



putting pay to incomparable salaries

In England, the 2002 pay negotiations concluded successfully with an agreement that the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the National Joint Forum (NJF) trades unions would form a working group to consider the pay increase for 2003.

Several meetings of the Modernising Pay Working Group have taken place, which is seeking to ensure that college employees' salaries are comparable to those of teachers, local government workers and other public service staff. ACM's Employment Committee agreed the group's strategy at a meeting in May. The Association is keen that agreement is reached within the timescale (target date for implementation is August 2003), that current differentials between managers and the staff they manage are maintained and that a three-year deal is struck.

The Association would also like to see the introduction of a national job evaluation system to help address equal pay issues.

Any developments on this matter will be posted on the ACM website at www.acm.uk.com and will be sent to those members registered for the ACM e-information service.

**Turn to page 2 to find out about
pay negotiations in Wales.**

Pay negotiations in Wales

In Wales discussions are taking place on the pay increase for college staff that will come into effect from April 2004. Following the provision of £9m by the Welsh Assembly in 2002 to move towards bringing college employees' salaries in line with those of teachers and other public sector workers, fforwm and the Welsh NJF trades unions have been working on a bid to submit to the Assembly for funding the second year of a three-year catch-up programme.

The joint bid to the Assembly will propose that managers should receive at least a further 3.5% increase in salary from April 2004 and that differentials with other staff should at least be maintained. This proposal will form the basis for ACM negotiators in the 2004 pay discussions. In the longer term, ACM will be seeking a pay structure for managers in Wales together with the introduction of a national job evaluation system. Visit the ACM website at www.acm.uk.com for news on the latest developments.

Review of funding methodology

Almost everyone working in an FE college agrees that the current funding methodology needs to be replaced, even if they can't agree with what! Following concerted efforts from a number of organisations, including ACM, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is investigating alternative funding methodologies. It has formed a Funding Simplification Consultation Group comprised of various external stakeholders from within the sector. ACM was represented at the group's first meeting.

The Association will be submitting detailed proposals to LSC and arguing for a much simpler, less bureaucratic model with only one census point each year, moving towards systems used in other parts of the post-16 education world.

Part-time workers' exclusion from pension scheme

A recent briefing issued to branches updated members on the campaign to win backdated rights to membership of the Teachers' Pension Scheme. A large number of tribunal claims have been submitted from across the public and private sectors, including many from ACM members.

The government is working on a formula that could see the settlement of certain cases. However, in the FE sector some outstanding legal arguments on who is eligible to claim seem likely to delay the prospects of any settlement and could scupper the prospect of members winning altogether. Of particular significance is the definition of a 'stable employment relationship' as this could affect the timescale of when a valid tribunal claim can be submitted.

David Green, Head of Employment Relations at ACM, explains that members have nothing to lose in making a claim. 'At present no action is being taken until the legal arguments have been resolved. But since any settlement offer will only be made to those who have made a tribunal application, there is nothing to be lost by submitting a claim in the meantime.'

A copy of the briefing sent to branches is available to members only on the ACM website.

sector news

opportunities for black leaders

Research¹ funded by the Commission for Black Staff in FE demonstrated the marked under-representation of black² staff at middle and senior management levels within further education. Although usually well qualified, black staff are less likely to gain access to the career development opportunities that facilitate progression to more senior posts. In response to these findings, the LSC (through its National Priorities Fund) is supporting an innovative pilot project – the Black Leadership Initiative.

Using mentoring and secondments, the initiative aims to provide opportunities for black staff to develop some of the skills and knowledge they need in order to apply for more senior posts within the sector. Across the lifetime of the pilot project, up to 30 black staff will be matched with experienced and more senior college managers (including principals) from other institutions, who will act as their mentors. Mentors will be trained and will provide up to 15 hours of tailored one-to-one support to selected black staff.

The pilot scheme also provides up to 10 black staff with a one-term to one-year secondment into middle and senior management posts at an institution within their geographical region. Secondees will be matched to a job that gives them the experience they require. They will also receive mentoring support and participate in other career development activities while they are in post.

