



## Ballot for Industrial Action - Rule 26

**To: All library, Professional Management and Support Staff (PMSS)  
in the Higher Education Sector**

Dear Member,

There was a provision associated with the Lansdowne Road Agreement 2016-2018 in the form of a "Chairman's Note" dated 28 May 2015 reflecting arrangements agreed between the Department of Education and Skills and unions (IFUT/SIPTU/TUI/UNITE/IMPACT/ASTI) representing workers in the Higher Education Sector. It included a specific section in relation to job evaluation exercises in respect of library, Professional Management and Support staff in the Higher Education Sector. The text read:

*It is open to the Department of Education and Skills (with the agreement of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) to authorise job evaluation exercises in respect of library, clerical, administrative and support grades in the Higher Education sector.*

*It is recognised that consultation between management and staff should take place before such a job evaluation exercise proceeds. However, it is open to either side (Management or Staff side) to put forward a business case to the Department of Education and Skills seeking authorisation to conduct a job evaluation exercise. It is also recognised that no such job evaluation exercise can proceed without the authorisation of the Department of Education and Skills (with the agreement of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform). Once a business case is received seeking authorisation to conduct a job evaluation exercise, the Department of Education and Skills undertakes to respond to such a request within an efficient and effective time-frame.*

The purpose of job evaluation is to measure whether or not a specific post is correctly graded. It assesses the skills and responsibilities required of a particular post, rather than the individual performing it.

Since 2008 the higher education sector has seen a very large increase in the number of students enrolled while staff numbers, due to the moratorium on recruitment and the operation of an employment control framework, fell. There has been a significant increase in total productivity as library, professional and support staff bore the brunt of these developments. The sector relied on the goodwill and dedication of its staff with many individuals assuming additional and more onerous duties without recompense.

This situation was exacerbated by the failure to fill higher grade posts over the past number of years. In some cases posts were filled by agency staff on a temporary basis.

Demand for places in higher education remains greater than ever and student numbers are projected to grow over the next 10 to 20 years. This continues to add to the workload and the responsibilities of our members on an ongoing basis.

It had been anticipated that a job evaluation scheme would have been introduced in the Institutes of Technology following the Lansdowne Road Agreement Chairman's Note of 28 May 2015. After a number of failed attempts to secure agreement from the management side to introduce such a scheme the union formally raised the matter at a meeting of the Education Sector Oversight Group on 15 December 2016. There had not been a meeting of the ESOG for some time prior to that date. The Department representatives advised that we should make direct contact with the Technological Higher Education Association in relation to the matter. We wrote to the Chief Executive Officer on 6 February 2017 but did not receive a reply.

On 19 May 2017 we then wrote to the Department of Education and Skills indicating that the union had been concerned for some time at the failure to progress the commitment set out in the Chairman's Note in so far as it relates to Institutes of Technology and other third level colleges where the union represents members. An indication was sought by return that the management side would agree to introduce such a scheme. Again a reply was not received.

In subsequent discussions Forsa has been advised that the Institutes are not in a position to introduce a scheme in the absence of funding from the HEA.

On 24th October 2017 the union wrote to Minister Bruton to advise him of the seriousness of the situation and the inevitability of industrial action if progress was not made.

There has been two meetings in recent weeks, one on 26th April 2018 and one on 31st May 2018. However, it is the judgement of the union negotiating team that industrial action (or at least the threat of it) will be required to make progress. The nature and extent of such action will be decided by the Education Divisional Executive Committee and will initially comprise of limited forms of industrial action if members vote to give the union this mandate.

The ballot will be conducted among members in library, Professional Management and Support Staff (PMSS) in the higher education sector.

**The Institute of Technology Branch Executive Committee is strongly recommending that you vote in favour of the motion enabling the taking of industrial action.** Initially, the action would be limited and targeted and would consist of the withdrawal of a number of functions currently carried out by library and PMSS members. The specific nature of the action will be decided and managed by the elected Education Divisional Executive Committee and will be advised to you should the ballot result in a vote in favour.

I attach for your completion a ballot paper, whereupon your preference of 'For the Motion' or 'Against the Motion' should be clearly marked. Institute representatives should return a certificate of ballot with the result of the ballot to the returning officer Siobhan O'Callaghan, **by 12 noon on Tuesday 10th July 2018.**

Yours sincerely



**Stella Griffin**  
**Assistant General Secretary**  
**Fórsa**



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Fórsa Trade Union



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