

Minute of the National Negotiating Committee (NNC) – Lecturing Staff meeting held on Thursday 19 March 2026 (1000-1200), at Colleges Scotland Offices, Argyll Court, Stirling.

In Attendance	
Chris Boyce	Staff Rep
Thora Hands	“ “
Anne-Marie Harley	“ “ (Chair)
Eileen Imlah	“ “
Charlie Montgomery	“ “
Pete Woods	“ “
Robin Ashton	Management Rep
Sue Clyne	“ “
Susan Elston	“ “
Chris O'Neil	“ “
Alan Ritchie	“ “
David Watt	“ “
Sarah Collins	Staff Joint Secretary
Steve Farrell	Management Joint Secretary
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Callum Chomczuk	Management Rep Observer
Louis Martin	Note Taker

14/25 Welcome and Apologies

The Staff Representatives were in the Chair for this meeting. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

There were no apologies.

15/25 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minute of Thursday 4 December 2025 was agreed.

16/25 Circular 02/17 – Update

The Management Joint Secretary provided an update on Joint Secretary discussions relating to Circulars 02/17, 01/18 and 04/18. It was noted that revised draft versions of these circulars have been prepared, however further detailed discussion is required involving HR and Curriculum management representatives before a response can be issued to the EIS-FELA.

It was also noted that any revised circulars would need to be shared with the wider HR community prior to consideration by CES.

The Management Representatives confirmed that they will review the draft circulars further and provide a response in due course.

Staff Representatives stated they were very keen to progress these and would like to be in a position to agree by June NNC given that implementation of 02/21 and 04/18 issues was an outcome of the 2024 pay agreement.

17/25 Circular 02/21

This item was considered as part of the discussion under item 16/25.

It was noted that a draft Referrals Panel Process and associated Terms of Reference, aligned to the approach developed in relation to Circular 02/17, has been prepared in relation to Circular 02/21.

The Management Representatives confirmed that further discussion is required before a response can be issued to the EIS-FELA.

18/25 Circular 01/18 and 04/18 Update

This item was considered as part of the discussion under item 16/25.

It was noted that a revised draft version to replace Circulars 01/18 and 04/18 has been prepared as part of the wider review of related circulars. Further discussion is required involving HR and Curriculum management representatives before a response can be issued to the EIS-FELA.

19/25 Associate Trainers

The Staff Representatives introduced their paper and outlined concerns regarding outsourcing and the use of associate trainers and agency staff across the sector. Evidence was presented suggesting an increasing reliance on outsourced delivery of lecturing activity, with the Staff Representatives stating that agency staff are being utilised in roles that would otherwise be undertaken by directly employed lecturing staff. The Staff Representatives also advised that, in their view, the use of such arrangements represents a national issue with potential implications for National Bargaining arrangements and the professionalisation agenda.

Examples were provided to illustrate these concerns and the potential impact on lecturing roles if such practices were to continue. It was further noted that, given the reported prevalence across multiple colleges, this should be considered a national issue, and that consistent application of National Terms and Conditions should be maintained.

The Management Representatives thanked the Staff Representatives for the paper and acknowledged the concerns raised. They advised that further analysis would be required to fully understand the extent and nature of the issue, including whether it constitutes a national matter or remains one for local determination.

The Staff Representatives reaffirmed their position that the issue should be considered at a national level and indicated that they would not support an approach which treats the matter as solely local where there is evidence of wider sectoral impact.

The Management Representatives confirmed that they would review and consider the issues raised and provide a response.

20/25 Class Sizes

The Staff Representatives advised that they defer detailed discussion of class sizes until the June 2026 meeting but indicated their intention to bring forward proposals to introduce a class size maximum, through inclusion within the National Working Practices Agreement. The Staff Representatives requested that Management Representatives give early consideration to the proposed direction of travel in advance of the June meeting.

The Management Representatives noted the update and would as requested give early consideration prior to receiving further detail. The Management Representatives confirmed that the proposals would be fully considered once received.

21/25 Class Contact

The Staff Representatives advised that they defer detailed discussion of class contact until the June 2026 meeting but indicated their intention to bring forward proposals to reduce class contact time.

