



Minute of the meeting of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Central Committee held on Thursday 5 December 2024 (1330-1530), via Zoom Video Conference

In Attendance	
Sue Clyne	Management Side
Angela Cox	“ “
Gavin Donoghue	“ “
Debbie Kerr	“ “
Chris O’Neil	“ “
David Watt	“ “ (Chair)
Chris Boyce	Staff Side
Paula Dixon	“ “
Eileen Imlah	“ “
Alison MacLean	“ “
Laura McLean	“ “
Charlie Montgomery	“ “
Deborah Smith	“ “
Janet Stewart	“ “
John Anderson	Management Side Joint Secretary
David Belsey	Staff Side Joint Secretary
Michael Boyd	Working Groups Officer
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Louis Martin	Note Taker/Zoom Administrator

13/24 Welcome and Apologies

The Management Side was in the chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Angus Campbell, Susan Elston, Jon Vincent, Ian Deed, Alan Ritchie, Management Side, and Annemarie Harley, Karen MacKay, Staff Side.

14/24 Minutes of Previous Meetings and Any Matters Arising

The minute of the meeting held on Thursday 23 March 2023 was agreed.

The minute of the meeting held on Thursday 28 September 2023 was agreed.

The minute of the meeting held on Thursday 7 December 2023 was agreed.

The minute of the meeting held on Thursday 12 September 2024 was agreed.

15/24 COVID Short Life Working Group

The Management Side provided an update on the COVID Short Life Working Group (SLWG). It noted that at the first meeting of the SLWG, it was agreed the Joint Secretaries would review Circular 01/20 as some of the content within it may no longer be applicable.

The Joint Secretaries review determined much of the circular was no longer applicable, as the testing protocols and the referenced Scottish Government advice are no longer in effect.

In an attempt to move this matter forward, the Working Group's Joint Secretaries proposed to discuss an updated Circular 01A/20 at the next meeting of the SLWG.

Unfortunately, the SLWG meeting did not go ahead, and the Circular was shared with the Central Committee for review. Following discussions on paper 5, the Staff Side requested an adjournment as, it believed more time was required to discuss the revised circular.

Adjournment

Following the adjournment, the Staff Side requested that the SLWG reconvene to continue discussions to allow any concerns from the staff side to be raised and discussed. It also stated that once this is complete, the circular could be implemented. The Management Side agreed to this proposal.

16/24 Policy Working Group

Update

The Management Side reported progress, noting that the Disciplinary Policy was presented as an output of the Working Group and was issued for agreement and asked if there were any objections to this. There were no objections from the Staff Side.

It was noted that the procedure was currently with the Working Group, and it was anticipated it would be issued to the next Central Committee meeting.

17/24 NJNC Secretaries Referral Protocol

The Staff Side Joint Secretary advised that the Joint Secretaries had drafted the Referrals Process to capture the process followed for current and previous referrals. However, the Staff Side requested more time to review the protocol. It suggested bringing it to the next Central Committee.

This was agreed.

18/24 Health and Safety

The Staff Side reiterated its request to establishing a dedicated Health and Safety Forum.

The Management Side repeat its previous position that, in its view, there is no need for an additional forum, as health and safety concerns are addressed through the existing structures at a local level and through the College Development Network.

The Staff Side responded by pointing out that trade unions are not included in the current forum, which underscores the need for a separate one.

In response, the Management Side repeated its request made at previous meetings for the Staff Side to submit a proposal outlining its suggestion. The Staff Sides view was that a paper is not required as there has been a previously submitted paper on this matter.

The Management Side noted that it had already provided feedback on that paper and that it was the Staff Side's responsibility to consider the feedback and respond.

The Staff Side requested the feedback in writing, and it would then review.

19/24 Lessons Learned Meeting with Minister

The Management Side reported first on the recent Lessons Learned meeting with the Minister. It advised that it has been agreed that a facilitated session with ACAS will be scheduled to support the fostering of positive behaviours and cultures within the NJNC framework.

It was also agreed that there should be a review of the National Recognition and Procedures Agreement (NRPA) as it has not been reviewed in the nine years since its inception. It was noted that a meeting with all Sides will be scheduled to take this forward in the New Year.

In addition, the Management Side also advised it strongly supported the Strathesk recommendation of appointing an Independent Chair.

The Staff Side reported on the recent Lessons Leant meeting with the Minister and it advised that it was not averse to looking at training and behaviours, but it firmly opposed the Independent Chair recommendation. It reported that additional facility time remained an issue. The Staff Side also reported that all members had agreed in principle to engage with the NRPA review.

