

The Implementation of the National Framework Agreement at Aberystwyth University

Frequently Asked Questions

Background to the Framework Agreement

1. What is the Framework Agreement

In 2003 the nationally agreed pay settlement for universities introduced a single 51 point pay spine and a requirement for all universities to develop, in partnership with the trades unions which were party to the national agreement, a pay and grading structure appropriate to the university itself and underpinned by role analysis.

2. What are the benefits of the Framework Agreement?

The agreement was designed with the following aims:

- To ensure equal pay for work of equal value
- To improve the recruitment and retention of staff
- To recognise and reward the contributions of individuals
- To underpin opportunities for career and organisational development

The University believes that the proposed agreement meets some of these needs now and provides a sound basis for the planned work outlined in paragraph 10 which will ensure that the remainder are met in the future.

3. What has happened at Aberystwyth so far?

In August 2005 the university introduced a harmonised working week for all staff covered by the framework agreement with defined working week.

A team of role analysts has been analysing roles at Aberystwyth University using the Higher Education Role Analysis scheme (HERA). This process has been scrutinised by a Role Analysis Working Group made up of representatives of the management and the trades unions. More details can be found in the section headed 'HERA'.

In 2007, as part of its commitment to meet the national agreement the university introduced the 51 point pay spine and notified staff covered by the framework agreement that they would be transferred to a point on the new pay spine which was equivalent to their current salary, or, if there was no exact match for their current salary, to the nearest point above that. Staff covered by the agreement moved to their new pay point on 1 August 2007. All current pay scales were adjusted to use incremental points on the 51 point pay spine at this time. This means that for the majority of staff the introduction of the new pay structure will not affect their pay.

4. What happens next?

The University has recently reached agreement with the campus trades unions which are party to the national agreement (UCU, UNISON and UNITE) on a new pay and grading structure and harmonised terms and conditions. This agreement, the "Agreement on the Application of the National Framework Agreement for the Modernisation of Pay Structures at Aberystwyth University", is now subject to local ballots of the members of each of those trades unions.

5. Why are some staff excluded?

Some groups of staff, for example, senior managers and professors are excluded because their salary range is above that covered by the national 51 point pay scale.

In the case of other staff, for example, the farm staff who are paid on Agricultural Wages Boards rates, there is a clear business case for retaining the existing arrangements.

6. Why has agreement been delayed for some staff?

Agreement has been delayed for hourly paid teachers, demonstrators, note takers and tutors to allow more detailed work to be done in collecting and analysing data on their roles and developing an appropriate pay framework. More detail can be found in paragraph 10.1 of the agreement and question 50 below.

Reaching Agreement

7. How will the new pay and grading structure be agreed?

The pay structure, along with some changes to terms and conditions, has been agreed by the Partnership Steering Group locally. Each of the trades unions which is party to the agreement has obtained approval for this local agreement from their national officers. The next stage is for each of these unions (UCU, Unison and UNITE) to hold ballots of their members at the University.

8. Will non union members have any input into the decision?

Any changes to terms and conditions including the pay structure are subject to collective agreements with the recognised trades unions and therefore agreed between the University and members of the unions. This means that non union members cannot participate in that decision.

Communication with staff

9. I have received a personal letter and an information pack, what is it for?

The information has been sent to all staff in roles covered by the agreement and is designed to inform you about the details of the changes that are proposed and the ways in which they will affect your personal position.

- The letter outlines your personal position based upon the job that you do, and invites you to attend one of a number of communication workshops to be held during and immediately after the ballot
- There is a document showing the HERA score for your role, including the score for each of the 14 elements
- There is a copy of the proposed agreement the "Agreement on the Application of the National Framework Agreement for the Modernisation of Pay Structures at Aberystwyth University"

It should be noted that all of the information in the above documents is subject to the acceptance of the agreement by the three local ballots.

- The fourth item in the pack is this document containing Frequently Asked Questions, which is intended to provide you with answers to many of the questions you may have.

10. Why are we getting this information now?

This information is being provided now to inform all staff of the proposed outcomes of the work that has been done on analysing their roles and creating a new pay framework and to enable members of the trades unions concerned to make an informed choice when voting on the proposed agreement.

