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Pay in FE colleges in England

This year's pay negotiations in the FE sector are likely to be particularly difficult in the context of the present economic climate. However, ATL and the other recognised FE unions in England have submitted a joint pay claim for 2009-10, which seeks to close the gap in pay between school teachers and FE lecturers. The main elements of the claim are as follows:

- a six percent increase in salaries and allowances from 1 August 2009 with a £2,000 underpinning;
- a reduction in excessive working hours with the introduction of a maximum 35-hour week;
- to provide all college staff with the option to undertake 30-hours' a year paid training entitlement with release from normal duties.



The full claim can be found on ATL's website at: www.atl.org.uk. The employers' side initially offered one percent, which was rejected by the unions. A further offer is expected at a meeting of the National Joint Forum on 5 June 2009.

Professional registration of sixth form college teaching staff

ATL has been waiting for some time for a DCSF decision on the payment of General Teaching Council (GTC) fees for teaching staff in sixth form colleges. Although a decision was promised by the end of March 2009, we are yet to receive a decision from the Department.

To ATL the issue seems very clear. Sixth form college teachers would be the only teachers in the maintained education sector bearing the cost of their own GTC fees. Clearly this cannot be right or fair and the argument has been strengthened by the forthcoming changes, which will see the sixth form college sector moving into the local authority (LA) family and into closer alignment with schools than they are at present. ATL will let you have any further news as soon as we receive it.

In the meantime, sixth form colleges and their teaching staff are advised that those teachers who would not qualify to join the GTC should join the Institute for Learning (IfL). If a member does join the IfL then they should tick the 'funded' box and not the 'self funded' box. This will ensure that fees are not then requested by the IfL and the fee is paid by the government.

Extra £8.9m for FE in Wales

Following a joint union campaign in Wales, the Assembly Government has found an extra £8.9m, of which almost £6.8m will go to the FE colleges in 2009-10. This money tops up the sums allocated to these colleges in January this year, which left them with less funding than in 2008-09. The extra money means that no Welsh college will see its grant for 2009-10 fall. ATL is now working with the other recognised unions on a joint pay claim for 2009-10. The Assembly Government insists, as a condition of funding, that FE institutions maintain pay parity with school teachers who are expecting a 2.3% pay rise.

Pay dispute ends in Northern Ireland

A six-year pay dispute has ended in Northern Ireland, with FE lecturers receiving a six percent pay rise over three years. There will be an additional payment for those at the top of the scale, which is to be found from the efficiency savings generated by the introduction of a new lecturers' contract.

Budget provides some financial relief for FE and sixth form colleges

In the recent budget, the Chancellor made the following announcements for FE:

- an extra £251m in 2009-10, rising to £404m in 2010-11, to provide an extra 54,000 places in sixth form and FE colleges next year;
- a further £300m for college building projects;
- £260m in new money for skills training in growth industries;
- a guarantee of funding to ensure that all long-term unemployed 18-24 year-olds receive a job, long-term work placement or training.

Although this increased investment is welcome, it does not entirely mitigate the effects of the recent capital building fiasco, which was the subject of an emergency resolution at ATL's annual Conference in April. Many college building projects will still have to be scaled back or cancelled. ATL has discussed this problem with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Association of Colleges (AoC), and will be meeting with the relevant Minister, Sion Simon. ATL also believes that there will be a need for a significant increase in the number of FE lecturers to cater for additional training for a larger number of students.

Institute for Learning elections

“Unfortunately, at the recent IfL Council elections Stephen Sidgwick failed to gain a seat. The turnout was poor, so, hopefully, with improved communication we can achieve a better result next time. However, our thanks go to Stephen for standing and for committing his time and energies to this opportunity”.

Colleges respond to the Learning and Skill Council's performance for excellence framework

Colleges are now focusing upon the requirements of the new performance for excellence framework, established by the LSC for 2008 roll out. The framework requires colleges to evidence learner responsiveness, employer responsiveness, and the financial health of the college. The framework can be viewed on the LSC's website at: www.lsc.gov.uk.

To share or not to share your continuing professional development?

Whilst, in a recent survey, FE members reported that no one wanted to view or help with their portfolio, it seems that college managers are requesting detailed information about what the portfolio contains. This is not correct. Members of the IfL can inform their managers that they are completing their continuing professional development (CPD), but that they do not have to share details of it with their manager.

