

Minute of the meeting of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Central Committee held on Thursday 20 March 2025 (1300-1500), at Colleges Scotland Offices, Stirling

In Attendance	
Chris Boyce	Staff Side
Paula Dixon	“ “
Richard Gordon	“ “
Keir Greenaway	“ “
Thora Hands	“ “
Annemarie Harley	“ “ (Chair)
Eileen Imlah	“ “
Alison MacLean	“ “
Laura McLean	“ “
Deborah Smith	“ “
Janet Stewart	“ “
Angus Campbell	Management Side
Angela Cox	“ “
Ian Deed	“ “
Susan Elston	“ “
Debbie Kerr	“ “
Alan Ritchie	“ “
David Watt	“ “
Sarah Collins	Staff Side Joint Secretary
John Anderson	Management Side Joint Secretary
Michael Boyd	Working Groups Officer
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Catherine McCreath	Note Taker

23/24 Welcome and Apologies

The Staff Side was in the chair and welcomed all to the meeting. As some participants were new to the group, introductions were made.

Apologies were noted from Charlie Montgomery, Staff Side, and Jon Vincent, Chris O’Neil, and Sue Clyne, Management Side.

24/24 Minutes of Previous Meetings and Any Matters Arising

The minute of the previous meeting on Thursday 5 December 2024 was agreed.

25/24 Covid Short Life Working Group (SLWG)

Action Note of Previous Meetings

The action notes from the Covid SLWG meetings presented in Paper 2 were noted.

Recommendations from SLWG

Draft Circular CC01/25

It was noted that following a request from the Staff Side at the last NJNC – Central Committee meeting, the SLWG reconvened in January and February 2025 to finalise the wording of Circular CC01/25. The revised Circular aligns with ACAS and NHS guidance.

Both sides agreed on the final version of Circular CC01/25, which will be formally issued by the Joint Secretaries.

Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 of paper 3 was noted, however, the Central Committee was advised that following feedback from UNISON, the Equality Impact Assessment has been updated by Thorntons, CES's lawyers and will be shared out with the meeting.

This was agreed.

26/24 Policy Working Group (PWG)

Action Notes of Previous Meetings

The action notes from previous PWG meetings presented in Paper 4 were noted.

Recommendation from PWG

Draft National Disciplinary Policy and Model Procedure

A Draft National Disciplinary Policy and Model Procedure, along with an Equality Impact Assessment conducted by Thorntons, were presented as outputs from the PWG in Paper 5. Both documents were agreed.

It was agreed that a Circular would be agreed by the Joint Secretaries and issued with an implementation date of 1 August 2025.

National Grievance Policy and Model Procedure

It was noted that the draft National Grievance Policy has been mostly reviewed by the PWG. A further one-hour meeting was scheduled to finalise the draft later in the afternoon, immediately after the NJNC – Central Committee meeting.

It is anticipated that the PWG hope to be in a position to approve it at its next meeting on Thursday 3 April 2025, after which work will commence on the Model Procedure.

The Staff Side noted that Annemarie Harley was stepping down from the PWG and that Thora Hands would be taking her place.

27/24 Fair Work Working Group (FWWG)

Action Notes of Previous Meetings

The action notes of the previous FWWG meetings presented in Paper 6 were noted.

Next Steps

The Staff Side advised that Fair Work remains an important issue, particularly as it directly impacts college funding, and would like to look at joint training with a view to then drafting a National Fair Work Statement for the sector.

It was agreed to discuss this further at the next scheduled FWWG meeting on Thursday 3 April 2025.

28/24 NJNC Secretaries Referrals Protocol

Draft Referrals Process

It was noted that the Staff Side had reviewed the draft Referrals Process, and Paper 7 included its tracked changes and proposed amendments.

The Management Side sought clarification on the Staff Side's proposal that both Staff Side Secretaries should have knowledge of all outstanding referrals.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a summary of referral topics would be maintained in a shared spreadsheet/log, rather than a fully detailed record, with UNISON confirming it was only concerned with support staff matters.

Further discussion took place regarding the submission of referrals, with the Management Side suggesting a more general reference to Joint Secretaries rather than named individuals, to account for personnel changes.

The Staff Side emphasised the importance of clear contact details and proposed that referrals be sent directly to the Joint Secretaries and suggested that the Secretariat be copied into all communication for administrative oversight.