11. What will happen at the communication workshops?

At each of the communication workshops there will be a presentation on the various parts of the agreement including: the HERA process and scoring; changes to terms and conditions; pay protection arrangements and the appeals process. After the presentation there will be an opportunity for individual members of staff to discuss their specific questions with a member of the HR team and/or a trade union representative.

12. How do I arrange to attend a communication workshop?

In your letter there are details of when and where the communication workshops will be held. If you wish to attend please contact HR on the number provided to book a place. Before booking a place consult with your manager so that, if necessary s/he can arrange to co-ordinate attendance from your department so that the required level of service is maintained.

13. What can I do if I am unable to attend one of the planned communication workshops?

If possible you should inform your line manager that you cannot attend and they will liaise with HR and the HERA team to arrange another time when you can be seen. If you cannot contact your line manager for any reason then contact HR using the contact details provided in your letter.

Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA)

14. What is HERA?

HERA or Higher Education Role Analysis is the scheme adopted by the university to analyse roles. It was developed specifically for Higher Education by a group called the Education Competencies Consortium Ltd (ECC). The scheme uses 14 elements to analyse each role, these are

- Communication, both oral and written
- Teamwork and Motivation
- Liaison and Networking
- Service Delivery
- Decision Making Processes and Outcomes
- Planning and Organising Resources
- Initiative and Problem Solving
- Analysis and Research
- Sensory and Physical Demands
- Work Environment
- Pastoral Care and Welfare
- Team Development
- Teaching and Learning Support
- Knowledge and Experience

Each of these elements is scored at one of a number of levels, further details of what is included in each element and the levels each uses are available on the HR website.

15. How has my role been scored?

We have used one of four methods to allocate scores to roles

- Analysing data gathered from you during an interview with a role analyst
- Analysing data provided by you in a role outline form

- Allocating your role a score which is derived from one or more role holders in the same or a very similar role
- Deriving a score from a job description or other appropriate documents. This has been done when no other evidence was available and there is no close match to an analysed role.

16. Are these results consistent across the University?

All the evidence provided by role holders has been verified by the appropriate line manager to ensure that it describes the role accurately and that there is a consistent quality of evidence within each department.

The outcomes of role analysis have been checked for consistency by the role analysts and then shared with trained members of each of the trades unions who have reviewed the scoring of a large sample of roles, again using the original evidence provided. This scrutiny process ensures consistent scoring of evidence across the University.

17. I have been given my scores, but what do they mean?

You will have been given a document containing three sections of information,

- The overall score for your role. This score is expressed as a number of points usually, in practice, between 100 and 800. Using this score and the score boundaries shown in Appendix 1 of the agreement between the University and the trades unions your role has been placed in one of the nine pay grades.
- The points that your role has scored for each of the fourteen elements that make up the HERA analysis
- The maximum number of points that can be scored on each of these elements

The HERA scoring system is complex. That is why we are using the workshops as an opportunity for the HERA team to explain how the score for each element of your role is made up.

18. Where can I find out more information about HERA?

There are more details about HERA on the University web site in the HR section and on the ECC website (www.ecc.ac.uk).

19. My role has changed since I provided my evidence, will this make a difference?

All roles have been scored using the evidence that was provided to the HERA team. If your role has changed significantly since it was analysed and you believe that the changes are such that they will have made a difference to the score of your role you should submit an appeal giving full details of how your role has changed and providing evidence of what you do now that is different from when your role was first analysed. This evidence should be verified by your line manager prior to the appeal being submitted.

Role Profiles

20. The agreement mentions role profiles, what are these?

After implementation the HERA team will be working to create a number of role profiles that describe an individual role or groups of similar roles. The profiles will provide information on typical tasks that are undertaken in roles that fall within this profile. Each profile will be developed using evidence provided by role holders as part of the HERA data collection exercise. Thus they will be based on what actual role holders have told the HERA team that they do. Each role profile will be specific to a grade and a job family and it will be possible to group them into similar areas of work.

For example there will be a number of role profiles for library roles. The profiles will be grade and role specific and will fall into the Administrative, Managerial and Professional or Clerical and Secretarial job family, depending upon the nature of the job. The role profiles will enable anyone who reads them to see how roles relate to each other in terms of the tasks undertaken and the size of the role.