FE reps' briefings: a view from a participant

“As an inexperienced college rep in my second year of lecturing I found the FE reps' briefing, (see opposite feature) held at the Carriage Works in Leeds on 28 April, very useful. The day was focused specifically on the issues faced in the FE sector and covered a range of topics from improving the branch to ways of achieving the 30-hours CPD. We were supported by a number of specialists who guided our discussions and provided support material to take away. I found it refreshing to speak with others in different colleges and reassuring that ATL is providing FE members with high quality support and tailored resources”.

Sam Meadows, Doncaster ATL rep.

FE reps getting involved at the recent briefing



Report from FE reps' briefing

The FE reps' briefing held in April was a great success. The briefing consisted of an audit run by Michael Cheetham, ATL Organiser, of the local branch, followed by a session on new and emerging policies in FE by Norman Crowther, National Official for Post-16. Both sessions ensured that reps had a deeper knowledge of their branches and what issues faced FE colleges and managers. In negotiations it is important to know what colleges are responding to in order to find best solutions for members.

The afternoon continued with a presentation on CPD that showed how CPD can be used to develop a greater understanding of policies that affect the FE sector and the day ended with a session by Michael Cheetham and Jon-Leigh Pritchard, Organiser for FE, on developing a college branch action plan. Reps found this particularly useful as it enabled them to stand back and reflect on their own practice and identify how they could improve communications to members (the FE toolkit has an exemplar newsletter and guidelines), improve recruitment strategies and develop the college team.

Of course, the events also enabled reps to share experiences and college policies, which added to very stimulating and insightful exchanges. Those colleges who have completed branch action plans will now be supported and their plans followed up by the FE campaign team, which consists of: Michael Cheetham, Norman Crowther, John Easton (senior Regional Official) and Jon-Leigh Pritchard.

Over time, all college reps will have opportunities to attend either national or regional events to develop their local capacity and understanding of the FE sector. The FE campaign team has already received a request to run an event for a number of colleges in the East of England. So, if reps would like to initiate a request for a regional event please liaise on a suitable location and local needs and then contact Norman Crowther by email at: ncrowther@atl.org.uk who will work with the FE campaign team in supporting you.

View from a college branch

“Doncaster College is a very large modern college in the heart of town and very much community based. It is also one of the largest single employers in Doncaster. Three months ago we were informed that we faced the prospect of losing up to one third of our teaching and support staff because of the college’s budget deficit. In place of qualified lecturers the Principal intended to utilise assessors. Large numbers of staff were briefed that they were at risk without prospect of alternative employment. However, thanks to the support of ATL members and colleagues nationally and regionally the governors decided to abandon this plan completely and work with ATL and the other unions to save money in a rational and phased approach”.

Sam Meadows, Doncaster ATL rep.

FE toolkit

If you are a small branch or a rep, who is yet to receive the FE toolkit, copies can be ordered from ATL Despatch by emailing: despatch@atl.org.uk.

Time to pay up campaign

The Time to pay up campaign is still ongoing and college committees should compare their pay scales with the AoC’s harmonised pay scale. Committees should also compare their pay increase for this year and the progress on job evaluation in their colleges. All of these criteria make up the recommendations from the AoC and ATL, as well as the other unions in the sector, in regard to the pay and conditions of staff. The Time to pay up campaign resources can be accessed from ATL’s website at: www.atl.org.uk.



Lifelong Learning UK: sharing resources with ATL

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the sector skills council for workforce reform and has collaborated with ATL on providing a memory stick for reps and college branches. The stick contains the latest policies and guidelines from LLUK, some of which senior managers have not seen. LLUK have kindly also included relevant ATL information for reps and members. Reps will receive additions to their sticks from LLUK, DCSF, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, the DIUS and other stakeholders in due time, as well, of course, as ATL! The memory stick and ATL’s FE toolkit for reps will be sent out to all reps in June.

Making sense of FE through reflective practice

By Ken Stours and Ann Hodgson

The last decade has been one of constant flux for FE colleges. Colleges have had to respond to a bewildering succession of funding, inspection, accountability and planning steers from central government and its agencies, alongside a torrent of policy initiatives each pulling them in a different direction. This position has, if anything, been exacerbated by the replacement of the DfES by the DCSF and the DIUS, which effectively gave colleges two national masters to serve. The rhetoric is of ‘self regulation’, but the practice is still very much top-down management and control.

