
Framework Agreement - Background

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A very brief background

The Framework Agreement, agreed in 2004, means that all staff and Universities will be on a single pay spine or grading structure. Although the actual shape of the grading structure is negotiated locally at each institution, there are nationally agreed principles which apply to all academic and academic-related staff in pre-92 universities. This Memorandum of Understanding (the MoU) simply ensures the new grading structures are, at least, no detriment on current structures.

Do we think the Framework Agreement is a good idea?

As always, the answer has to be yes and no. The grading structures at most universities certainly needed overhauling. They were complicated at best and unfair at worst. National bargaining is a basic trade union principle. Local bargaining is far more likely to lead to inequalities and unfair treatment of staff within and between institutions. This is why we went on strike in 2004 to ensure AUT members (as we were then) were protected by the national principles of 'no detriment' contained in the MoU.

Job Evaluation

Most universities have also gone through a process of job evaluation. It is hoped that this process will ensure equal pay for work of equal value. It should at least give a much fairer ranking of roles within each university. As with the Framework agreement as a whole, we are happy with the overall aims but have some concerns about how this is implemented at a local level. Again UCU members have an element of national protection as academic roles are being evaluated against national role profiles and a library of equivalent profiles for academic-related staff is being established.

What does all this mean here at Sussex?

At Sussex the three campus trade unions (UCU, Unison and Amicus) have been jointly negotiating the Framework Agreement in partnership with the University over the last two years. The formal negotiating committee, the Joint Joint Negotiating Committee (JJNC) meets regularly and a large number of informal meetings have also been held to progress business of the formal proceedings.