

# The Future of HE in Scotland & the UK

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## **Higher education and constitutional change: implications for university workers**

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**UNISON Scotland**



# UNISON approach to constitutional change

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- Not joined either campaign
- Define Scotland we want – then powers
- Two major publications
  - ❖ Fairer Scotland
  - ❖ Fairer Scotland - Devolution
- Challenged claims of both campaigns
- Consult members

Christie Commission *'This country is a paradoxical tapestry of rich resources, inventive humanity, gross inequalities, and persistent levels of poor health and deprivation.'*

Policy lens - tackling inequalities, poor health and deprivation

**Getting a Fairer Scotland**

UNISON is engaging in the debate over Scotland's future before the 2014 referendum. If we don't make our concerns part of it no one else will. There will be many parties and campaigns looking for the support of UNISON members, let's make them work for it.

Let's not take anyone's word for it that things will be better simply because Scotland is or isn't independent.

Telling us what could happen isn't good enough. We need to know what the campaigns and parties actually want to make happen.

We need to make sure that whatever else happens - we get a Fairer Scotland.

It's not answers about flags and sporting teams that we need... but about jobs, services and rights at work.

So we need to ask questions that really matter - and judge the options on how concrete the answers we get are.

Here are a few questions that matter. You might want to put these to anyone looking for your support...

**PUBLIC SERVICES**  
What will you do to keep services public and maintain standards?

**RIGHTS AT WORK**  
What sort of rights should people have at work - and what will you do to improve them?

**JOBS & THE ECONOMY**  
What will you do to create full employment?

**EQUALITY**  
What will you do to make Scotland a more equal place?

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# A Fairer Scotland - Devolution

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- Subsidiarity
- Fiscal powers
  - ❖ Income and Property taxes devolved
  - ❖ Business and consumption reserved
- Non-fiscal powers
  - ❖ Public service pensions
  - ❖ Data and consumer protection
  - ❖ Competition policy
  - ❖ Labour market including health and safety
  - ❖ Equal opportunities



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# Funding

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- Great university tradition and 40k overseas student experience
- Support public funding contrast with English marketisation
  - ❖ But limited impact on access for disadvantaged students (FE funding)
- Impact of independence on level of funding
  - ❖ Broader public spending impact and university squeeze?
  - ❖ rUK student charging legal? End of free tuition?
  - ❖ Research grant impact. 'Common research area' UK agreement?
    - (BIS paper - 8% of GDP but gets 13% funding, UK charities research funding)
  - ❖ Balanced by a better immigration policy?
- At very least some uncertainty over funding

# Pay and Conditions

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- 21,720 non-academic staff in Scotland plus atypical staff
  - ❖ Face of universities and foundation of high quality learning
- Bargaining at UK level – Scottish bargaining structure?
- Low pay and Living wage
- Gender pay gap at 14.4%
- Zero-hours and casualisation
- In-house services
- Impact of funding pressures
  - ❖ Currently: £1bn surplus, staff costs falling % income, top pay

# Pensions

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- UK-wide Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)
  - ❖ £9.8bn 'deficit' – IORP Directive, solvent cross borders
  - ❖ Could split, but cost because bigger pension funds better
  - ❖ Transitional arrangements negotiated?
- Smaller university schemes already struggling
- LGPS limited impact. Already Scottish scheme

# Governance

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- Fairer Scotland – democratic accountability
- Universities fall somewhat short of standard
  - ❖ Highlighted particular failings in submissions
- Poor governance leads to capture by managerial elites
- Appointment and role of governors
- Worker representation
- Staff governance standard

# Conclusion

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- Judge constitutional change by *Fairer Scotland* proposals
- Concern about HE funding
- Impact that may have on pay and conditions
- Pensions an issue but manageable
- Need to strengthen governance
- Constitutional change needed to improve HE?