

Gender Pay Gap

University and College Union (UCU)

UCU Scotland evidence to the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee on the gender pay gap in Scotland

The University and College Union (UCU) is the largest trade union in the Post-16 education sector in the UK, representing 110,000 academic and related members across the UK, and is the largest union in the higher education sector in Scotland.

Background

The gender pay gap is a major problem in Scottish universities and a matter of key concern to members of UCU. The gender pay gap was a significant factor in the union's recent dispute with the universities employer body, UCEA, along with pay and casualisation. The union made a specific demand in the national claim for action to close the pay gap by 2020. Although the dispute ended in autumn 2016 with the employer imposing their pay settlement on staff, the other areas of the dispute remain unresolved and a number of UCU branches in Scotland, and across the UK, have submitted local claims on the issue of the gender pay gap in their institution.

The gender pay gap in Scottish universities

The committee is looking at the different definitions of the gender pay gap, but in submitting this evidence we have used a simple calculation of the mean academic women's salary set against the mean male academic salary. In this submission we show this as a percentage so if a university had no gender pay gap then women academics' salaries would be 100% of men's, with any figure lower than that indicating a gender pay gap. The figures we've used are those supplied by universities themselves to the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) for the last year that nationally available data is available, 2014/15.

UCU produced a detailed report into gender pay gap in 2016 called *Holding down women's pay* . Following publication a number of institutions questioned the way that UCU interpreted the figures arguing that they had other, more nuanced figures. In every instance, their figures showed them doing better, with a smaller pay gap than the relatively simple method we've used. For the gender pay gap to be identified and reduced we believe that there is benefit in using a simple, transparent method cross sector and that employers should be discouraged from 'gaming the system' by presenting their figures to show them in a better light than they would otherwise have been. Addressing the

gender pay gap cannot be about PR and spin, rather universities and all employers need to firstly accept there is a problem before identifying the steps to address it.

No matter the criteria used it is undisputable that there is a problem of a substantial gender pay gap in Scottish higher education, although there are wide variations between different institutions with some doing much better than others. The figures, detailed institution by institution, are appendicised but range from the small specialist institutions doing very well with Glasgow School of Art's women academics earning 98.5 of the mean male academic salary, rising to 99.1% at the Conservatoire, to those where women fared much worse including the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) with a very low figure of 60.6%.

The relatively small size of UHI may skew their figures, but there are a raft of institutions coming in with figures in the low eighties including Aberdeen (82.1), St Andrews (83.1), Glasgow (83.4), Stirling (84.5), and Dundee (84.8) with an additional six in the high eighties.

In monetary terms, as an average, a woman academic's salary in Scotland will be £6,671 per year less than their male counterpart. This is significantly more of a difference than the UK average of £6,084, and means that female academics in Scotland are working for 86.9% of the wages of their male colleagues. By any measure these are substantial amounts of money, particularly when one considers that the early stages of academic careers are characterised by insecure contracts, where staff are often subject to atypical and hourly paid work. Over 50% of teaching staff in universities are on atypical contracts, such as zero-hours. For someone in such a position anything driving down their salary by any amount is acutely unfair, doubly so when the issue is solely their gender.

It is a point that is often made, but some 50 years after the equal pay act it is unacceptable that this is the case. Analysis carried out last year by UCU showed that if we continue to make progress on gender pay at the same rate as we have over the past ten years, it will be 2050 before the gender pay gap is closed. A woman academic recently having started her career will be close to retirement by then.

Reasons for the gender pay gap

There are many reasons why the gender pay gap exists, including discrimination against women in the workplace, discrimination in pay systems, the value placed on work predominantly taken by women and interrupted careers. Equal pay issues can be compounded by the lack of fair job

evaluation schemes, and the difficulty women find progressing to senior academic positions.

While over just under half (44.5%) of all academic staff in Scotland are women, by the time their careers have progressed to the professorial level the equality has disappeared with 77.9% of professors in Scottish universities male and only 22.1% women.

Additionally, the gender pay gap increases with seniority. In Scottish universities the grades with the highest pay gaps are senior management (where women are paid 89.4% of men's salaries on average), Head of School/Function Head (91.8%) and Professor (93.1%).

This lack of gender balance at the top, combined with the pay gaps within senior grades appears the primary driver of the overall gender pay gap in Scottish universities.

The leaky pipeline of career progression in universities, with women academics not progressing through the promoted academic roles to the same extent as male colleagues, is a real concern. It is wrong that progressing to the top of academia does not seem to be compatible with having children and balancing family and caring commitments. We desperately need to address the long-hours culture and pressures to churn out publication after publication if this is to change.

As a union we have expressed concerns that funding mechanisms within the system have not helped close the pay gap, but rather have appeared to compound it. The Research Excellence Framework has in recent years been modified to take into account staff absences such as maternity leave and disability leave to some extent; however anecdotal evidence is that it helps to widen the gender pay gap in universities, with those employees who are more easily able to move around the country able to chase the money and funding, consequently moving up the promotions ladder.

Conclusion

As a result of the work done by UCU around gender pay some universities took actions against the gender pay gap in 2016. The University of Essex gave women academics a one off pay rise¹ in June 2016 with a view to ending the pay gap by October 2016. The move was subsequently followed by LSE. While one off payments are very welcome they don't address the

¹ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-of-essex-hikes-salaries-for-female-professors-to-eliminate-pay-gap>

systemic problem and local, detailed work identifying the cause of the pay gap in each institution and the steps necessary to close it is necessary.

UCU is calling on all institutions to work with their local UCU branch and agree a joint statement of intent; to undertake an equal pay audit in conjunction with the UCU branch; conduct a joint analysis of the equal pay audit with the branch; and finally to construct an agreed action plan with their UCU branch to address any gaps using specific objectives with deadlines. Our experience is limited to higher education in Scotland, but a similar model would, we believe, be applicable in other sectors.

HEI	Female academic salary as a % of male academic salary (Mean)*
University of Aberdeen	82.1
University of Abertay	88.3
University of Dundee	84.8
Edinburgh Napier University	94.9
University of Edinburgh	86.6
Glasgow Caledonian University	91.4
Glasgow School of Art	98.5
University of Glasgow	83.4
Heriot-Watt University	87.7
Queen Margaret University	89.1
Robert Gordon University	95.0
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	99.1
University of St Andrews	83.1
SRUC	88.8
University of Stirling	84.5
University of Strathclyde	89.9
University of the Highlands & Islands	60.6
University of the West of Scotland	94.7
Scottish average	86.9
UK average	87.7

*Figures are taken from information supplied to HESA by universities and HEIs and are for the year 2014/15.

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