

# A review of UCEA's work in 2019-20

This review reports on many of the achievements and activities undertaken in the past year, referencing our [Programme of Work](#) published in September 2019. UCEA's Programme of Work was of course severely interrupted by the pandemic and its ongoing repercussions but we quickly adjusted outputs, supporting members throughout. Covid-19 aside, 2019-20 delivered a number of unforeseeable developments but UCEA was able to meet these challenges while remaining focused on the objectives identified at the start of the year. This review is a summary for members, identifying selective outcomes and outputs from our work over the year and many areas where work continues.

## 1. Pay matters

### We said we would:

Achieve an acceptable and timely implementation to the 2019-20 pay round, in the context of all five trade unions continuing to be in dispute and planning ballots in the autumn. Plan and run the processes for a 2020-21 collective pay round and support HEIs accordingly, from benchmarking to briefings.

### What we have delivered:

- Concluded the 2019-20 New JNCHES round with an outcome for employers and employees in place for the start of autumn semester. These included formal and informal dispute meetings and providing full support throughout industrial action taken until March 2020. Following the low turnouts and impact, there has been no further action.
- Conducted an extensive and modified consultation process to set a realistic focus for 2020-21 negotiations. With the JNCHES meetings paused due to the pandemic we ran a Covid-19 Update survey in May, confirming the opt-in mandate for no uplift to the pay spine.
- Developed a virtual approach to New JNCHES negotiations, confirming to trade unions, that members are not in a position to offer an uplift in pay for 2020-21 apart from addressing issues around the National Living Wage.
- Enabled extensive dialogue with trade unions through JNCHES
- Provided access to high quality pay benchmarking data for members, seeing increased participation in the UCEA/XperthHR pay club survey, more bespoke pay benchmarking and sustained take-up of our Senior Staff Remuneration Survey; the latter incorporating a new Executive Pay briefing.
- Sought and provided information on financial reporting requirements (in England) through extensive engagement with OfS and liaison with other sector bodies.
- Provided members with new benchmarking information to assist with their pay ratio examination.
- Provided comprehensive briefings on pay and labour market trends; updating and communicating the Pay in HE data analysis.
- Updated Living Wage Toolkit and analysis of gender pay gaps, materials for members and added new case studies.

## 2. Employee relations

### We said we would:

Support members with pay, pensions and other issues being run together as matters of dispute, dealing with regular ballots and industrial action. Maintain trade union dialogue regardless of strike action and seek to take forward sector-level work that addresses areas of trade union interest (including casual employment, gender and ethnicity pay gaps and mental health) – offering partnership working to the trade unions. Support those employers who want to review or realign their bargaining.

### What we have delivered:

- Support and communications material for use by HEIs impacted by ballots for industrial action on pay and other matters in the trade unions' JNCHES claim.
- Close liaison with UUK colleagues on materials supporting employers on USS ballots, ensuring overall coherence with other ballot issues.
- Support materials, technical and legal guidance, and communications support – the latter with/through UUK if USS related - in place for any sector-wide industrial action.
- Offered the benchmarking service for the HE sector on employee engagement.
- Developed proposals on the future of collective bargaining
- Worked with Universities Scotland (US) to convey the HEI-focused activities on Scottish employment priorities and supported US colleagues accordingly. Briefing US and Scottish Government on pension cost increases and on the pandemic.
- Launched a successful Employee Relations network for members.
- Held virtual HR Director meetings on ER issues.
- Convened formal HESH Forum meetings with the unions and HSE.
- Provided updated support materials, technical and legal guidance on managing industrial action, reflecting legal and other developments.

## 3. Broad organisational development and workforce agendas

### We said we would:

Provide support on organisational development and workforce issues, including health and safety, mental health, sexual misconduct, racial harassment, performance and achieving flexibility. Enhance HR insight and impact through working with data and to address issues around the casual workforce.

### What we have delivered:

- A suite of well-received development events held around reward, performance and engagement, including workshops and online seminars.
- Developed a new Matrix of employment Charters to support HEIs in deciding which they should pursue for their own HEIs.
- Produced surveys and analysis of the HE sector's response to the Covid-19 Job Retention Scheme, undertaken case studies into the HE sector's response to staff health and wellbeing while working remotely. Launched the well-received 'Beyond the HE bubble' report and blog, examining responses to the impact of Covid-19 on other sector organisations.
- Provided analysis of HESA data to deliver the Employee Turnover self-service tool. Delivered Head of Institution pay ratio material.
- Provided members with confidential survey data on the use of voluntary severance and redundancy schemes in the sector, and on approaches to holiday pay and overtime.
- Produced guidance for HEIs with clinical academics on new pay arrangements and continued work with NHS Employers, Department of Health and Social Care and the Medical Schools Council to improve communications.
- Influenced national debate and discussion with NHS Employers regarding the inclusion of clinical academics in local Clinical Excellence Awards schemes.
- Published gender pay gap data and infographics although not a statutory requirement in 2020 due to Covid-19.
- Delivered our well-attended (100 delegates) major international conference, The HE workforce: exploring global perspectives.

