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## FAO

EIS-FELA and UNISON

4 September 2023

Dear David; John

### **Industrial Action in the College Sector**

I am writing to you today to express my concern and disappointment at receiving notification of yet more industrial action in the college sector, beginning this week. There is no doubt this action will have a hugely negative impact over the coming months. Since the spring, our students have faced growing uncertainty around their future qualifications and now they face further disruption to their learning and progression.

While I absolutely understand that it is the right of your members to take industrial action, I am disappointed to see it taking the form of further disruption to essentially the same cohort of learners.

I am aware that one of the key issues at play here is the potential impact of the cost of the pay deal on jobs within the sector and as you are aware, the Scottish Government is simply unable to provide any further funding to finance any deal negotiated.

We are however, actively engaged in a process with the Scottish Funding Council and Colleges Scotland aimed at identifying additional flexibilities for 2024-2025 aimed at making the sector more sustainable going forward.

As a result of the current fiscal context, I understand that individual institutions need to be able to restructure and reconfigure their organisations to best meet the needs of learners and address financial pressures.

However, I will reiterate again, as I have to employers, that it is my expectation that compulsory redundancies are used as a last resort, when all other means of restructure and voluntary severance have been considered.

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I appreciate meetings between the parties have taken place in recent days, but the feedback I have received is that these have not produced any agreement to move forward.

While, I acknowledge that pay and terms and conditions are for trade unions and college employers to negotiate, and that the flat cash funding settlement Colleges received adds to the affordability challenge around salary increases, I expect both side to continue to engage to try and reach a settlement in this long running dispute.

For the avoidance of any doubt, I have written to the employers in similar terms.



**GRAEME DEY**

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