21. When will these profiles become available?

The University has undertaken to produce the profiles as soon as possible. At the moment it is difficult to say how long this work will take as it will depend, to a great extent, on the pressure that other implementation issues place on the HERA team. Once the role profiles are completed, and agreed, all staff will be informed of the profile to which their role has been allocated. At that time the complete suite of profiles will be put onto the University web site.

22. As an academic am I already allocated to a role profile?

Yes you are. Having looked carefully at the nationally produced library of academic role profiles and the evidence provided by academic role holders during the data gathering exercise, the University decided that with minor modifications it could adopt the national profiles. These role profiles are available on the HR section of the University web site.

Pay structure

23. How has the number of incremental points in a grade been determined?

Like all universities Aberystwyth currently has a number of different pay scales for different staff groups. In designing a new single pay and grading structure into which these different groups could be fitted there were two aims. The first was to ensure that, as far as possible, we could retain within the new grade most of the current incremental points that are available in comparable existing grades. We tried to do this in order to avoid creating either green or red circles purely as a result of new pay structure (rather than as a result of role analysis). Although we have not been able to achieve this aim completely, the new structure does minimise the number of red circles. The second aim was to comply with good practice guidance by avoiding unnecessarily long incremental scales, and the use of the same point in two grades (i.e. overlapping maximum and minimum points), without creating an unsustainable number of red or green circles.

24. What is the difference between a discretionary point and a contribution point?

A number of the old pay structures had points above the automatic incremental progression that staff could access through an agreed procedure, these procedures differed between the pay structures as did the criteria that were used to judge whether an application succeeded or not.

In the proposed pay structure all grades have contribution points these will be available to all staff through a common and agreed procedure.

25. How can I access the contribution points?

The University has agreed to work in partnership with the trades unions to develop a policy and procedure for the use of contribution points and accelerated increments and the criteria for awarding them.

26. How is my grade and pay related to HERA points?

Each role or role profile has been scored using HERA. We thus know the points score of each role in relation to all other roles and can place them in a list or rank order. This list when put in order of highest HERA points to lowest HERA points has enabled the University to propose the points ranges that form the grade boundaries.

These points ranges are shown on the pay structure diagram in appendix 1 of the agreement. If the points for a particular role fall within the points range for a particular grade, then the role is assigned to that grade.

The points for the role thus determine which grade it is placed in. There is no relationship between points and pay within a grade. The progression through the normal increments in the grade is the same for all holders of roles within a grade.

27. What are structural red and green circles?

Structural red or green circles occur when the old pay scale and the new do not have the same minimum or maximum point.

The University currently uses at least 9 different pay scales and creating a single pay structure from these inevitably results in a slight mismatch of incremental points on some grades.

Structural green circles occur when the current incremental point of the individual is below the new grade's minimum pay, but their role is judged to be in the grade most closely equivalent to their current grade. These staff will see their salary moved to the minimum point of the grade with effect from August 2007, unless they took up their post after this date in which case any increase will be effective from their date of appointment. The letters received by staff will not differentiate between those green circled by structure or role analysis.

Structural red circles are those where their current pay is above the maximum for their grade, but their role is judged to be in the grade most closely equivalent to their current grade. These staff will be covered by the agreed pay protection arrangements. This will include staff who are currently paid on discretionary points. Details of the protection arrangements can be found in paragraph 6.2.7 and in appendix 2 of the agreement and in questions 31 – 37, 47 and 48 of the FAQs.

Terms and Conditions

28. Will there be changes to my terms and conditions?

The Agreement seeks to harmonise terms and conditions for staff working in the same grade. In many instances terms and conditions are also harmonised across grades. Details of the new terms and conditions are in Appendix 4 of the agreement. For some staff there will be no changes.

29. When will any changes be implemented?

With the exception of a change to holiday entitlement (where applicable), all changes to terms and conditions will be effective from the date that the agreement is implemented.