## 4. Legal and policy developments

### We said we would:

Provide timely information and advisory support on policy and legal developments affecting UK HE employment and assist employers in responding to the distinctive employment agendas and emerging issues in the different UK jurisdictions. Offer pay gap support on gender data reporting and actions and in preparation for ethnicity pay reporting and examination of intersectional data. Support employers on changing immigration rule with Brexit pending.

### What we have delivered:

- Continued talks with the trade unions through sector-level roundtable meetings on the impact of Covid-19 on workforce issues, exploring actions and develop joint positions to support the sector.
- Published the joint UCEA-trade union agreed 'Principles for working safely on campus during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic'.
- Published legal advice on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (JRS).
- Resolved queries relating to access of the JRS for HE employers.
- Delivered support and benchmarking tools for members for the 2020 GPG reporting round, including communications and a revised suite of infographics.
- Contributed on behalf of the sector to government-level consultations around future ethnicity pay reporting.
- Played a key role as a member of UUK's working group on tackling racial harassment, facilitating UUK to collate examples of good practice in HEIs.
- Represented members' views to government on several consultations, including those on bereavement leave, parental leave and pay, confidentiality clauses, sick pay and flexible working.
- Joined up sector-level work with UUK and others and pan-industry work with CBI on MAC.
- Continued to lobby via the CBI and UUK on risks to the HE Sector from the Immigration White Paper.
- Worked with UUK to lobby the Home Office/UKVI to resolve immigration issues arising from the impact of Covid-19.

## 5. Challenges in the pensions landscape

### We said we would:

Represent the sector's interests in relation to significant challenges for public sector pension schemes. Support HE employer options and strategies across the public sector schemes and continue to work with UUK on USS funding and benefits issues. Brief members on developments across the broader pensions landscape including legislative and regulatory changes.

### What we have delivered:

- Continued our role representing members in the LGPS and TPS, particularly at scheme meetings covering governance, administration and benefits.
- Regular updates on relevant pension topics as well as a bi-monthly newsletter which provides essential information on an array of pensions topics both HE and non-HE related.
- Gathered and shared intelligence across the range of schemes offered by HEIs, including a further LGPS survey to collate the results of the 2019 LGPS valuations (E&W), a survey for HEIs with SATs and a DC survey setting out HEI approaches to introducing DC pension provision.
- Continued to support UUK in their role as employer representative on USS and throughout the UCU dispute.
- Provided direct support to UUK colleagues and in the EPF USS Group in a year of further extensive work on USS, including engaging at USS Joint Negotiating Committee and Funding and Benefits Sub-Committee meetings.
- Retained seats on the TPS SAB and LGPS SAB and maintained links with the HE representatives on the other schemes, including the NHSPS and Scottish TPS.
- Submitted a response to the consultation on potential flexibilities for senior clinicians in the NHSPS who are affected by pensions tax charges.
- Supported NHS England in the development of the NHSPS scheme pays 2019/20 policy.

## 6. Cross cutting activities

### We said we would:

Deliver a deeper integration of UCEA's IT systems and implementation of a new CRM and website, improving accessibility of UCEA resources and communication. Ensure timely and appropriate communications, media presence and briefings to members. Offer wide ranging opportunities for member engagement, networking and development, through a programme of events that responds to emerging themes throughout the year. Maintain strong financial health and sustainability and an effectively deployed and engaged UCEA team, including the appointment of and transition to new Chief Executive. Conduct and deliver a (triennial) full membership survey seeking feedback on UCEA's activities and value for money.

### We highlight here:

- Successful member launch of new website and CRM, on time and to budget, with enhanced member experience and process improvements.
- Produced regular Updates, Bulletins, Newsletters, Headlines, Briefings and revised or new Infographics.
- Set up a new Covid-19 hub of resources for members on our website.
- A new UCEA blog provision, focusing on Covid-19 related challenges to the sector and beyond.
- Provided members with communications materials on key issues and at key times, ensuring more balanced sector-level media coverage.
- Upgraded our core IT infrastructure to improve our reliability, effectiveness and productivity.
- Maintained and developed our specialist networks for members, providing meetings, calls and round table events, including extended remote interaction.
- Met our budget and subscriber engagement targets, including visits to HEIs and UCEA input at a wide range of national and regional sector body meetings.
- Achieved good attendance and positive feedback from events through the year; hosting weekly HRD virtual meetings, online reward workshops, interviews and network meetings since lockdown. The wide range of virtual meetings and webinars has been planned and delivered at short notice.
- Published the results and learning from our successful triennial membership survey. While this survey predated the Covid-19 pandemic the information gathered is still valuable, providing us with feedback on three years' service provision and information to shape our future priorities and services.

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