The Management Side responded that it was surprised by the request for additional Facilities Time from the EIS-FELA as the most recent Agreement was only reached in April 2023. It also advised that the role of the Independent Chair would have been to cut down on bureaucracy, determine what is competent business, rationalise processes and expedite discussion. However, the Management Side recognised that the Independent Chair needed the support of both Sides. The Management Side said that once discussions are complete, Facilities Time could be considered by College Employers Scotland, if still required.

The Staff Side stated that to get the NJNC working to capacity, an increase to Facilities Time is required to leverage lay member input in the several Working Groups that are in train as there is no Scottish Government funding for the EIS to provide the secretariat function. Unite also advised that until now, it has not asked for Facilities Time as colleges are providing the requested time off, but as there is no backfill arrangements, the work is building up when Unite representatives attend national meetings.

20/24 Fair Work Working Group

Update

The Central Committee was updated that the working group has not met since November 2023 due to meetings being cancelled and competing priorities. It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 30 January 2025.

21/24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting is **Thursday 20 March 2025**.

22/24 Matters Arising

A further discussion took place on the recent budget announcement. The Staff Side queried the position on National Insurance contributions. The Management Side advised that at this time, there is uncertainty about whether National Insurance contributions will be fully or partially covered and that the sector may face a significant pay bill exceeding £15 million, as it seems National Insurance contributions were not accounted for in the budget.

Both sides expressed concerns about the allocation of funding, particularly regarding the Scottish Government's responsibility to cover these contributions as failing to do so could have serious implications for the sector.

Action Monitoring Log

Thursday 28 September 2023				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
01.23	Joint Secretaries to have a separate discussion to address the matter of personnel in attendance at NJNC meetings.	JS	October 2023	Complete
02.23	Joint Secretaries to discuss three concerns from the Staff Side in relation to the minute of the meeting Thursday 23 March 23.	JS	October 2023	Complete
05.23	It was agreed to schedule a further meeting of the group that met on 24 th August 2023 to progress discussions on lessons learned, once a written submission is received by the Support Staff Secretary.	MS/SS	October 2023	Ongoing
Thursday 7 December 2023				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
11.23	Staff Side to raise by points on outstanding minutes so it can be discussed separately by the Joint Secretaries.	SS/JS	March 2023	Complete
11.23	Joint Secretaries to define the status of observers.	JS	March 2023	Ongoing
11.23	Joint Secretaries to review communications around disputed matters.	JS	March 2023	Complete
13.23	Joint Secretaries to discuss letter to CDN on Health and Safety.	JS	December 2023	Ongoing
13.23	Staff Side to draft a paper setting out its expectations for a National Health and Safety forum for further discussion.	SS	March 2023	Ongoing
14.23	Joint Secretaries to look at referrals on local policies.	JS	December 2023	Complete/ Overtaken
15.23	Continue offline discussions on Distant Island Allowance.	SS/MS	March 2023	Complete/ Overtaken
16.23	Staff Side to check accuracy of Paper 6 and provide confirmation on whether or not accepted.	SS	December/January 2023	Overtaken

19.23	Schedule a Lessons Learned meeting following receipt of all submissions to Scottish Government.	MS/SS	March 2023	Ongoing
Thursday 12 September 2024				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
02.24	Further review the draft minutes of Thursday 23 March 2023 and Thursday 28 September 2023.	JS	December 2024	Complete
04.24	Clarify the Staff Side position on issuing the Policy of the draft Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.	SS	December 2024	Complete
05.24	The Fair Work Working Group to continue with joint work including research and surveys.	JS	October 2024	Complete
06.24	Submit a paper on Staff Side expectations on Health and Safety forum within NJNC.	SS	December 2024	Ongoing
07.24	Progress work on Lessons Learned and arrange an employers and trade unions only meeting.	JS	December 2024	Outstanding
07.24	Consider and discuss issues around improving NJNC processes at the next Central Committee meeting.	JS	December 2024	In Progress
08.24	Revisit the current NJNC protocol that has been in place since 2014.	JS	December 2024	In Progress
08.24	Draft a Referrals Process for the Joint Secretaries.	JS	December 2024	In Progress
Thursday 5 December 2024				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
15.24	Joint Signatories will meet next week to address staff concerns before implementing the new COVID circular.	JS	December 2024	Complete
16.24	Review feedback and continue progress on the Disciplinary Procedure.	JS	March 2025	In Progress
17.24	The Staff Sides to review the protocol before it is brought back to the next Central Committee.	SS	March 2025	In Progress
18.24	The Management Side is to resubmit its feedback on the Staff Sides Health and Safety paper.	MS	December 2024	In Progress
18.24	Staff Side to respond to the Management Side feedback on Health and Safety.	SS	March 2025	In Progress