LSC is just one of the stakeholder organisations: AoC, the Commission for Black Staff in FE, LSDA, the Network for Black Managers and NIACE are also involved in the development and running of the Black Leadership Initiative. College principals and corporation members are represented on the steering group, and a project director and a project administrator are responsible for the day-to-day management of the initiative. Lessons learnt from the scheme will be used to develop other sector-wide leadership projects.

The Black Leadership Initiative pilot project runs from November 2002 until May 2004. Half the mentors and secondees have been placed during the academic year 2002/03 and the other half will be placed during 2003/04. Rajinder Mann, Project Director, and Ann Simpson, Project Coordinator, are keen to hear from aspiring black managers who are interested in taking up the secondment or mentoring opportunities on offer.

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¹ Commission for Black Staff in FE (2002). *Challenging racism: further education leading the way*. The full report of the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education.

² The use of the term 'black' includes members of African, African Caribbean, Asian and other minorities who may face racism.

acm responds

developing a national skills strategy and delivery plan

published by DfES, June 2003

- One message from this document seems to be that the problems of the UK's long tail of low skills levels are rooted in the supply side of education and training; that is that the inadequate demand for skills training is located with a supply side which is unresponsive and driven by institutional needs. As a result of this analysis, the supply side remains heavily regulated and audited. This is in contrast to the arrangements in place for the demand side, where participation in the nation's skills strategy remains voluntary.
- However, the problem does not wholly belong to the supply side. While some employers are committed to workforce development and invest substantial resources, others have no will to train their workforce, especially those members of their workforce with low skills. The original Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) report on workforce development questioned whether a purely voluntary model would deliver the changes we are looking for. Unfortunately, this document has backed off from that. Minimally, it would be helpful if the new strategy hinted at limits to voluntarism, with a reserve of compulsion a couple of years down the line if voluntarism does not work. Any such regulation should be liberal and light touch for those employers who voluntarily invest in workforce development.
- The licence to practice model is relatively little used in the United Kingdom. Credible, significant and appropriate expansion of this model would be helpful in encouraging the demand for skills both by employers and individuals. Sector Skills Councils and employers should make the major contributions to determining the skills and knowledge needed for the award of a licence.
- Employers, of course, train on the basis of business need and look to providers to supply training that fits the bill. Where there are supply side problems around learner focus and responsiveness, this is due in large part to the curriculum and funding regulations that conspire to set tight limits on the scope colleges have for flexibility. The Association is delighted that QCA and the LSC are now working closely to review these arrangements. We would be pleased to contribute to this work. In the new model for unitisation, the funding and curriculum arrangements should promote flexibility, but the two sets of arrangements (funding and curriculum) must also be coherent and consistent with one another. Colleges will most certainly exploit the improved scope for offering learning tailored to employer and individual needs.
- The Association accepts the need to target priority groups, but has some anxieties that the new proposals might exclude other groups of learners whose participation brings individual, social and economic benefits. Women returners and older learners are two such examples.
- In an age-conscious paper, older learners do not even make it to the agenda. We are in danger of underestimating the returns on improving the participation of older people. They are far from negligible, especially as the proportion of the population in that age group expands (in 18 years time 40% of the population will be over 55). About one-third of unemployed people over the age of 50 would like to be in work. Finding work benefits not only those individuals, but also transforms them into net contributors to the economy. Furthermore there is now a good deal of evidence that continuing to learn in later years is positively correlated with better health, both physical and mental. Self-evidently, continued good health and independence are beneficial to the individual, but they also reduce the cost to health and social services of caring for unhealthy or dependent people.