In this context the debate about the role that FE colleges should play in the education of young people and adults, which was raised forcefully by the Foster Review in 2005, has continued to rage. Is their role primarily to serve the needs of the expanding ranks of young people expected to stay on in education and training with the raising of the participation age, or to serve the needs of their adult community or to reach out to employers by becoming regional or even national centres of excellence in particular vocational areas?

Many larger FE colleges have responded by attempting to answer all three of these needs by marketing themselves in different ways to different sets of ‘customers’. Smaller sixth form colleges, on the other hand, have begun to consider moving closer to LAs with a view to restricting themselves primarily to courses for 14-19 year-olds.

One of the more positive aspects of the recent heightened political profile for FE colleges has been the move towards greater ‘professionalisation’ of the workforce. This has come in the form of a requirement for teaching qualifications for lecturers and new principals and an annual entitlement to 30-hours of CPD.

In response to continuous changes in the regulatory, governance and professional environment for FE, the Institute of Education (IoE) is developing its strategic partnership with FE colleges. Working closely with its partner centre, the London Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training, it is launching a new CPD offer for the FE and lifelong learning sector. Meetings have taken place with ATL, UCU and the IfL to cement closer relationships with teachers and lecturers

in FE. Collaboration also involves the development of research capacity, the promotion of greater mutual learning and space for strategic reflection between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners.

For the range of courses for FE at the IoE visit their website at: www.ioe.ac.uk. ATL was the first union to promote this collaboration and will always seek to develop the professional lives of our members as well as defend their terms and conditions.



FE members getting active

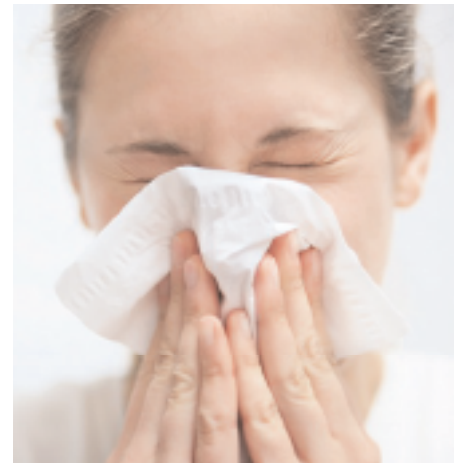
FE members have been getting active in response to the rapidly changing landscape in post-compulsory education with reps and members engaging with various opportunities in recent months.

Back in April members from across the country turned out in force to attend a Conference on Motivating and Engaging Learners in Post-Compulsory Education at Edge Hill University. Over 50 teachers and lecturers, employed in various roles, enjoyed a series of workshops which focused on specific issues relating to teaching and learning in the post-16 sector. Keynote speaker, Jason Bangbala, led an inspiring and motivating workshop on Managing Challenging Behaviour before members attended seminars on Emotional Intelligence, Specific Learning Difficulties and Personalised Learning delivered by Edge Hill University tutors.

With new regulations requiring those teaching in post-16 education and training to complete 30-hours' CPD each year, the Conference was timely offering members the opportunity to work towards this target. Many of those attending were also keen to take advantage of the formal accreditation opportunities via ATL's partnership with Edge Hill University using the Conference workshops as the basis to work towards 20 Masters level credits, which are entirely free of charge for ATL members. Edge Hill University are hoping to repeat this Conference next term so if you are interested in attending, or would like to find out more about gaining accreditation for your work-based CPD, please contact Michael Cheetham by email at: mcheetham@atl.org.uk.

Swine flu guidance

ATL has received a number of enquiries from members concerned about the recent arrival in the UK of Swine flu. For FE and HE institutions guidance is available from the DIUS website at: www.dius.gov.uk.



Only the best of principals!

ATL is currently seeking nominations for examples of the best Principals in the FE sector and in sixth forms that you have worked under, or worked with, in some capacity. If you would like to nominate a Principal as an exemplar of best practice please contact Norman Crowther, ATL's National Official Post-16 education, by email at: ncrowther@atl.org.uk. Successful nominees will be contacted by FESAG in the hope of arranging an event about good leadership in the FE sector.

