

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department for the Economy

FURTHER EDUCATION LECTURERS' PAY DISPUTE AND CURRENT PAY OFFER

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Mr Murphy (The Minister for the Economy): I would like to update Members on the current position with regard to the Further Education lecturers' pay dispute and the current pay offer made to Trade Unions to resolve this on-going industrial dispute.

You will be aware that lecturers in Further Education Colleges have not had a pay settlement for 2023/24 and have been engaged in action short of strike, which escalated in January to include withholding of marks for student assessments and examinations. This potentially could delay the awarding of qualifications to 45,000 students attending colleges within the 2023/24 academic year.

Colleges play a vital role in improving our skills base and it is important that Further Education lecturers are properly paid for their vital contribution to the economy. It is therefore my intention to close the pay gap with teachers.

A budget envelope was provided to Further Education Colleges in February and an offer was made to Trade Unions on this basis. Subsequently a higher pay offer was made to teachers. Therefore this pay offer was rejected by Further Education lecturers.

Since then I have worked to approve an envelope which allows for a pay offer to be made to Further Education lecturers' which aligns with that provided to teachers. The Colleges have made a revised pay offer to Trade Unions which would bring lecturers' starting salaries from £24,496 to £30,000, and provides all other lecturers with a 8.4% pay increase plus a consolidated £1,000 increase on all other pay points.

I hope this pay offer means that action short of strike will be brought to an end and important qualifications can be awarded promptly.

This is only the first step I intend to take to ensure that the dedicated, skilled and talented Further Education workforce are fairly paid. I am committed to work in partnership with Trade Unions and Further Education Colleges, as employers, to establish a review into pay and conditions for Further Education lecturers, particularly to focus on parity with teachers, in the context of strengthening the role of Colleges in line with my Economic Vision.



CONOR MURPHY MLA
Minister for the Economy