**Northumbria’ Position on UCU’s ‘four fights’**

Northumbria’s position is more positive than in many other universities.

**Pay**

Currently the University takes part in the national annual collective pay negotiations, which is a decision supported by both of our recognised Trade Unions, UCU and UNISON.

The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) represents the employers, including Northumbria University, in the pay bargaining process. UCU, UNISON, Unite, GMB and EIS are the trade unions which represent employees in the negotiations.  With 146 institutions taking part, no single HEI can determine the pay award offered by UCEA.

The University implemented the employers’ final 2021-22 pay offer from 1 August 2021, increasing salary points by at least 1.5% from 1 August 2021, with higher increases for the lower pay points of up to 3.6%.

The trade unions involved in the process, including UCU and UNISON, did not accept the pay offer therefore this remains a matter of dispute.

In common with other universities, Northumbria faces a range of unprecedented financial challenges which include very significant increases in employer pension contributions, questions about future funding of higher education and uncertainty about the medium to long term impact of Brexit and the pandemic. The headline fee for undergraduate students remains at £9250 and is unlikely to increase over the period ahead.

Despite these challenges, careful financial management over the last 18 months has enabled the University to maintain a stable position financially and has safeguarded jobs. The 2021/22 pay award together with annual increments added £5.8Million to the University’s annual pay costs.

The University is open to exploring alternative pay bargaining arrangements, which would mean withdrawing from the national pay negotiation process.

**Equality Related Pay Differentials**

Gender pay gaps consider the average pay of all women in the organisation compared with the average pay of all men, irrespective of their roles. The University’s gender pay gaps are published annually by 30 March. Although not yet published, the 2021 gender pay gap was 12.32%, a reduction from 14.02% in 2020.  The education sector average is 17.6% ([Office forNational Statistics – Gender Pay Gap 2021 provisional](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2021)). The University’s pay gaps reflect the higher proportion of women in lower paid roles and an underrepresentation of women in higher paid roles. The University’s grading structure is designed to ensure that men and women undertaking the same work are paid the same.

The mean pay gap for academic staff is 5.32%. We continue to work to reduce pay gaps further, for example through targeted support for female colleagues in academic promotions. In 2019/20 75% of academic promotions were awarded to female colleagues and in the 2021/20 round 7 of the 13 colleagues promoted to professor were women.

The University will be introducing ethnicity and disability pay gap reports this year and producing intersectional data in line with the commitments made in the Athena Swan Action Plan and forthcoming Race Equality Charter Action Plan.

**Contract casualisation/Job Security**

On 1 September 2021, the start of this academic year, the University employed 3,168 colleagues of which 1,463 are on academic contracts, 164 are researchers and 1,541 are on professional support contracts. On this date the University employed 255 more staff than in 2019 (137 academic, 55 researchers and 63 professional support).

Across all these three groups 11% of colleagues at Northumbria are on fixed term contracts. Fewer than 13% of academic staff (including researchers) are on fixed term contracts, compared with 25% nationally in 2019.  4% of our academic staff (excluding researchers) are on fixed term contracts, compared with 7% nationally in 2019 (UCEA – Employment Contracts in HE, January 2022).

The University uses fixed term contracts carefully and usually when tied to project funding which is time-limited, to bring in specialist expertise, cover for maternity, sickness and other types of absence.

Around 250 research and professional support staff were furloughed on full pay during the pandemic and all colleagues have returned to work and remain in employment.

The University engages hourly paid Associate Lecturers for teaching related activities to deliver specialist knowledge, to provide cover or for additional teaching activities.  Hourly paid colleagues are on open ended contracts and receive a schedule of hours to be worked.  There are currently 320 Associate Lecturers engaged by the University.  The use of Associate Lecturers has remained static over the last two years.

**Workload**

This is a complex area, as workloads vary across the institution, individuals and teams. Workload pressures are also at different levels of intensity throughout the academic year, and the University continues to work to ease any particular pressure points that emerge. Ultimately, academic workloads are balanced between teaching, research and administration. Although those workloads vary, data published by faculties indicates that on average we are able to achieve a reasonable balance between activities. Teaching, for example, makes up less than 40% of workload on average across the University. This balance and flexibility continues to offer colleagues time and support for research activities to the great benefit of the institution. During the pandemic, at Northumbria we have been able to continue to support research with workload time in a way that not all institutions could. Northumbria did not cancel any research sabbaticals, for example, unless at the request of individuals who were no longer able to carry out their planned activities (for example where they could not travel). In addition, our ongoing investment in the academic staff base will continue to ease any workload pressures experienced by colleagues

The University has developed its wellbeing offer significantly over the last two years and [workrelated stress absences](https://sts.northumbria.ac.uk/adfs/ls?wa=wsignin1.0&wtrealm=urn%3asharepoint%3anp-sp&wctx=https%3a%2f%2fone.northumbria.ac.uk%2fhr%2fhome%2f_layouts%2f15%2fAuthenticate.aspx%3fSource%3d%252Fhr%252Fhome%252FEmployment%2520Relations%252FWork%2520Related%2520Stress%2520and%2520Working%2520Days%2520Lost%252Epdf&wreply=https%3a%2f%2fone.northumbria.ac.uk%2f_trust%2fdefault.aspx" \t "_blank) in the first quarter of the 21-22 academic year are at their lowest level in five years.