- In its discussions of the 14–19 curriculum, the document speaks of the vocational ‘route’. This Association is unconvinced that the curriculum should fork decisively at 14, with the academic road leading in one direction and the vocational in another. Young people need to be able to knit both academic and vocational elements into their learning programme – the precise mix depending on their individual needs. The vocational programmes we create should be excellent and fit for purpose. We should not try to address the parity of esteem debate by trying to make the vocational route look and sound more like the academic route: such strategies have only diluted the vocational route and undermined it. The traditional apprenticeship is still the vocational brand that carries the greatest prestige and respect, even though it was unapologetically employment-oriented. It was highly regarded because it offered excellent quality training that was fit for purpose (of gaining skilled employment).
- It is this brand – the traditional apprenticeship – that the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) scheme is trying to build on. At present the MA model has met with only limited success as it has failed to gain sufficient employer buy-in, offers only NVQs, and in any case probably has more limited applicability as a model than is claimed for it.
- There is no mention in this report of how we are to improve labour market intelligence and information. While we are fully cognisant of the difficulties associated with such data, the quest to achieve reliable predictions is indispensable to a skills strategy, and we would like to see this issue tackled.

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acm responds

funding adult learning: technical document

published by the Learning and Skills Council, March 2003

- We fully understand the reasoning for prioritising the groups of learners identified in this document. For some time, this Association has campaigned for easier access for all adults to the attainment of Level 2 qualifications. Our resolution to last year's Trade Union Congress on this issue met with overwhelming support. We applaud the government for moving this policy forward.
- We note, however, that this would constitute a rearrangement of priorities *within existing resources*. What is the boundary around the resources that would be redistributed? Institutional? Resources currently targeted at adult learning? Resources targeted at post-16 learning, including higher education? It is the view of this Association that the whole post-16 pot, including higher education, should be reviewed in the development of the new policies.
- While strongly supporting the policy of improving access for these groups we are concerned about the detrimental effect this may have on the learning opportunities for other groups. If the proposed policy has to be achieved within existing resources, this will dilute the resources available for other learners and may have a negative impact on the access of, for instance, women returners and older learners.
- This Association strongly supports improved access for adults with low skills. However, this is high-risk business for colleges. When you open doors that have not been opened before, the response – especially initially – is not easy to predict and may take time to become established. Who will be taking this risk? What support will colleges get?
- There would seem to be some dislocation between the steers that are coming from the Department and the on-the-ground policies of the LSC. At present there are resources for unlimited numbers of 16–19 year olds and similarly for adults with basic skills needs. However, at present there are no resources for growth for other adult learners, such as those aspiring to a Level 2 qualification.
- Practitioners always emphasise the importance of non-accredited learning for adults with low levels of confidence and skills. Adults new to learning need an emotionally comfortable environment and non-accredited learning is often an important ingredient in that. Such learning is frequently the stepping stone to further learning, including qualifications. It is important that the new policies do not damage the availability of non-accredited learning which is so valuable for attracting unconfident learners.
- The bureaucracy associated with improved access should be kept to an absolute minimum. Too much paperwork will deter learners and waste the time of providers.
- Colleges are in a strong position to work with excluded learners, having a strong track record of working with reluctant learners on site, off site and in the workplace. However, widening participation demands innovation, imagination and risk taking – these activities do not flourish in an over-audited blame culture.
- With regard to the adult curriculum there is often a sense in official documents that the lack of flexibility and learner responsiveness is the fault of the providers. However, both curriculum and funding regulations conspire to set tight limits on the scope colleges have for flexibility. The forthcoming review of unitisation must ensure that the funding and curriculum infrastructure have full potential for flexibility. Colleges will most certainly exploit the improved scope for offering learning tailored to employer and individual needs. Again, it will be essential for the reasons outlined above to introduce unitisation with the minimum of bureaucracy.

ACM Council May 2003

A meeting of ACM's newly elected Council was held on 9 and 10 May in Stratford upon Avon.

Council members were updated on the Association's lobbying activities undertaken to persuade the government to move funding clawback and pension issues further up its agenda. The Association's response to the *Success for all* consultation document was discussed and Council members were informed that the Association is represented on the DfES Stakeholders Group. Consideration was given to the format for next year's annual conference and it was agreed to offer a range of good practice workshops aimed at middle managers and to retain the presentations by keynote speakers from the sector.

