

Pay and Grading Proposals FAQ

22nd January 2024

These FAQ support the University of Bristol pay and grading briefing note and have been prepared to provide answers to some of the anticipated questions, and provide more detail. They are not exhaustive, if you have a question that is not answered here please contact your HR Business Partnering Team.

What is happening to the pay and grading structure at the University?

The University wants to invest £9 million over three years to make improvements to our staff pay and grading structure. We have been talking to our Trade Unions about the best way to do this and working up proposals in partnership with them.

What is the pay and grading structure?

Our pay and grading structure is the way in which we divide the national pay spine up into grades. Every job at the University is assigned to a grade using job evaluation which sets out the salary range for that role.

What is the purpose of these improvements?

We want to ensure that the University's pay grades continue to be as competitive as possible within the sector and renew our ongoing commitment to paying the voluntary living wage. The proposed improvements will also help us to attract the talent that will enable us to deliver our 2030 strategy and give existing staff further movement on the pay scale when they receive pay progression in future years.

What are the proposed improvements to our pay structure?

If agreed by the Trade Unions the improvements will be made in three steps over a three-year period

In summary the key points are:

- The bottom of our pay and grading structure will move from point 4 to point 9 of the national pay spine.
- Changes will be made to grades A, B and C to help align them to the voluntary living wage
- An additional spine point will be added to the top of grades A-L and the bottom point of those grades will eventually be removed.
- A new grade will be created for Associate Professors called M0
- Spine points will also be added to the top and removed from the bottom M grade ranges as a last step in the improvements proposed.

The revised pay scales are available for staff to see [[Link to diagrams](#)].

Are there any other improvements included in the proposals?

Yes. The University has also proposed to increase the starting annual leave entitlement for staff on grades A-I from 23 to 25 days. The cost of this is included in the total available investment of £9 million.

Are these improvements part of national pay negotiations?

No. National pay negotiations set the actual pay rates on the national pay spine for all participating Universities across the country. The proposals we are talking about are locally negotiated and only effect the way we set the boundaries of our grades at Bristol University on the national pay spine. These changes are therefore in **addition** to any pay award negotiated nationally. The next round of national negotiations will commence in the Spring of 2024

How much will this investment in staff pay cost?

The cost of these changes will be around £9 million over three years.

Can the University afford this?

Whilst this will be an additional cost pressure at a challenging financial time, we feel it is necessary and a priority to ensure that we continue to invest in our staff and continue to retain and attract the best people.

How were negotiations conducted?

Negotiations took place between the University HR leadership team and our Trade Union leaders in Autumn 2023. They were conducted confidentially over several weeks.

What happens next?

These proposals for improvements now need to be formally considered and accepted by our Trade Unions.

All matters relating to pay require formal negotiation, even positive one off changes like this cannot be made unless all of our recognised Unions accept them.

Our Trade Unions all have different internal arrangements for agreeing a change, some will have to hold a formal ballot whilst others may only need to consult their membership.

What happens if our Trade Unions do not accept the changes?

We hope that doesn't happen, the University is committed to improving pay for our staff and want these proposals to come into effect, but if they are not accepted then we will not be able to proceed and the proposal to make this extra investment in improvements to the pay structure will be withdrawn.

Do all Trade Unions have to agree to these improvements?

Yes. We cannot make these improvements unless all Trade Unions agree.

When will we know if the Trade Unions accept or reject this proposal?

We anticipate that our Trade Unions will carry out their consultation with their membership and any balloting during February and we will know their position in March.

If the proposed improvements are accepted by our Unions what will this mean for staff?

The proposals will be implemented over a three year period, and we will prioritise changes to those on grades A-L. For some staff this will not have an immediate impact, but in the long term there will be further scope for progression available for staff, with the benefit being felt most immediately by those who are currently at the top of their grade. Staff on our lowest grades (A-C) will see the immediate benefit of changes to accommodate the voluntary living wage.

Why will it take so long to roll out? / why can't you just make the changes immediately?

The improvements are complex and the University is doing this within a limited budget.

To implement this in a manageable way the changes will roll out over three years beginning in August 2024.

Improvements will be made annually on 1st August as outlined below:

- Changes to Grades A-I - 1st August 2024

- Changes to Grades J-K – 1st August 2025
- Changes to Grades L-M – 1st August 2026

What happens to the annual pay award?

The annual pay award is determined by a separate national negotiation with our Trade Unions and is not affected by these proposed improvements. You will receive an annual pay award when it is agreed regardless of these proposed improvements.

Will there be changes to annual increments?

No. Staff annual pay progression will continue as it always has done with eligible staff receiving a pay increment every year. The impact of these improvements is that generally staff will be able to progress further than they could before. In particular staff who are at the top of their grade will be able to progress one more step on the pay spine.

Will the rules for Grade M movement be affected?

No. The grade M movement process was not part of the discussions with the Trade Unions, but it will be subject to a separate review in due course to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. The proposals do make improvements to the M grades that adjust the spine points and increase the scope for M grade movement subject to the existing rules.