

IFUT EXPOSES MORE SECRET PAY AGREEMENTS

CONDEMNS HEA'S POLICY OF SECRECY

The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) condemns the decision by the HEA not to disclose details of the exceptionally high salaries paid to approximately fifteen senior personnel in six of the seven universities under its remit.

Earlier this year IFUT, using the Freedom of Information Act, exposed the secret salary levels paid to certain senior personnel in UCD.

Now, by use of the FOI Act, IFUT has established that there are small numbers of similar secret pay arrangements in all of the other six universities.

“The HEA has provided us with the names of all of those who have been awarded exceptionally high levels of pay” said Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT. “However, despite the fact that all of these salaries are paid from public funds the HEA is stubbornly refusing to reveal the money amounts involved”.

“This level of secrecy is unacceptable and is a direct attack on the principles of openness and transparency” said Mr Jennings.

IFUT has other serious concerns about the HEA's scheme to provide for secret pay deals for a tiny minority of senior personnel.

- The HEA approved scheme states that a pre-condition for the payment of exceptionally high salaries has to be that the person involved “would not be prepared to work in the university if he/she did not get the salary offered”.

This gives rise to a classical “prodigal son” scenario whereby hardworking and loyal members of staff – who got a zero increase under benchmarking – are treated as inferior to those who, by definition, would be quite happy to walk away from the university.

- The awards which have been sanctioned by the HEA provide a clear contradiction of the claim made by the employers to the Benchmarking Body and the O'Brien Review Body that there was no lack of incentive posed by the current relatively low levels of salaries paid to university academics.
- The scheme approved by the HEA explicitly commits it to ‘avoiding any damage to the morale of staff in the universities’. This commitment has been clearly broken.
- IFUT is also concerned that the HEA has mismanaged this scheme by
 - (a) Not insisting on the provision by universities of documentary evidence to back-up their departure from agreed salary levels. This requirement is explicitly included in the scheme.
 - (b) Failing to enforce the rule requiring universities to update their reports every six months.

“Let me be quite clear regarding where IFUT stands on this issue” said Mr Jennings.

“IFUT has no objection whatsoever to the payment of good world class salaries to world class Academics. However, it amounts to rank hypocrisy to claim on the one hand that current university salaries are competitive by international standards while simultaneously sanctioning secret salary levels to a chosen minority based on the premise that they would otherwise not work in Ireland for Irish university pay levels”.

“At a recent IFUT National Meeting one of our members pointed out that the traditional collegiality of our universities and the collective morale of our academic staff was being undermined by a short-sighted policy of deliberately treating people differently”.

“It is bad enough that the current Management ethos promotes competitiveness and rivalry over co-operation and collegiality. It is simply shocking that they then think that the way to foster competition is to be secretive about the remuneration of certain of our colleagues”.

Note 1: IFUT is disputing the HEA’s refusal to disclose the salary information requested through the appeals procedure of the Freedom of Information Act.

Note 2: The names of all of those being paid exceptional salaries will be posted on the IFUT ‘Members Only’ section of the IFUT website www.ifut.ie

Footnote: As General Secretary of IFUT I was very surprised recently when, following media coverage of my criticism of the treatment of university staff, I received an e-mail from a non-IFUT member working in one of our universities.

Most surprisingly this letter claimed that “university academic staff in Ireland receive huge salaries” and complained that “mediocre staff receive exactly the same rewards each year as dedicated staff”. It went on to suggest that I must “only meet the whingers and complainers”.

Well, now I know why my correspondent thinks pay is so satisfactory and why he is not “whinging or complaining”. It turns out that this very same individual is one of the lucky ones being paid an exceptionally high salary which his university and the HEA seem determined to keep secret.

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