This was agreed. It was also agreed the Joint Secretaries would review the final version of the Draft Referrals Process and issue it to the sector.

NJNC Protocol Review

It was noted that the existing NJNC protocol, established in 2014, requires review. This is currently being progressed by the Joint Secretaries and further discussions will take place.

29/24 Healthy and Safety

The Staff Side reiterated concerns about the impact of work on employees' personal lives and well-being and emphasised the need for a proactive approach to workplace health and safety. It suggested a new approach to this request advising that a Health and Safety forum could be used to produce evidence to support and lobby for funding in the sector due to the impact funding is currently having on the Health and Safety of college staff.

The Staff Side agreed to draft a Terms of Reference that would ensure that this activity did not conflict with or overlap core Health and Safety matters dealt with via established Health and Safety processes.

30/24 Student Awards Funding

Paper 8 from UNISON highlighted a recent Scottish Government announcement confirming that all post-school provision funding will be consolidated within the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Although there is no immediate impact on Further Education (FE) staff employment, UNISON has highlighted the absence of reassurance for FE staff in the transition process. As discussions on potential impacts have not yet taken place, the Staff Side has proposed that this remains an agenda item for ongoing monitoring.

It was agreed to keep this matter under review.

31/24 Lessons Learned Meeting with Minister

It was noted that at the December 2024 NJNC – Central Committee meeting, both sides reflected on key areas for improvement within the NJNC framework following a Lessons Learned session with the Minister.

The Management Side reiterated its support for an ACAS facilitated session to improve behaviours and culture within the NJNC, alongside a review of the National Recognition and Procedures Agreement (NRPA), which has remained unchanged since its implementation.

It was noted that the Staff Side had previously raised concerns over Facilities Time, arguing that an increase was necessary to enable effective participation in NJNC functions.

However, the Staff Side welcomed the proposal for ACAS training.

UNISON stated it will confirm its participation in the ACAS session in due course.

32/24 Date of Next Scheduled Meeting

It was agreed to reschedule the next meeting to **Thursday 29 May 2025** (originally Thursday 12 June 2025).

Action Monitoring Log

Thursday 28 September 2023				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
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	Overtaken/ Complete
Thursday 7 December 2023				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
11.23	Joint Secretaries to define the status of observers.	JS	March 2023	Ongoing
13.23	Joint Secretaries to discuss letter to CDN on Health and Safety.	JS	December 2023	Overtaken/ Complete
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	Overtaken/ Complete
19.23	Schedule a Lessons Learned meeting following receipt of all submissions to Scottish Government.	MS/SS	March 2023	Overtaken/ Complete
Thursday 12 September 2024				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
06.24	Submit a paper on Staff Side expectations on Health and Safety forum within NJNC.	SS	December 2024	Overtaken/ Complete
07.24	Progress work on Lessons Learned and arrange an employers and trade unions only meeting.	JS	December 2024	Overtaken/ Complete
07.24	Consider and discuss issues around improving NJNC processes at the next Central Committee meeting.	JS	December 2024	Complete
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	Complete
Thursday 5 December 2024				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
16.24	Review feedback and continue progress on the Disciplinary Procedure.	JS	March 2025	Complete

17.24	The Staff Sides to review the NJNC Secretaries protocol before it is brought back to the next Central Committee.	SS	March 2025	Complete
18.24	The Management Side is to resubmit its feedback on the Staff Sides Health and Safety paper.	MS	December 2024	Complete
18.24	Staff Side to respond to the Management Side feedback on Health and Safety.	SS	March 2025	Complete
Thursday 20 March 2025				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
25.24	Issue Circular CC01/25 as a National Agreement, effective from 1 August 2025.	JS	April 2025	Complete
26.24	Issue the National Disciplinary Policy as a National Agreement effective from 1 August 2025.	JS	April 2025	Complete
27.24	Convene the Fair Work Working Group in April 2025 to discuss joint training and draft a National Fair Work Statement.	JS	April 2025	Complete
28.24	Update the Draft Referrals Process to reflect the agreed amendments.	JS	March 2025	Complete
28.24	Finalise and issue the updated Referrals Process to the sector.	JS	April 2025	Complete
29.24	Draft Terms of Reference for a Health and Safety Forum ensuring alignment with existing processes.	SS	June 2025	In Progress
30.24	Monitor developments regarding Student Awards Funding and assess potential implications.	JS	Ongoing	Ongoing