



Enterprise Bargaining 2018

Our key priorities for a new enterprise agreement

Our context

Our past enterprise bargaining agreements have delivered mutually beneficial outcomes for our staff, the unions and the University and our aim is to achieve an equally beneficial outcome as we start bargaining with the unions for a new enterprise agreement.

Our context has of course changed considerably, even over the lifetime of the current 2014 enterprise agreement. Whilst we've achieved a lot as a University, we're also, like many in the higher education sector facing some significant challenges and choices.

Not least of those is the financial sustainability of universities and it's no secret that all universities are now feeling financial pressure to differing degrees and planning their contingencies.

We've made some positive choices that have served us well. We've enjoyed periods of growth that have helped offset some cost pressures and have adapted intelligently to the demand driven system of funding that has been in place. There's been a recent shift which has impacted across the higher education sector. The changes signalled by the Commonwealth Government in December 2017 have meant an end to the demand driven system and have given rise to significant funding challenges that we must address going forward.

This produces an uncertain operating environment and the decisions we make now, particularly those we make through enterprise bargaining, will need to support our ability to be agile and to respond to the challenges that may come our way and to ensure that where we land is sustainable for the University into the future.

We can be proud of what we have achieved in partnership and our achievements give us a good foundation to move forward as we respond to the current challenges. We have a proven track record in making good choices; launching UniSA Online when we did was the right thing to do and will help further leverage our position in what is becoming an extremely competitive growth space. Our continued focus will need to be on delivering quality and meeting student expectations to ensure we are a University of choice for our students and to differentiate us as Australia's University of Enterprise.

As we open negotiations for a new enterprise agreement, it comes at a pivotal transition point for both UniSA and our staff. Our aim is to work constructively with the unions and our staff to achieve a new enterprise agreement that provides as much certainty for our staff as possible.

Our key priorities

The University will pursue the following priorities during bargaining for a new enterprise agreement:

Fair and sustainable salary increases

Our salary increases will be based over a proposed 4-year enterprise agreement and will be fair and sustainable to ensure that we continue remain competitive in the current environment. They will also be consistent with our financial settings going forward.

Enhanced leave provisions

We have a suite of extensive leave provisions available to staff that are competitive and generous. We do see an opportunity to add to and enable greater access to our existing array of leave conditions.

Shared paid maternity leave

We will expand the current 22 week paid maternity leave provision to enable staff to share the paid leave with their partners, where the partner is also a staff member and they become the primary care giver.

Domestic violence leave

We believe it is important to support staff who may be experiencing domestic violence and we will extend the current paid special leave arrangements available to staff experiencing domestic violence to include our casual staff.

Leave management

It is important for staff to be able to manage wellbeing and work-life balance and take their recreation leave at regular intervals. The University will seek a review of the current 40-day excess leave threshold and propose a new process whereby staff with high levels of excess leave, schedule the taking of their leave at regular intervals firstly through agreement, and in the absence of agreement, by an automatic direction.

Performance culture

We have a high-performance culture that encourages and fosters excellence to best meet the University's operational and teaching needs and to improve our research performance. Equally, we must have processes that support us when we deal with inappropriate behaviours and unacceptable performance and processes that enable us to manage these situations fairly but also in an effective and efficient manner for all concerned.

Streamlined disciplinary processes

We will propose a new process that will streamline and simplify disciplinary procedures introduced well over twenty years ago for managing unacceptable performance and misconduct/serious misconduct. While, thankfully, these provisions are not used often, it is important that the University is able to deal with these types of issues in a timely manner that still protect the rights of staff to a fair process. This is an area that was highlighted by the culture survey as an area our staff also felt could be improved.

Modern enterprise agreement

Easy and streamlined

We will propose a new agreement that is easier for staff to understand as well as for managers to follow and use. Like most other universities, we are striving to obtain some simplification in our agreement to make it easier to understand and apply. We will therefore be looking to reduce any ambiguity, remove legal jargon and any overly prescriptive provisions that are better situated in University policies or procedures.

We are not proposing to remove what is customarily referred to as “entitlements”, but rather procedure and process that is best served in policies and procedures. We want to ensure that our staff continue to enjoy excellent and fair terms and conditions of employment and we will work with the unions during the negotiation and agreement writing process.

Streamlined disputes process

We will propose a streamlined dispute resolution approach in a new agreement that enables staff to continue to raise “personal grievances” through a new and separate process in the agreement rather than through the existing dispute resolution clause. We will also propose to reframe the existing dispute resolution clause and process that also enables matters covered by the enterprise agreement and National Employment Standards to be addressed through that clause.

Consultation on major change

We will propose an improved consultation process in a new agreement which allows for effective consultation without long delays and periods of uncertainty for staff. Our current agreement contains multiple consultation clauses which leads to confusion and can exacerbate staff uncertainty. We propose to consolidate existing provisions to make it simpler and easier for staff to navigate.

We will also propose changes that can better enable us to assist staff to navigate through major change to help enable better outcomes for staff.

Flexible and agile working arrangements

We will propose arrangements which support a flexible and agile workforce that is responsive to changing student expectations and enables hours of work, and employment categories, that support the demand for real time and anytime/anywhere education to enhance the student experience and industry engagement.

Flexible ordinary hours

We will propose a more flexible way for professional staff to work their ordinary hours outside the traditional span of hours in a mutually agreeable manner, to create greater opportunities and work life balance that meets the needs of our staff and the University.

Fixed term employment categories

We will propose to expand the existing categories for fixed term contracts to include student employment, internships and recent professional practice and propose minor variation to existing categories.

Casual employment

The University will propose a more consistent alignment and playing field with other universities that enables us to be more flexible and adaptable to changing demands. We will

be proposing to remove our current 25% academic casual employment restriction, which is important as we venture into new initiatives such as UniSA Online, that often because they are new and uncertain, require a more flexible and adaptable approach with casuals rather than fixed term or continuing employment.

Teaching academic appointments

In our current 2014 enterprise agreement we introduced a new teaching academic career pathway which has enabled our staff to transition and develop their career discipline in teaching. Our motivation has also been to provide a clear career pathway up to level E for our teaching academic staff. Appointment to continuing positions in such circumstances will be part of that suite of career opportunity.

A number of academic staff have been promoted through this career pathway since being introduced in 2015 promotion round.

The current enterprise agreement does limit the University from advertising and appointing teaching academics on a continuing employment basis in limited circumstances (for example online education, UniSA College, Teaching Innovation Unit and conversion from existing fixed term employment as a teaching academic).

We will propose that we can appoint into teaching academic positions on a continuing or fixed-term basis without restriction, to provide the University with greater flexibility to respond to changes in Government policy and funding, meet student expectations and provide staff with greater certainty when we can with continuing employment.

Academic workload allocation

We will propose a review of the current academic workload clause to address inconsistencies between the workload allocation principles and process in relation to better recognise differences between experienced/seasoned and early career academic staff. We will also propose that our definitions of academic work developed in 2013/14 be reviewed in line with the changing nature of academic work, including online.

Other matters

Whilst our key priorities are outlined here, there are other changes that we will propose in a new agreement that are minor in nature and when considered as a whole, will form part of an overall package of employment conditions. We will reserve our right to amend and add to our proposals, including responding to matters arising from the bargaining process with the unions and through staff consultation.

We look forward to a constructive bargaining process and mutually beneficial outcomes for our staff, unions and the University.

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