



Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

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NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION - FEBRUARY 2017

Teachers Pay Claim 2017

The Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) has submitted a pay claim for 2017 and is awaiting an initial response from the Government and Employers in the coming weeks. The SNCT claim includes

1. an uplift to meet the decline in 'real' value in teacher salaries since 2003 and bring Scottish Teachers into line with average teachers' salaries across the OECD
2. the importance of reward at the top point of the main grade scale in the retention and recruitment of teachers particularly following the removal of the Chartered Teachers scale and the decline in career opportunities
3. the restoration of pay of short-term supply teachers
4. a reduction of class contact time and a reduction in class sizes to control teacher workload.

Unfortunately, due to council elections in May the negotiations will not be completed until the new councils have been formed following the elections.

SSTA Survey on National Qualification Changes

The SSTA was represented at a meeting of the Assessment and National Qualifications working group on 31 January where Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) gave a presentation on the changes to National 5 Course for the 2017-2018 session. SQA made these changes following consultation with SQA subject groups and feedback to SQA surveys of pupils, teachers and schools.

The changes for each National 5 course will result in one or more of the following:

- extension of the existing question paper
- extension/modification of the existing item of coursework
- a new question paper
- a new item of coursework

The SSTA conducted a survey of members on the changes. Within 48 hours SSTA received 830 responses that showed that 63% said the changes would increase workload with a further 18% saying that they had made no difference in reducing workload. SSTA is meeting with SQA and Government officials to discuss the returns to the survey and the views of our members on each of the SQA courses. More detailed analysis of the survey to be produced separately.

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My View - National Qualification Changes

National 5 unit awards have been removed from SQA courses to be replaced with a more robust exam which covers more course content to make the exams more reliable.

- 1. Reduction on teacher and student workload** SQA seem to be devoid of ideas thus appear to penalise students as a consequence of reducing workload.
- 2. No fall back position for students who fail** if the exam is more robust to cover more course material then it follows that what would be covered by unit awards is now placed within the final exam. Therefore, it would be entirely feasible for SQA to give a Unit Award should a student fail the final exam but was able to pass one of the subsections within the exam paper. For example, in RMPS there are 3 sections in the exam. Students might fail the origins and morality section but do enough to pass the world religion section. In this scenario the student might fail the exam but would qualify for a unit award in world religion and thereby gain credits for this element.
- 3. Reexamination of presentation criteria with possible reduction of students being presented at N5** Bring back appeals. SQA know full well that students will sit a prelim and that this informs a teachers professional judgement on presentation. In the past, SQA wanted a prelim as evidence rather than a unit assessment. If a student fails the final exam then there should be room for a school to appeal, based on a prelim that is completed under exam conditions, to at least open the opportunity of a credit from a unit award.

- 4. Risk of students working for a year with no reward or recognition of work done because there are no unit awards.** The above suggestions would not increase workload for student or teacher. It would allow valid evidence to support the view that they deserve a unit award at the least. SQA might see an increase in workload. However, this can be minimised as all grades are entered electronically and it would not be too difficult to automatically give a unit award should the student meet the criteria for a unit award. Appeals would be different. Nonetheless, my argument would be that SQA are the examining body and have a duty to provide the best opportunity for all students to be rewarded and recognised for what they do achieve.
- 5. Negative impact on school tariffs for passes and attainment** GIRFEC applies to SQA as it does to all of us who have an input into every students aspiration to achieve. By adopting these adjustments to the exam system, I would argue that we would also be making a positive impact in raising attainment and also closing the attainment gap for all students.

Stuart Hunter, Executive Committee



Vice President Election 2017 - 2019

The result of the Vice President Election for 2017 - 2019

Result (1 to elect)	Votes	
GUIDI, John	567	Elected
McCORMICK, Ward	279	

We would like to congratulate John Guidi on his election and offer him all the best wishes during his term of office.

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Winding Down or Phased Retirement?

Over the last two to three years there has been a lot of press regarding the changes to the Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme. Quite rightly, everyone has been focusing on the changes, however, we also need to stay focused on the flexibilities that exist to help people retire at reasonable age.

Currently, there are **two main options** still available within the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Both options can only be **granted with the employer's consent**, so it is important that members understand the rules before they start to investigate which option is right for them.

Winding Down

The first option is called Winding Down. Essentially, if you are approaching retirement age you have the opportunity to continue with employment on a part-time basis whilst protecting your overall final retirement benefit entitlement. In other words, you can **work part-time, receive a part-time salary**, but still receive **full credit toward your pension**.

You cannot start Winding Down earlier than **four years prior to your Normal Pension Age**. For most teachers, Normal Pension Age will be 60. However, for those who joined the superannuation scheme after April 2008, it may be 65.

