

## A common contract for staff

### Why a common contract?

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Each further education (FE) college employs its staff under different contracts. Staff have different holidays. A lecturer in one college might teach fewer or more hours than a lecturer in another college. ColegauCymru and the joint trade unions (JTUs) believe conditions of service should be harmonised. The Welsh Government agrees.

### Negotiations

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Negotiations to agree a common contract between ColegauCymru and the JTUs have taken well over 3 years. They have been tough but fair and a wide range of conditions of service have been brought together into a single contract. Agreement is close.

Thanks to the negotiations, the common contract has undergone a significant number of revisions. It is very detailed and over 50 pages long - copies are available from your HR department. Separate contracts have been drawn up for different categories of staff to reflect the differences between management spine staff, lecturers and business support staff.

### The views of the Minister for Education and Skills

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In September 2011, ColegauCymru wrote to the Welsh Government Minister for Education and Skills seeking clarity on three key points. He agreed that a common contract must:

- (i) enable colleges to respond to the needs of learners, communities and businesses
- (ii) assist colleges to raise standards and widen access
- (iii) be, at worst, cost neutral for the sector

In particular, he confirmed that there should be a '*cost neutral solution for Wales as a whole*'.

### Why is cost neutrality important?

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We are facing a tough economic climate. Funding is likely to be tight for many years. If a common contract substantially increases costs, colleges have to find the money from somewhere and jobs and the service we provide to learners could be at risk.

## A fair and reasonable contract

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The contract that both sides are very close to agreeing is fair and reasonable contract.

Inevitably, this will mean change for individual members of college staff.

## The common contract: summary of the key points of the offer

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### Business Support Staff

- 37 hour working week
- 28-32 days leave (dependent on length of service) + 8 bank holidays and up to 5 efficiency days (41-45 days in total) (*this is above weighted sector average of 28 + 8 + up to 5 days*)
- Time Off In Lieu if work beyond normal hours or overtime at relevant rate

### Managers

- 37 hour working week
- 37 days leave + 8 bank holidays and up to 5 efficiency days (in most colleges 50 days in total) (*this is above weighted sector average of 37 + 8 + up to 5 days*)
- Negotiate on Time Off In Lieu if work outside normal hours

### Lecturers

- 37 hour working week of which 32 hours must be on college premises
- 835 contact hours per year for all lecturers (*this is above weighted sector average of 832 hours*)
- Annualised hours (overtime paid only if above annual contact hours)
- Maximum of 24 hours weekly class contact, with a maximum of 26 hours for maximum of 7 weeks at the start of the relevant academic year (*this is below weighted sector average of 24.5 hours*)
- 5 days' directed scholarly activities from 'departmental duties' (new benefit for many lecturers)
- 46 days leave + 8 days bank holidays and up to 5 efficiency days (in most colleges 59 days in total) (*this is above weighted sector average of 44 + 8 + up to 5 days*). And right to 20 days continuous leave
- Continuing professional development of 30 hours per academic year out of 'departmental duties' (new benefit for many lecturers)
- Duties include invigilation of exams
- Probationary Lecturers given 10% (or one session per week) remission (*new benefit for many probationers*)
- Staff undertaking professional teaching qualification given 10% (or one session per week) remission (*new benefit for many taking professional qualification*)
- Course/programme coordination, internal verification/internal moderation, tutoring – local arrangements
- Hourly paid lecturers: 20 minutes per taught hour for preparation/marketing plus other time by local agreement for taking on some or all departmental duties carried out by full-time or fractional lecturers (*currently wide variation in practice between colleges*)

## **What happens next?**

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In the final stage of the negotiations, there are a few outstanding issues that need to be resolved. A timetable for the next few months has been drawn up. An equality impact assessment has to be carried out and final legal advice sought. The unions will consult their members. Each college governing body has to decide its course of action. It is expected that a recommendation for agreement will be reached by 7 January 2014. The intention is that all staff covered by the new contract will have transferred over to the new contract by 1 September 2016.

## **Final point**

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Colleges serve the needs of their learners, local business and local communities. They continue to raise standards and provide the educated citizens and trained workforce that Wales needs. They need to maintain this in an increasingly competitive and demanding environment, and do so cost effectively and sustainably. FE colleges therefore must have a motivated and professional workforce.