The Staff Representatives requested that Management Representatives give early consideration to the proposed direction of travel in advance of the June meeting.

The Management Representatives noted the update and would as requested give early consideration prior to receiving further detail. The Management Representatives confirmed that the proposals would be fully considered once received.

22/25 Health and Safety

The Staff Representatives reiterated concerns regarding health and safety issues across the sector and advised that, in their view, these matters would benefit from consideration at a national level. They highlighted increasing evidence of issues arising within colleges, including concerns relating to the management of stress, organisational change, risk assessment, and wider working environments, and emphasised the importance of promoting consistent standards and good practice across the sector.

It was proposed that a national health and safety forum could provide an appropriate mechanism to consider emerging patterns, support discussion of general health and safety practice and provide guidance to help reduce the risk of harm while supporting effective industrial relations. It was further noted that such a forum could assist in identifying common issues and promoting standards beyond minimum statutory requirements.

The Management Representatives acknowledged the concerns raised and reiterated that accountability for health and safety rests locally with individual colleges. They noted that existing local mechanisms are in place to address such matters and expressed reservations regarding how a national grouping would operate in practice, given that accountability remains with colleges. They nevertheless indicated that they would be willing to consider a paper outlining how such arrangements might operate at a national level.

The Staff Representatives emphasised that a national forum could support the identification of sector-wide patterns, facilitate the sharing of good practice, and support clearer expectations for local arrangements. It was agreed that the Staff Representatives would prepare a paper for consideration at a future meeting and that Management Representatives would consider would be useful.

23/25 School-College Partnership Guidance

The Staff Representatives introduced the item and advised that they are seeking to develop guidance in relation to school-college partnership arrangements.

They highlighted a number of issues arising in practice, including increasing demand for college delivery to school pupils and a lack of clarity regarding the application of General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registration requirements. It was noted that there is an inconsistency in how these requirements are interpreted across colleges and schools.

Concerns were also raised regarding the practical implications of these arrangements, including where school pupils are taught within partnership settings and questions regarding whether GTCS-registered teachers may be required to be present. It was noted that colleges do not always have sufficient influence over how these arrangements are determined.

The Management Representatives noted their understanding that delivery within school-college partnerships is undertaken by colleges. In response, it was indicated that there remains a lack of clarity regarding how GTCS requirements apply in practice, and that greater clarity at a national level would be beneficial.

It was noted that further engagement with GTCS may assist in providing clarity on these matters and Sarah Collins would draft an email to GTCS on behalf of the NNC.

24/25 College Transformation Framework/Tripartite Alignment Group

The Staff Representatives presented a paper and raised concerns regarding the role and scope of the Tripartite Alignment Group (TAG), particularly where discussions relate to National Bargaining and the impact on workforce planning and lecturing staff terms and conditions.

It was noted that recent discussions within TAG appear to extend beyond its original purpose, with the Terms of Reference being updated in scope, including consideration of matters which may have implications for National Agreements such as Workforce Planning. The Staff Representatives emphasised that issues affecting Terms and Conditions should be considered through National Bargaining structures in line with the National Recognition and Procedures Agreement.

The Management Representatives advised that TAG is not a National Bargaining forum and noted that representation within TAG sits with Colleges Scotland. It was further noted that the group was established to support sector sustainability, with discussions primarily focused on financial and operational matters.

The Staff Representatives reiterated their view that workforce-related matters have the potential to impact National Agreements and emphasised the importance of transparency where discussions may affect the sector and questioned where consultation with trade unions would take place as the NNC is the forum for this when it relates to matters of National Policy. Staff Representatives noted it was for Management Representatives to consult with the Staff Representatives on matters of national policy as per the NRPA. As such, it was for Management Representatives to be clear what those “matters of national policy” are.

Following the discussion, it was agreed that the Management Representatives would provide a factual paper outlining TAG’s remit and current areas of activity at the June meeting, to support a shared understanding of the group’s role.

25/25 Calendar Drift

The Staff Representatives introduced the item via a paper and raised concerns regarding calendar drift, noting that, over time, lecturing staff may be required to work additional days without additional pay due to the way in which college calendars are structured.

