

Minute of the meeting of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Central Committee held on Thursday 29 May 2025 (1300-1500), via Video Conference

In Attendance	
Angus Campbell	Management Side (Chair)
Sue Clyne	“ “
Ian Deed	“ “
Debbie Kerr	“ “
Joe Wright	“ “
Chris Boyce	Staff Side
Keir Greenaway	“ “
Chris Greenshields	“ “
Thora Hands	“ “
Eileen Imlah	“ “
Alison MacLean	“ “
Laura McLean	“ “
Charlie Montgomery	“ “
Deborah Smith	“ “
Janet Stewart	“ “
Pete Woods	“ “
John Anderson	Management Side Joint Secretary
Sarah Collins	Staff Side Joint Secretary
Michael Boyd	Working Groups Officer
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Catherine McCreath	Note Taker/Zoom Administrator

33/24 Welcome and Apologies

The Management Side was in the chair and welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Annemarie Harley, Staff Side and Angela Cox, Chris O’Neil, Susan Elston, Jon Vincent, David Watt and Alan Ritchie, Management Side.

Before discussing the minutes, the Staff Side raised concerns that GMB had not been able to attend recent meetings of national working groups and stated that the Chair had a role in determining attendance at these national groups. The Central Committee was advised that the GMB representative in attendance at this meeting had used annual leave to attend.

The Management Side stressed the importance of adhering to the agenda for the day and advised the Staff Side that the GMB remains in contact with the Joint Secretaries regarding this issue. It was also confirmed that the matter of National Facilities Time is scheduled to be discussed at the next Support Staff Side Table meeting on 4 June 2025. It was expressed by the GMB that it was a norm to deal with matters of attendance within the welcome, such as apologies or restrictions on release.

34/24 Minutes of Previous Meetings and Any Matters Arising

The minute of the previous meeting on Thursday 20 March 2025 was agreed.

Matters Arising

Lessons Learned

The Staff Side queried the status of the 'lessons learned' activities, convened last year by the Minister.

The Management Side advised that ACAS had been in contact with parties, but a meeting date with ACAS or the Minister has not yet been confirmed.

The Staff Side Joint Secretary also noted that it had followed up directly with ACAS without response and requested that College Employers Scotland (CES) continue to pursue a date prior to summer break.

UNISON and Unite Resignation from the Current NRPA

The Staff Side sought clarity on whether a further Central Committee meeting would be scheduled to discuss the implications of UNISON and Unite's withdrawal from the NRPA.

Lengthy discussions took place, with concerns raised by the EIS-FELA and GMB about lack of transparency and consultation regarding the development of a new NRPA.

The Management Side acknowledged the point being made and confirmed that the matter was now being formally negotiated with UNISON and Unite, including the implications of their withdrawal. While no specific details or timeline had yet been agreed, it was noted that the next Central Committee meeting in September would be provided with an update on progress.

GMB requested formal involvement in any future discussions regarding a new framework.

UNISON and Unite clarified that its intention was to progress the negotiations on a new support staff NRPA and would do so independently of GMB and the EIS-FELA.

The Management Side acknowledged GMB's request but agreed that those discussions were not currently open to GMB, as they (GMB) had not given any intention to leave the current NRPA.

The Chair closed the discussion and moved on to the next item.

35/24 Policy Working Group (PWG)

Action Notes of Previous Meetings

The action notes from the PWG meetings were noted.

Update from PWG – Draft National Grievance Policy and Model Procedure

It was noted that the PWG continues to develop a National Grievance Policy and Model Procedure. The last meeting of the PWG focused on two unresolved areas: *the evidence of management training and selection for grievance-related roles*; and the Management Side's proposal to reword the reference to "Status Quo Ante" in Section 3.6. It was agreed by the PWG to reflect and respond to the proposed revisions via email.

The Staff Side also provided feedback on the draft Model Grievance Procedure which would be responded to in writing by the Management Side. It was noted, the PWG may meet before the end of the Academic Year, subject to availability of both sides.

36/24 Fair Work Working Group (FWWG)

Action Notes of Previous Meetings

The action notes from the FWWG meetings were noted.

Update

It was noted that the FWWG has made some progress including an agreement to reframe the proposed national sectoral statement as a model college statement that may be adopted or adapted locally.

