



Proposal to merge Central College Glasgow, Glasgow Metropolitan College and Glasgow College of Nautical Studies

UNISON Scotland's response to the Consultation on Proposals to merge Central College Glasgow, Glasgow Metropolitan College and Glasgow College of Nautical Studies

February 2010

Introduction

UNISON is Scotland's largest public sector trade union representing 170,000 members delivering public services across Scotland. We represent the majority of support staff working in Scottish Further Education Colleges. Our members include managerial, administrative and technical staff, dealing with business development, finance, personnel matters, support services, admissions, information provision, advertising, board secretaries, librarians, staff in flexible study centres, careers staff, nurses, nursery nurses, drivers, personal assistants for students with learning or physical disabilities, general administration, secretarial and clerical staff, janitorial, cleaning, catering and maintenance staff.

UNISON welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposals to merge Central College Glasgow, Glasgow Metropolitan College and Glasgow College of Nautical Studies

Response

UNISON Scotland is extremely concerned about the implications of this merger for our members. UNISON members in further education colleges have experienced flawed mergers or restructurings many times in recent years, and morale is at an all time low. The lack of information and consultation in the current process has exacerbated this concern leaving members stressed and unhappy. We therefore welcome the government's consultation on this merger.

UNISON expressed the concerns of members to the colleges' management in June last year and requested a "full, meaningful and transparent consultation with the trade unions". This type of process would have helped alleviate our members' fears about their jobs and ensure that the problems of past mergers could be avoided. Sadly there has been no meaningful consultation so far.

Many of the staff involved have already been through a merger. Glasgow Metropolitan formed from the merger of Glasgow College of Building and Printing and Glasgow College of Food Technology. It took two years of negotiations for a set of terms and conditions to be agreed for the new college. There are though still outstanding issues as to hours of work, pay scales and holiday entitlement 5 years after the merger. For example some staff work thirty-six and half hours a week and some staff 35 hours per week and holiday entitlement for some staff is 28 days others 25. UNISON believes that all staff should be moved the better set of terms and conditions.

UNISON members have no confidence that this merger will be different. They do not believe fairer terms and conditions will be put in place within a reasonable timeframe, and fear that this process will drag on for years or just be left on a shelf and forgotten about. Members are also concerned any savings made will be as a result of job losses.

The tone of the consultation document is that the colleges should merge and then sort out the staff issues. The fairness of terms and conditions is not a minor detail that can be fixed at some vague point in the future. The colleges have a legal duty to inform and consult our members on any changes and also to seek agreement with the trade unions on any proposals. The same legislation requires the colleges to consider representations from the trade unions, which they have so far failed to do (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 Regulation 15).

Members are concerned that the merger will also lead to job losses rather than the increased opportunities for career progression mentioned in the consultation document. Currently UNISON members are opposed to this merger and management in the colleges must engage fully with trade unions at the earliest opportunity if progress is to be made.

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