You also must have a **minimum of 25 years teaching service**, of which the **last 10 years must have been full-time service**, to be eligible for this option. The scheme incorporates the following features:

- Your part-time contract must be set at a **minimum of 0.5 full-**

time equivalent

- Each year you serve under the part-time contract will count as one full year for pension benefit calculation purposes
- Your **pensionable salary**, for benefit calculation purposes, will be the **salary that you receive in the 365 days prior to entering Winding Down** employment, indexed to the actual point of retirement
- It is possible for the Winding Down contract to continue after your Normal Pension Age, subject to a maximum length of four years.

When you do come to fully retire you need to make sure that you receive the maximum pension you are entitled to. Due to the rules of the scheme, there is the possibility that when you retire you may be better cancelling, or revoking, the Winding Down arrangement.

This sounds quite extreme, however it is common practice and down to the **definitions of pensionable salary**. This is the salary that your pension is based on so it is important that it is as high as possible.

Currently, there are **two definitions**.

“Your pensionable salary is the best of the following:

- **Average of best consecutive three years' revalued salaries from last 10 years or,**
- **Salary in last 12 months**

At present the best option is the first definition– the average of the best consecutive three years' revalued salaries from the last 10. This is because your salary is revalued to equal what it would have been if it had risen in line with inflation

(CPI) over the last 10 years. AS you suffered a pay freeze for some of those years, inflation figures have been quite high in comparison.

However, under the Winding Down arrangement, your pensionable salary is only going to be revalued in line with inflation over the last 365 days prior to entering Winding Down, and up to the actual point of retirement. When you do come to retire, it is a matter of checking which pensionable salary definition will suit you best to ensure that you receive the largest pension possible.

Finally, it is expected that Winding Down will be removed as a retirement option over the next number of years.

Phased Retirement

The second option is called Phased Retirement. As with Winding Down, you will need to obtain your employer's consent, with the difference being that this option is available **from the age of 55** no matter which scheme you are in.

It allows you to go **part-time but access up to 75% of your pension benefits** to help support your income before you retire fully.

The option means that you can take Phased Retirement without having a break in employment as long as you **reduce your salary contract by 20% or more**. This reduction **must last for at least 12 months**, and once again it needs to be done with the permission of your employer.

In summary, this option allows you to reduce your working hours and access up to 75% of your pension

Winding Down or Phased Retirement?

benefits. The remaining pensionable service, which must be at least 25%, will be added to any subsequent service you accrue and used in future benefit calculations.

It needs to be noted that if you do decide to retire early, in other words before your Normal Pension Age, that something called an “actuarial reduction” will apply to the pension you are taking.

The actuarial reduction is an adjustment made to your pension as, if you decide to retire early, the pension will therefore need to be paid for a longer period of time. There is a defined amount in your “pension pot”, so if this needs to be paid for a longer period of time, the annual income payment will be slightly less.

This adjustment is worked at a reduction of between 4-5% of your accrued pension for each year you decide to retire early.

For example, if you decided to retire at the age of 58 then you would receive 92% of your accrued pension benefits.

Phased Retirement is one of the most popular options available as it allows people to maintain a level of income coming up to retirement. Generally, as people approach retirement they may feel they want to slow down, but feel trapped as they still could have the same level of expenditure. For example, they may have children at university, or a mortgage etc.

By taking Phased Retirement, they can “balance” their income by receiving up to 75% of their pension

benefits plus a reduced part-time salary, so that the net take-home pay equates to approximately the same as a full-time salary. These figures can be worked out, although **the amount of pension does depend on the length of service that the member has within the scheme.**

The SPPA website has various factsheets that are there to help with the definitions and guidance notes. Below are the links to the relevant factsheets produced by the SPPA and we would recommend that you read these.

Phased Retirement

[See here](#)

Winding Down

[See here](#)

We would encourage you contact the SPPA for additional information. The SPPA will be more than happy to help, however, they cannot provide financial advice on which option is best or what the actual net figures should work out to be.

Stuart McCullough of L-Life Ltd, our independent financial advisers, is more than happy to help with this as he can provide the relevant pension estimates as well as net salary and pension calculations to give you the figures. This is to help you make the right decisions. L-Life Ltd can go through the options that are available and help you decide on the most appropriate choice.

Stuart McCullough
stuart@llife.co.uk

L-Life Ltd.

John Crichton



After working for more than 11 years as a Professional Officer in the SSTA office John Crichton has decided to retire.

John has been a valued member of the Association since he started teaching in 1985. During that time he has been a School Representative, then a District Secretary in Dumfries and Galloway as well as a member of the Finance Committee and the Premises Committee.

