it completed by July 2023. Recognising that any changes to the top of any grade will increase costs, the negotiations will also consider the process of transition to the new mapping.

In the meantime, we will also formally review all those staff who have been at the top of their current grade for at least 3 years and systematically decide whether there is a case for individuals to be awarded a contribution point from April 2023 within the existing procedures. Full EIAs will be carried out on each aspect of this work. The wider review will also consider how to build such systematic support for staff who have been at the top of their

grade for three years to make a case to be awarded a promotion or a contribution point.

We also commit to improving further the support we offer for professional services career development and progression.

Casualisation

Heriot-Watt University is committed to contracting with all members of the workforce in the most appropriate way and to do so fairly and transparently, providing as great a level of commitment and clarity as possible. Significant work has already been delivered to standardise our approach across the University, and as a signatory to the Scottish Business Pledge the University is committed to Fair Work and pay for all staff. We do not and will not use exploitative zero hours arrangements and restate our policy to pay any casual workers in line with the nationally agreed pay scales. We would welcome guidance arising from joint considerations at a national level and will review local practices against any such guidance. Where there is a sufficiently meaningful and predictable level of regular work, the University will normally offer an employment contract which may be fixed term or permanent/open ended, full or part-time and will provide as much security of employment as possible to avoid an individual being issued with a succession of fixed term contracts. We will work with our recognised trade unions and student representatives to further refine our approach and ensure all those engaged directly by the University have the opportunity to request a review of their contractual arrangements.

We recognise the particular challenge relating to those engaged via short-term research funding and will work with UCEA and UCU to engage with UKRI and other key research funders to work collectively to minimise the insecurity associated with this model.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The University will continue to work with the recognised trade unions to further enhance our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We commit to reviewing related employment policies and procedures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and put in place actions and remove barriers to ensure that the closing of any identified pay gaps is accelerated. We repeat our commitment (Equality Outcome 1) to reduce the gender pay gap by 5-10% by 2025 and to strive to go beyond this. In line with our Athena Swan plans, we will look especially at key career stages including how we support colleagues returning following periods of family related absence. We will do this in a way which reflects the global nature of our University community, in line with our values, building on our sector-leading research in areas such as disability. We commit to continued working with colleagues to reduce gender, race and disability pay gaps including addressing recruitment and selection practices, opportunities for progression and career development. We will jointly respond to any recommendations arising from joint work at a national level.

We commit to continuing our review of and improvements to our supporting family life suite of policies.

Workload

We wish to thank colleagues for the extraordinary way they have responded to the global pandemic to ensure critical research has continued and our students have been able to continue to study and successfully progress. We also jointly record the positive way in which the University and trade unions have worked together during the pandemic to support staff and students. We recognise that COVID-19 affected workload significantly and has changed the way we will work going forward.

We are committed to ensuring Heriot Watt University is a great place to work, and all our colleagues are able to excel in their jobs without working excess hours.

We are committed to Connected Hybrid Working and to enabling flexibility whilst seeking to protect collaboration across our flourishing community ensuring a positive on-campus experience for students and staff. The wellbeing of our staff is of paramount importance to us and is critical to the success of the University, and we believe nobody should have an excessive workload that is unmanageable or where staff are unable to maintain a positive work life balance. We believe all staff should have the right to switch off when away from work and to take their full holiday allowance.

It is important that the “hours as necessary” nature of the employment contract does not result in sustained long hours working. We therefore commit to working with the trade unions and wider staff community to finalise our workload principles developed in 2020 to ensure no staff member has a planned workload that persistently exceeds the underlying 35-hour-week basis.

In particular, we will review and define appropriate minimum staff to student ratios and prioritise new positions to adjust these where required, recognising that this may vary quite significantly between courses and disciplines. We will build on our documented workload principles to develop a more clearly defined framework which recognises the range of substantive tasks as well as the accumulation of other required duties with an appropriate and realistic time allocation. This will also recognise the range of factors which influence workload across different Schools and disciplines. We will monitor the consistent application of [these principles](#) across the University and work together to identify appropriate ways to report this to colleagues. We will additionally review and, where appropriate, adjust performance targets, taking into account part-time working, leave and disciplinary specificities.

We will do this in parallel with other work to improve the efficiency and consistency of processes across the University, including our focus on digital transformation in streamlining and automating processes with the aim of reducing workload.

We will continue our work to raise awareness and understanding of Mental Health and actively support the wider wellbeing of our colleagues. We will work in partnership with our trade unions to identify appropriate ways to identify, measure and manage occupational stress via an appropriate system of stress audits. We will do this with direct reference to the HSE Stress at Work Management standards.