The Employment and Services Committee discussed and agreed changes to the members' code of conduct (available on the members' page on the website). Other issues discussed were the work of the NJF Modernising Pay Working Group, branch development, the helpline and casework service, and employment law developments.

The Education Committee discussed the Association's basic skills project led by Nadine Cartner, Head of Policy; the new ACM publication *The organised college manager*, due to be circulated to members in the autumn; and ACM responses to Circular 03/01 and the *Funding adult learning: technical document*.

The next Council meeting will take place on 26 and 27 September.



ACM Council members (from left to right):

Back row:

Tom Johnson, David Watkins, Fiona Rawlings, Ian Millard, Sue Ransom, Jacek Juszczyk, John Dishman, Richard Atkins, Bob Vesey

Middle row:

John Lowe, Sandy Young, Eric Morgan, Mike James, Sally Dicketts, Maggie Dollin-Evans, Peter Pendle, John Rockett, Robin Landman

Front row:

Bernadette George, Ann Wardall, Theresa Drowley, Nell Steward

ACM lobbies on retrospective funding clawback

At the Association's May Council meeting it was agreed that ACM's lobbying to suspend retrospective funding clawback for 2002 should be intensified. Based on advice received from several ACM experts on funding and MIS, a letter was sent to the then Minister for Lifelong Learning, Margaret Hodge. As a result, a meeting between ACM representatives, senior DfES civil servants and LSC officials will take place at the Association's national headquarters in Leicester in August. ACM is hopeful that there will at least be some relaxation of the regulations. Outcomes of the meeting will be posted on the ACM website.

Reaching out to under-represented groups

Following ACM's most rigorously contested elections in years, Council has formed a Search Committee to co-opt ACM members from under-represented groups onto Council. Up to six co-opted places are available. So far three members have been appointed: Alan Skinner, Colchester Adult Education Institute; Roger Culpin, Southend Adult Education College; and Rajinder Mann, a consultant working in the learning and skills sector. The Search Committee is keen to identify further potential co-opted members for Council, especially someone with a disability or expert knowledge of disability issues as well as managers working in sixth form colleges. If you are interested in becoming a co-opted member of Council please contact peterpendle@acm.uk.com

It's an Honour

ACM would like to congratulate the following members who were commended in the Queen's Birthday Honours:

Gordon Byrne OBE

Director, Upper Bann Institute of Further and Higher Education
[For services to further education](#)

Helen Gilchrist CBE

Principal, Bury College
[For services to further education](#)

Shirley Hayward MBE

Head of School for Skills for Life and Learning, Yeovil College
[For services to further education](#)

Elizabeth Morrison MBE

Curriculum Director, Fermanagh College
[For services to further education](#)

Another satisfied member

ACM successfully represented a member from the Midlands in his recent employment tribunal claim for disability discrimination. The case, originally scheduled for a two-day hearing, was brought to a close on the first morning when the member's employer was persuaded to make an acceptable out-of-court settlement.

Following the conclusion of the case, the member stated that he and his wife 'cannot express in words how grateful we are for your support and guidance in preparing for the tribunal. Without both of you [the member's caseworker and ACM's barrister] we could not have got the result you achieved.'

The member went on to say: 'We were exhausted yesterday and we know both of you must be too. Again we say it is our privilege to have been given both of you to represent us in such a friendly and totally professional manner. Please pass on our thanks to all the staff at ACM and say how proud we are to be members of such a great supporting organisation.'

ACM events

17 October 2003 | London

Media training

Members £245
Non members £265

Please note this training session is limited to a maximum of 10 delegates

27 October 2003 | Leicester

New thinking about funding

A one-day conference for managers
Members £120
Non members £150

7-8 November 2003 |

Birmingham

Branch networking

Free of charge for branch officers only

18 November 2003 |

Cirencester

Preventing work-related stress

Members £60
Non members £80

Please visit our website at www.acm.uk.com for further details and to book places online.

Request for an ACM information pack and application form

I am considering joining ACM, please provide me with further information.

Full name

Job title

Name of organisation and address

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