



## UoB Briefing

22 January 2019

Dear Colleague,

As you will be aware we implemented a 2% pay increase in the August 2018 payroll for all non-clinical academic and related staff. This increase was the final offer made by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) for the 2018-19 pay round through the national negotiation process.

I wrote to you last October to advise that the University and College Union (UCU) was balloting its members nationally over its proposal to take industrial action over the 2% pay award. UCU did not receive a mandate from their members at that time to take industrial action. However, we have now been advised that they are re-balloting members over this 2% pay award.

This year's 2% pay increase is higher than those of recent years and is one that seeks to maintain sector pay competitiveness despite major uncertainties over the future funding of UK universities such as the current Government Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, which is due to report next month, the future costs and benefits of the USS pension, and the final Brexit deal; all of which raise significant concerns over the future sustainability of universities.

Despite these sector challenges, the University of Birmingham continues to invest significantly in its staff, with overall staffing numbers now at more than 8,000. The growth in academic staff numbers is particularly strong and has increased by 225 in the past twelve months. We also continue to make positive progress against our gender pay gap action plan; for example, 35% of our grade 9 academic staff are now female and the number of female Professors has increased to 27%. We have also made progress on bonuses and last summer saw a significant reduction in the mean gender bonus gap among grade 6-9 academic and related

staff from 22% to 10%. We recognise there is still much more to do, but the overall picture is positive and we are on track to achieving our initial target of having at least 30% of our senior academic staff being female.

We are also very aware of the current uncertainties surrounding future USS costs and benefits. The Joint Expert Panel set up by Universities UK (UUK) and UCU, as the respective representatives of employers and scheme members, published its first report last October and set out further proposals regarding the 2017 scheme valuation, and work continues nationally to establish an agreed way forward. In the meantime, employer and employee contributions will both increase from this April and potentially again in October 2019 and April 2020, as set out on the [USS website](#) while we wait for a final agreement to be reached.

The national 2% pay increase is, of course, just one element in the total pay, reward and recognition scheme at the University. Pay increases for many staff will also include annual increments, promotion and other contribution-related pay increases, which amounts to an additional average increase of 2%.

UCU is once again seeking approval from its members for strike action and action short of a strike, including not rescheduling lectures or classes cancelled as a result of strike action, as well as a marking and assessment boycott. This action is directly targeted at students as they approach the critical exam period. In such circumstances, the student experience would be our first priority and we would ask colleagues who are members of UCU to think about this when considering the ballot. We hope that colleagues will continue to see that we are committed to a moderate and reasonable approach to employee relations.

Best wishes,

**Professor Tim Jones**

Provost and Vice-Principal

