

University Vice-Chancellors in UK Involved in Deciding Their Salary

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Category : Education/Family

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

1. **remuneration** / ɹɪˌmyu nəˈreɪ ʃən / (n) – financial compensation
Example: The teachers demanded fair **remuneration** for working during weekends.
2. **inflate** / ɪnˈfleɪt / (v) – to increase the value or size of something
Example: The shop **inflated** the prices of its items so it could make more profit.
3. **at the expense of** / æt ðɪ ɪkˈspens əv / (idiom) – in a way that causes harm to someone or something
Example: The company chose production speed **at the expense of** product quality.
4. **transparency** / trænsˈpæər ən si, -ˈpær-/ (n) – the state of being honest or open
Example: The company should increase its **transparency** about its operations so that employees will be well-informed.
5. **conflict of interest** / ˈkɒn flɪkt əv ˈɪn tər ɪst, -trɪst / (n) – a situation wherein an individual gains personal advantage from a decision
Example: To avoid **conflict of interest**, I decided not to apply to my father’s company.

Article

Read the text below.

Majority of university vice-chancellors in the United Kingdom were found to be involved in **remuneration** committees.

The University and College Union (UCU) filed a request for freedom of information—the right to obtain information controlled by public sectors—after high incomes of vice-chancellors were brought to light. The data revealed that 95% of university vice-chancellors take part in the activities of committees that make salary-related decisions. Almost half of the vice-chancellors are committee members, while 47% are allowed to participate in committee meetings.

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt pointed out that universities have long disguised remuneration committees as independent organizations to turn people’s attention away from the increased pay of vice-chancellors. This pay increase is perceived as inappropriate because vice-chancellors enjoy high salaries while students accumulate huge debts to pay for tuition fees.

In 2016, the average pay for vice-chancellors was £257,904, while the average student debt was £44,000. Considering that university salaries come directly from both taxes and tuition fees, vice-chancellors are allegedly **inflating** their own pay **at the expense of** taxpayers and students.

According to parliament member Michelle Donelan, there have been instances wherein the pay of university leaders is far greater than that of the prime minister. Because of this, lawmakers are calling for stricter regulations to control these suspicious activities.

In January 2018, the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) developed some guidelines that forbid vice-chancellors to join remuneration committees. Although the guidelines are still under review, they are expected to promote **transparency** and prevent **conflict of interest** when it comes to setting university leaders’ pay.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- In your opinion, is the issue on the vice-chancellors’ high salaries a reflection of poor university governance? Explain.

- Should the UCU also look into the salaries of other university leaders?

Discussion B

- Why is there a need for transparency of information?

- How can transparency of information be increased? Discuss.

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