



Minute of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – Side Table (Support) Meeting – Pay, on Thursday 24 April 2025 (1000-1200), at Colleges Scotland Offices, Argyll Court, Stirling.

In Attendance	
Debbie Kerr	Management Side
Chris O’Neil	“ “
Alan Ritchie	“ “
David Watt	“ “ (Chair)
Richard Gordon	Staff Side
Gary McIntosh	“ “
John Anderson	Management Side Joint Secretary
Janet Stewart	Staff Side Joint Secretary
Jillian Cheape	Secretariat
Anne Davidson	Note Taker

22/24 Welcome and Apologies

The Staff Side was in the Chair for this meeting. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Alison MacLean, Staff Side.

23/24 UNISON and Unite Pay Claim

Support Staff Pay Claim 2025-2026 and 2026-2027

The Management Side advised it had prepared a document detailing a recap of discussions to date and set out the employer’s position. This was tabled for discussion at the meeting.

The Management Side acknowledged the Support Staff Pay Claim had been received on Wednesday 12 March 2025, and confirmed its counteroffer of a 2.5% consolidated increase on all salary points had been rejected. It further noted that confirmation was still awaited from the Scottish Government Minister as to whether the College Sector is subject to Public Sector Pay Policy (PSPP), but that a statement had been provided from a Government Official to give some clarity, which advises that “*differing negotiating arrangements are in place for sectors such as Further Education*”. The Staff Side acknowledged this was an attempt to be helpful but still expects definite clarity on the matter from the Government Minister. The Management Side confirmed it would provide further confirmation upon receipt.

The Staff Side Joint Secretary confirmed that they were representing both UNISON and Unite in the meeting and were able to negotiate on that basis.

The Management Side confirmed that PSPP is an avenue that it may be willing to explore on the basis that it offers stability in industrial relations for the sector, over an extended period.

The Staff Side confirmed it is also keen to reach an agreement over a three-year period to give stability and avoid industrial action, noting that stability is of particular importance in view of the upcoming ballot on Job Evaluation.

The Staff Side noted that in pay negotiations in other sectors, a recommendation has been made recently to accept an offer of 4.5%, having rejected earlier offers of 3%. *It enquired that if something along the lines of PSPP were to be considered, how the 9% would be split across the three years, noting that 9% across three years would not be acceptable*

The Management Side noted that the accepted protocol, should be that a revised claim be tabled, which it could then respond to. It advised that at this point, its offer remained the same, until a revised counterclaim was received.

It was suggested that both parties adjourn to allow support staff to consider their position and any possible counterclaim.

Adjournment

Following an adjournment, the Staff Side Joint Secretary said that a revised claim will be issued, but verbally tabled a revised claim comprising **4.5% for Year 1 and 3.5% for each of Years 2 and 3**, with an **underpin of 5% for the lowest salary grades, earning £27,000 or less**; a no compulsory redundancy guarantee; an uplift to the salary point at which overtime is payable, to £44,000; an increase to the standby allowance to £120 per week and an increase in the First Aid Rate to £550 per annum.

The Management Side responded, saying that its position of considering even a PSPP based on 9% increase across a three-year period, presented a significant challenge to the sector in terms of affordability, especially when set against the backdrop of the sector funding cuts.

The Management Side took an adjournment to consider the revised claim.

Adjournment

Following a lengthy adjournment, the Management Side tabled a counteroffer for consideration by the Staff Side.

The Management Side counteroffer for Year 1 was for a 4.5% increase on all salary points for support staff, with an underpin of 5% for salaries up to £27,000, effective from 1 September 2025, subject to additional Scottish Government funding being provided to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as a ringfenced grant. For AYs 2026/27 and 2027/28, the offer was 3% for each of those years. Only on the basis of the above being agreed, it would offer to increase the salary level at which overtime is paid to £44,000 from 1 September 2025 and to uplift the Standby Allowance to £120 per week. It could not agree to a no compulsory guarantee or to increase the first aid allowance.

The Management Side noted it was pleased that both parties appear to be on the same page but pointed out that there remains a substantial sectoral funding gap. On this basis, its offer is contingent upon discussions with the Scottish Government and securing additional funding for the cost of the pay settlement beyond that of the 9% PSPP.

It noted that making a request to the Scottish Government would be a matter of urgency but could only be done when the only outstanding issue was the difference between the employers' final position and the unions demand. There could be no further negotiation after the Scottish Government involvement. The Management Side did confirm that the Scottish Government has been made aware that a request similar to the award given to lecturing staff would likely be forthcoming.

The Staff Side advised that if the employers' counteroffer was for 3.5% for Years 2 and 3, then that would be something that they could take to their members, but that 3% in Years two and three would be too light.

The Management Side pointed out that front-loading the first year to 4.5%, has a far greater effect on Years two and three, than the PSPP 9% over three years, and, in fact, would mean an overall increase of 10.9% over the period.

The Staff Side agreed to discuss the revised offer with Unite and was also in agreement on the need to firm up all aspects of a prospective pay award in advance of discussions with the Scottish Government.

The Staff Side again confirmed it would provide its revised claim in writing and that if the Management Side did the same, it would consider the offer and respond further.

24/24 Date of Next Scheduled Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting is Wednesday 4 June 2025.

Action Monitoring Log – Pay Meetings Only

Thursday 24 April 2025		
Action	Owner	Status/ Anticipated/ Completion Date
Provide written confirmation on the Scottish Government position in relation to the College sector and PSPP.	Management Side Joint Secretary	May 2025
Issue a written version of the revised Support Staff Pay Claim	Staff Side Joint Secretary	Complete