The changes to the holiday entitlement and the holiday taking year will be implemented alongside the implementation of the agreement. However, provided that the agreement is implemented before the end of March 2009, they will take effect from 1 January 2009 so any changes to entitlement during your current leave year will be based on the entitlements shown in paragraph 6.1 of Appendix 4 to the agreement.

30. How can I find out more about how the changes affect me?

There will be an opportunity to find out more about the changes during the communication workshop sessions. Also fuller guidance notes will be developed for release at or soon after implementation.

The University will be working with departments to ensure that all changes to terms and conditions are understood and that the data which is collected and submitted to them reflects the changes and is accurate.

Protection

31. What is protected as part of the agreement?

There are two elements of protection. The first is salary protection for staff whose role is red circled. The second form of protection applies when a change to your terms and conditions would lead to a reduction in your pay.

32. What will you protect as part of my salary protection?

Your current spine point will be protected. This means that you will not be entitled to any further annual incremental progression, but you will receive any increases that result from national pay settlements as applied at Aberystwyth University.

33. How does protection work for terms and conditions?

In practice, for any payment covered by terms and conditions the payroll office will calculate your pay both on the basis of current terms and conditions and the new ones and use the calculation that results in the higher pay. So for example if your overtime is currently calculated at double time on Saturday afternoon and your new terms and conditions only pays such overtime at time and a half, any overtime that you work on a Saturday afternoon will continue to be calculated using double time until the period of protection ceases.

34. How long will protection last?

If you remain in your current role the protection of your salary or terms and conditions will last from the date the agreement is implemented for a period of four years.

35. What happens if I move jobs within the period of protection?

If your move is on a voluntary basis, then your period of salary protection will end and you will be paid at the rate appropriate to the role that you have moved to. If the terms and conditions of your new job are different from the terms and conditions for your former job, the protection of your terms and conditions will also cease at the point at which you move jobs.

36. What will happen after the protection period?

At the end of the period of salary protection your salary will be reduced to the salary point immediately below the contribution points of the grade for your role. In the case of terms and conditions, payments will be calculated using the new terms.

37. Can I gain contribution points in the grade for the role to minimise the decrease in salary or maintain my current salary?

Yes, you can apply to access contribution points during the period of salary protection. You will need to go through the same process as any member of staff making an application and provide evidence that you are contributing at the appropriate level.

Pensions

38. Will my pension be affected?

It will not be directly affected however you may be in the position of being able to choose to change pension schemes if the pension scheme applicable at your new grade is not the one you currently belong to. Paragraph 9 of the agreement provides more detail about this.

39. How can I find out more?

The University will organise a number of presentations by their pension providers to give staff generic information on the options available. If you need specific advice on your particular situation you will need to speak with an independent financial adviser.

40. Do I have to pay pension scheme contributions on any arrears of pay?

Yes you will; this ensures that your contribution record reflects any change in salary from or since the effective date of the agreement.

Implementation

41. What is going to happen at implementation?

Once the agreement is formally accepted following a positive outcome to the local ballots you will receive a letter confirming your grade and salary. Any increase in your salary will be paid from the beginning of the month in which the Agreement is implemented. Any changes to terms and conditions will also take effect from the beginning of that month.

Individual positions

42. Will I be receiving any back pay?

You will receive back pay if one of the following has applied to you at any point between 1 August 2007 and the date of implementation:

- Your salary is below the minimum for your new grade i.e. you are green circled
- You were on the top incremental point of your current grade but your new grade has more increments available
- You were on a grade which did not have any increments and you are not on the top of the automatic incremental range for your new grade

43. If my hourly rate is increased will I get any back pay on payments like overtime which were paid at the old hourly rate?

Yes you will, although this may not be paid at the same time as any arrears of basic salary as it is more complex to calculate.

44. I currently receive an honorarium what will happen to this?

What happens will depend upon why you are receiving an honorarium, if you are undertaking additional duties on a temporary basis or as a result of a secondment the honorarium will not be affected because it is your substantive post that has been analysed and that you have been allocated to.

However, if you are receiving an honorarium for duties that have now been included in your role and described in your role outline form then the honorarium will cease and any back pay that you may be due will need to take this payment into account to avoid effectively paying you twice for the same thing.