From the time John joined the office in January 2006 he has represented members all over Scotland in meetings with their employer and has presented many sessions at training days for Representatives and District Secretaries. He has been the Convenor of the ASN Panel as well as the Senior Managers Panel and has represented the Association at numerous national committees including the SNCT, Pensions Board and more recently the Head Teacher Recruitment Working Group and the Assessment and National Qualifications Group.

John's attention to detail will be sorely missed, where he always manages to come up with an angle not yet spotted by others. His level of knowledge of conditions of service and pensions issues will be hard to replace. We will also miss his sense of humour and (despite pretend protestations) his sociability. He will be a hard act to follow but we wish him every happiness in what we suspect will be a very active retirement, taking into consideration his commitment to triathlons, wild swimming, kayaking, cycling and running.

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OBITUARY



J Mc DOUGAL ROY, Past President

I first met J Mc Dougal Roy (Dougal to his friends) when attending Congress for the first time in the early eighties. He was a formidable force in both his grasp of issues and his debating skills. It was immediately obvious that he was held in great respect by his colleagues. What struck me then was his total commitment to the Association. He was steeped in Association history, had amazing recall and complete command of the Constitution, Standing Orders and its past battles, over some of which he held an undying grudge.

To newcomers, he may have seemed a spare, quiet person, self-contained and ascetic. Looks were deceptive! He would sit quietly through a debate, lips pursed, hands steepled, almost bored looking. Then he would take the floor and, very politely launch a verbal Exocet missile at some hapless speaker foolish enough to speak vaguely or inaccurately. He was a master of the motion “that the question be now put” which effectively scuppered many an ill-prepared speaker. It was never a pretty sight.

When one knew him better, Dougal was charming, courteous and kind. Essentially a very private person, he was sparing with personal details but a loyal and considerate friend. He would not have relished having his business being aired in public. Suffice to say that he was a dedicated teacher and a great campaigner for Scottish education. He loved the outdoors and his golf. He also rather enjoyed some light hearted teasing, though one had to know him well to get away with it.

Once he was berating me as the then President about what he termed “consorting with the enemy”. “Well I said, things have changed since your time, you’re just an old curmudgeon”. He turned away hiding a smile. Shortly after he sent me a card signed with the single word “curmudgeon”.

Dougal was also a very accomplished artist. For decades he individually hand wrote the Life Membership scrolls for the Association in beautiful calligraphy. They must have taken hours to meet his perfectionist standards. He then made the signing President practice on a perfectly ruled piece of paper using his special pen, before allowing him or her loose on the scroll. My hand positively trembled in terror of making a mistake.

It was typical of Dougal to make no fuss about his illness. Choosing to deal with it in privacy. He would not want to inconvenience anyone and preferred to retain his dignity at the end of his life, as he had always done.

Thus it was no surprise, though sad that his funeral was private at his own request. He did not like fuss.

Many of the Associations “old guard” will like me mourn his passing. We will remember his many decades of commitment to the SSTA with enormous gratitude and honour that memory. Above all, we will miss his pawky humour and his friendship.

May he Rest in Peace

Barbara Clark, Past President

Increase in General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) Fees

SSTA met with the GTCS following the announcement of an increase in fees from £50 to £65 in January to ask for the decision to be reconsidered, not to be implemented and focus on its essential role of registration and accrediting teacher programmes. The SSTA questioned the independence of the GTCS if it carried out functions that should be undertaken by the Government and/or the Employers. The GTCS said that it had reduced its reserve in the last few years and it could not continue to function without the planned increase in fees. The GTCS also confirmed that the new fee would not be increased for the next three years. The GTCS had originally decided against monthly subscription due to the excessive costs expected from local authorities but was now reconsidering this option to help and spread the cost over the year rather than in one payment in April. The GTCS is to look at the costings of some of its other functions and the funding received from the Government to ensure members are not meeting these costs.

The SSTA view is that those bodies should be expected to meet the additional costs and not the GTCS members. The SSTA still believes that all measures should be considered to return the fee to £50 including the employer meeting the increase if not the total fee.

Request for Examples of Secondary Schools Using Digital

Is digital learning and teaching making a positive impact in your Secondary School? If so Education Scotland would love to hear from you. As part of National Digital Learning Week 2017 they are looking for examples of where digital is making a difference. This is your chance to take part in a video case study and showcase your Secondary school in a national week-long event and be part of the Practice Pipeline. If you would like to nominate your school, please send your contact details to lorna.kerr@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk and they will be in touch soon.

The 2017 National Digital Learning Week (NDLW 17) will take place from 15-19 May. This year the theme of the week will be 'Digital Difference' and throughout the week they'll be asking you to share and celebrate the digital approaches which make a positive impact on classroom practice. The week will be packed with inspiring case studies from Early Learning and Childcare through to Senior Phase and beyond showcasing how digital makes a difference throughout the entire learner journey equipping young people for work.

Visit www.digilearn.scot for more information.



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