The FWWG also welcomed the STUC Fair Work Officer to its May 2025 meeting. It was agreed that the Officer would attend a future meeting to deliver introductory training and support the group's consideration of the Fair Work Convention's self-assessment toolkit, due for launch on Monday 9 June 2025.

37/24 Health and Safety

Terms of Reference

The Staff Side presented a draft Terms of Reference proposal to establish a Health and Safety subcommittee under the NJNC structure. The proposal emphasised that the subcommittee would not replace local Health and Safety Committees but could act as a positive national forum for promoting sector wide good practice and addressing key issues such as work-related stress.

The Management Side requested an adjournment to consider the proposal.

Adjournment

Following an adjournment, the Management Side confirmed it did not support the establishment of a standalone NJNC Health and Safety subcommittee as it considered it to fall outside the remit of the NRPA. While acknowledging the quality of the proposal and the issues raised, the Management Side suggested that the request for a model stress risk assessment could be addressed through the National Sickness Absence Policy.

The Staff Side noted the Management Side's points and emphasised that model stress risk assessment remains a key concern and agreed to reflect on the feedback. Both sides recognised the need for further focus on this specific issue within the review of the National Sickness Absence Policy.

38/24 NRPA Disputes Process

GMB introduced this item, highlighting the importance of the NRPA disputes process being operational, accessible, and used meaningfully to support resolution at the earliest opportunity. It expressed concern that some disputes may be delayed or blocked from progressing, which undermines confidence in the procedure.

The Management Side responded that the NRPA does contain a defined disputes process and is of the view that the collective Committee/Side Tables that are considered the party to any dispute, not individual trade unions.

The Staff Side disagreed, stating that the NRPA refers to "parties" in the plural, which it interpreted as including the individual unions, and noted precedent where individual unions had raised disputes that were accepted.

The Management Side acknowledged that there may have been past practice of responding to a dispute outside of the formal process and that the circumstance at the time may have necessitated that but noted that in a single-table structure, the requirement is for matters to be raised and resolved collectively.

The Staff Side added that this issue had arisen in connection with GMB's concerns and dispute on Facilities Time.

The Management Side advised it was not prepared to discuss this specific issue at this meeting but confirmed it was scheduled for discussion at the upcoming Side Table (Support) meeting on Wednesday 4 June 2025.

Following lengthy discussions, the Management Side requested an adjournment to consider the points raised.

Adjournment

Following the adjournment, the Management Side advised that it would seek further guidance, including legal advice, on the interpretation of the term "party" under the NRPA. It confirmed its willingness to discuss the matter further after the upcoming Side Table (Support) meeting in June 2025, where the topic is expected to be addressed.

Both sides agreed to revisit the issue thereafter.

39/24 NJNC Protocol Review

The Management Side noted that the current version of the protocol remains dated, and earlier efforts to review and update it, some of which involved engagement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), had not reached a conclusion.

Following discussion, it was agreed that, rather than continue as a separate agenda item, any review of the NJNC Protocol should be incorporated into broader discussions as part of the proposed NRPA reform work.

40/24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed, and a schedule of meetings of the NJNC – Central Committee for Academic Year 2025/26 will be shared once finalised.

Action Monitoring Log

Thursday 7 December 2023				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
11.23	Joint Secretaries to define the status of observers.	JS	March 2023	Overtaken/ Complete
Thursday 12 September 2024				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
08.24	Revisit the current NJNC protocol that has been in place since 2014.	JS	December 2024	Overtaken
Thursday 20 March 2025				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
29.24	Draft Terms of Reference for a Health and Safety Forum ensuring alignment with existing processes.	SS	June 2025	Complete
30.24	Monitor developments regarding Student Awards Funding and assess potential implications.	JS	Ongoing	Ongoing
Thursday 29 May 2025				
Item	Action	Owner	Completion Date	Status
34.24	Continue to engage with ACAS to secure a date for a meeting on Lessons Learned.	MS	June 2025	Complete
34.24	Provide the Central Committee of any updates on the implications of UNISON and Unite's withdrawal from the NRPA at a future Central Committee meeting.	JS	September 2025	In Progress
37.24	Consider Management Side feedback on the proposed Health and Safety Subcommittee and reflect on the focus of stress risk assessment within the Sickness Absence Policy.	SS	September 2025	In Progress
38.24	Seek legal advice on the interpretation of "party" under the NRPA disputes process and revisit this discussion at the next Side Table (Support) meeting.	MS	June 2025	Complete