45. When will I receive any back pay?

As soon as the calculations can be made and checked for accuracy. This may take some time as this is a complex matter, particularly for any back pay attributable to

additional payments like overtime. The University will inform staff about the timing of payments.

46. How will I access the incremental points in my grade?

If you are currently in a grade that has incremental progression your incremental increases will continue to be awarded annually provided that you are not within an existing procedure aimed at rectifying poor performance, in which event incremental increases may be withheld.

If you have not previously been entitled to incremental increases, any increments that may be due in your new grade will be awarded automatically on 1 October each year until you reach the maximum automatic increment for the grade.

Over time the University intends to move to October increments for all staff. The process for achieving this is set out in paragraph 1.4 of appendix 4 of the agreement

47. I currently have a discretionary point will I keep this?

If you are on a discretionary point currently then you will be assimilated to the new pay spine on the equivalent contribution point of your new grade. However, because your discretionary point was awarded using different criteria and a different process you will need to re-qualify for your point or points using the new criteria and processes. This is to ensure that the pay structure is maintained within the parameters of equal pay for work of equal value as required by law.

48. I have been red circled, what happens now?

At this stage your grade is provisional based on the outcome of the local ballots. Once your grade is confirmed on implementation you should, first of all, talk to your line manager about the situation. You may identify one or more of the following as immediate options.

- If you feel that you meet any of the criteria in the appeals procedure you may decide to appeal. In this case you will need to lodge your appeal with the HERA Project Manager within the 30 working days window for lodging an appeal. More information on appeals is given below.
- If you feel that your grade is right and you are red circled simply because your old grade had a higher maximum than your new grade and your salary is now outside the automatic incremental range for the grade, then it will be possible for you to apply for a contribution point using the new criteria and procedures once they are developed – if you wish to do so and if you think you would meet the criteria.
- If you choose not to appeal or your appeal is unsuccessful then you and your manager will need to decide on a plan that will help you **either** to develop your skills so that you can apply for posts that are at the grade which contains your current salary point, **or** to develop your role so that it would meet the grading criteria for the grade which contains your current salary point. You may wish to involve HR (including staff development personnel) in these discussions to provide advice and guidance.

49. I have applied for promotion under the current academic promotions round how will this affect that?

The implementation of the agreement will not affect the decisions made in the current promotions round and any agreed changes to grade will be made in October 2009 using the new pay and grading structure.

50. I have a retirement date which is different to that in the terms and conditions what will happen?

You will retain your current retirement date and the ability to request to remain in work beyond this point.

Future Work

51. Section 10 of the agreement describes work that will be undertaken after the agreement is implemented, how will this be organised?

The University, in partnership with the trades unions, will develop and publish an outline plan for this work. There are some elements to the work that need to be completed as quickly as possible and these will be given priority.

52. Why has the work to bring hourly paid teachers within the agreement been postponed until after implementation?

It has been agreed with the trades unions that it will take a considerable amount of time to address the complexities of this cohort of staff effectively. We have agreed with the unions that the work of analysing the roles that staff undertake, matching them to existing academic role profiles or creating new ones when an appropriate profile does not exist and developing a salary structure that recognises work that is undertaken in addition to the actual teaching contact will take place during the twelve months after implementation of the agreement.

Appeals

53. How do I find out about the appeals procedure?

Full details of the appeals procedure are included in Appendix 3 of the agreement, they will also be posted in the HR section of the University web site.

54. What is the difference between appealing against the grade in which my role has been placed and appealing against the role profile to which my role has been allocated?

There are two occasions when an appeal can be lodged.

- The first is when you have your grade confirmed at implementation. At this point you will already have received details about how your role has been scored, the role analysis outcome, upon which to base any decision to appeal. At this appeal you will be asked to provide details of why you believe that the score for your role is incorrect based on the evidence you have supplied, or to supply further evidence against one or more elements which you (verified by your line manager) believe better reflects your duties.
- The second point is when all the role profiles have been written and you have been notified about the role profile to which your role has been allocated. At this point you will be able to compare your own role profile with all the role profiles that the University has developed. At this appeal you will be asked to provide details of why you believe that the evidence you have supplied is not reflected in the profile that your role has been allocated to and that it either warrants a new and individual role profile, or that it more accurately matches to another of the profiles available. You may also be able to supply further evidence against one or more elements which you (verified by your line manager) believe better reflects your duties to support your appeal.