It was highlighted that this issue arises periodically and that, in some colleges, arrangements have previously been put in place to address this, including the provision of additional leave. It was noted that such arrangements are not applied consistently across the sector.

The Staff Representatives expressed the view that this represents a potential contractual issue and highlighted the associated legal risks if not addressed. They emphasised that a consistent sector-wide approach may help mitigate these risks.

The Management Representatives queried whether lecturing staff are, in practice, working additional time, noting that contractual arrangements define annual leave entitlement. They advised that, in their view, existing contractual terms continue to be met.

In response, it was reiterated that the operation of college calendars over time may result in additional days being worked despite annual leave entitlement remaining unchanged. Reference was made to previous sector approaches that sought to address this issue.

The Management Representatives requested an adjournment.

Adjournment

Following the adjournment, the Management Representatives confirmed that they would consider the issues raised and provide a response paper for consideration at the next meeting.

26/25 June Public Holiday

The Staff Representatives raised concerns regarding the additional public holiday in June associated with the Scotland National Team's World Cup fixture. It was noted that the holiday has been promoted nationally by the Scottish Government, however decisions on whether to apply the additional public holiday are being taken locally by individual colleges, resulting in inconsistency across the sector.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential operational impact if colleges do not recognise the additional public holiday, including the likelihood of reduced student attendance and the potential requirement for teaching to be repeated for students who do not attend. It was also noted that differing approaches between schools and colleges may create practical difficulties for staff, including childcare considerations.

The Staff Representatives emphasised the importance of a consistent approach across the sector and queried whether a joint communication could be issued to colleges highlighting these concerns.

The Management Representatives advised that approaches are currently being confirmed across the sector, with many colleges intending to recognise the additional public holiday. They confirmed that information is being gathered and that the overall position will be shared.

27/25 Workplan

The Management Representatives introduced the workplan as a standing item to support oversight of ongoing workstreams.

It was noted that the workplan will continue to be used to monitor progress across these areas.

It was agreed that the Joint Secretaries would discuss the workplan further outwith the meeting.

28/25 Date of Next Scheduled Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting is **Thursday 11 June 2026**.

Action Monitoring Log

Thursday 4 December 2025		
Action	Owner	Status and Completion Date
Further develop the draft process and flowchart to support Joint Secretaries in determining Circular 02/21 referrals for consideration at the next Side Table meeting in March 2026.	Joint Secretaries	In Progress
Draft a revised Circular (based on Appendix 2 of Circular 02/17) for consideration at the next Side Table meeting in March 2026.	Staff Side	In Progress
Staff Side to reflect on and clarify its interpretation of the Management Side's feedback on the revised glossary for the Hybrid Working and Learning Practices Working Group, identifying any areas requiring clarification ahead of further discussion.	Staff Side	In Progress
Review the Staff Side response to determine a more consolidated response to the revised glossary for the Hybrid Working and Learning Practices Working Group.	Management Side Joint Secretary	In Progress
Staff Side to provide clarity and definitions regarding the use of associate trainers and agency workers to support further consideration.	Staff Side	Complete
Thursday 19 March 2026		
Action	Owner	Status and Completion Date
Management Representatives to review circulars 02/17, 01/18 and 04/18 and provide a response.	Management Reps	April 2026
Management Representatives to review the issues raised in relation to associate trainers and agency staff and provide a response.	Management Reps	June 2026
Staff Representatives to bring forward a formal paper on class size maxima for consideration at the June meeting.	Staff Reps	Complete
Staff Representatives to bring forward a formal paper on class contact for consideration at the June meeting.	Staff Reps	Complete
Staff Representatives to prepare a paper outlining proposals for a national health and safety forum for consideration at a future meeting.	Staff Reps	Complete
Management Representatives to provide a factual paper outlining the remit and activity of the Tripartite Alignment Group for consideration at the June meeting.	Management Reps	June 2026

Management Representatives to consider the issues raised in relation to calendar drift and provide a response paper at the next meeting.	Management Reps	June 2026
Joint Secretaries to discuss the workplan.	Joint Secretaries	June 2026