However, you will need to decide at which of these two points to appeal as only one appeal can be made.

55. I am a member of academic staff and I believe that I can demonstrate that my role has been allocated to the wrong profile, when can I appeal?

You can appeal within the first appeal window. Your appeal will be considered using the same procedure as will later be applied to staff appealing against the role profile to which their role has been allocated.

56. When can I lodge an appeal?

As has been mentioned in question 53 there are two opportunities that staff will have to appeal.

The first opportunity for appealing against the role analysis outcome for your role will start at the beginning of the month following implementation and continue for 30 working days (6 weeks).

The second opportunity for appealing against the role profile allocation will start at the beginning of the month following notification to staff and continue for 30 working days (6 weeks).

The precise dates will be included in the individual letters that staff receive after the ballot and formal acceptance of the agreement and posted on the website.

57. What happens if I cannot submit an appeal within the timescales set?

The appeal window will only be extended if there are extenuating circumstances such as absence due to long term sickness, maternity, paternity or adoption leave or academic study leave. If you are aware that you may be in this situation then let the HERA Project Manager know as soon as possible.

58. How do I appeal?

Appeals should be made in writing to the HERA Project Manager indicating on what grounds you are making the appeal. The grounds that can be used are set out in paragraphs 12 and 13 of appendix 3 to the agreement. Any additional information on your role that you can provide to the HERA team at this stage may help your appeal reach a speedy conclusion.

59. Is the process different for an appeal against the score for my role and an appeal against the role profile to which it has been allocated?

The process is the same.

60. What happens once I have lodged an appeal?

There are a number of stages to the process these are outlined below.

- 60.1. A member of the HERA team will contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss your appeal and to gather as much information as possible about your concerns. It may be possible to agree a resolution of your appeal as a result of this meeting. If this is the case you will receive a letter confirming the outcome of the appeal and, when appropriate, details of when any change to your grade and salary will be implemented.
- 60.2. If the first meeting does not resolve the appeal and you have not had a full HERA interview as part of the data gathering process, then such an interview will be arranged. At this meeting the role analyst will ask you to provide evidence of what you do in relation to each of the 14 HERA elements. Alternatively, in those cases where specific elements of the role are in question, the role analyst will focus on these elements.
- 60.3. The role analyst will assess the evidence that you have provided and check with your line manager that they agree with the evidence that you have given before scoring it.
- 60.4. You will be informed of any changes to the role analysis outcome that may result from this process and whether this affects the grade in which your role is placed.

- 60.5. If this resolves your appeal this will be noted and if there are any changes to grade and salary this will be implemented as soon as practical.
- 60.6. If this does not resolve your appeal it will progressed to the formal stage of the process.
- 60.7. In the formal stage of the process your appeal will be considered by a panel of two trade union representatives and two management representatives, all of whom have been trained in the use of HERA. The panel will take into account all evidence that you have provided throughout the role analysis and appeal processes. If you wish, you may attend the meeting to clarify any aspects of the evidence you have provided, but this is purely optional. The panel may uphold the appeal, reject it or ask for more information. You will receive notification of the outcome in writing.

61. If I appeal can I take someone with me to any of the meetings?

You can take a colleague or a trade union representative to any of the meetings mentioned in 60 points 1 to 7.

62. How long will this process take?

It is hoped that the initial meeting with a member of the HERA team will take place within 30 days of the team receiving your appeal letter. However if we receive a large number of appeals, or they all arrive at once, this may take a little longer.

If a full HERA interview is needed in order to gather more evidence, this will be scheduled as soon as possible after the initial meeting.

The appeals panel will, wherever possible, be convened within 30 working days of the appeal being passed to them by the HERA Project Manager.

Further Information and Updating

Further information will be provided to staff during the communication workshops and is also available by contacting the HERA team on hera@aber.ac.uk or by telephoning the HR help line on 01970 621894.

It is anticipated that these FAQs will be added to as questions are asked by members of staff. The copy on the website will be updated and members of staff may request an updated hard copy from the HERA team.