

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

STAFFING COMMITTEE

20/01 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Tuesday 11 February 2020 at 2.00 pm in Room 101, Henley Business School

Present:

Dr R J Messer (Chair)
Mr J J Brady
Dr K Henderson
Mr S Hunt
Mrs C Rolstone
Mrs S Thornton
Professor C Tissot

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Professor A Bell, Professor D C Berry, Miss M Cleaver, Professor C Harty, Professor O Kennedy, Dr A Laville, and Mrs J Rowe.

20/02 The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2019 were approved

20/03 Lecturer Unavailability Forms

The Director of Human Resources introduced _____, and provided some background and context to this item. He reminded colleagues that in recent years, given the pressures with teaching space and the T&L timetable, a process was developed to make sure the teaching space was being most effectively used during the full teaching week – the assumption being that all teaching staff will be available to teach during the working week unless there are genuine and legitimate reasons (e.g. a reasonable adjustment made for disability-related reasons or there is a contractual flexible working agreement in place) for making a request not to teach at certain times.

_____ confirmed that in recent years teaching staff have been asked to complete a Lecturer Unavailability form if they were not available to teach on a given day / time (with priority given for those reasons stated above), and Heads of School were required to sign off the form before it was sent to the Timetabling and Room Booking team.

She indicated the process for the 2020-21 timetable had now been revised – only contractual Lecturer unavailability will be taken into account before

scheduling the timetable, and any completed forms will not need to be signed off by the Head of School. She stated that all other unavailability requests would be considered as soon as possible after the draft timetable had been scheduled, and indicated that the Timetabling team would use its best endeavours to accommodate such requests.

also confirmed that Heads of School are asked to let the Timetabling and Room Booking team know about teaching staff who maybe unavailable due to research commitments (e.g. on research leave).

The Committee recognised that in previous years Heads of School may have adopted different approaches when considering unavailability requests from their teaching staff.

The Committee were content with the process for the 2020-21 timetable, and thanked _____ for her attendance at the meeting.

20/04 Pay and Pensions Update

The Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with an update on matters relating to pay and pensions, particularly the UCU industrial action, likely further action and related developments at the national level that may provide an opportunity to resolve the disputes.

He reminded colleagues of the 8 days' of strike action taken by UCU members' between 25 November and 4 December 2019, and informed the Committee that during this 8 day period the maximum number of colleagues participating in strike action on any one day was 214.

He confirmed that deductions from pay for strike action were made, as indicated in advance, from December salaries, and the total amount deducted in December was £203,614. He indicated that this money has been ring fenced in the first instance to be used in ways which mitigate the impact of strike action.

He confirmed that the local industrial action also includes action short of strike (ASOS) on a continuous basis until April 2020. He reported that the action does not, as yet, include an assessment and marking boycott which the ballot mandate allowed for.

The Committee heard that the UCU has now notified the University that 14 further days of strike action to take place on dates between 20 February and 13 March 2020.

The Director of Human Resources reported that in respect of the ongoing dispute relating to the USS, the most significant development has been the publication of the second report of the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) which was made public just before the Christmas break. UUK has confirmed that talks with UCU in respect of the JEP recommendations began in January.

He confirmed that consultation in respect of the 2020-21 pay round will commence shortly.

20/05 UCU Local Claim update

The Director of Human Resources reminded members of the committee of work being carried out via a local University and UCU Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) in respect of precarious contracts of employment, gender pay gap and “grade drift”.

A sub-group of the JNC has since been meeting at regular intervals to address the issues raised, and summarised some of the agreed principles.

In respect of sessional staff, the following is proposed:

- the creation of a more consistent framework for the appointment of sessional teaching staff, an hourly rate of pay aligned to the University’s grade structure, a multiplier applied to the hourly rate to reflect the full range of sessional duties (broadly preparation, delivery and assessment), and conversion to fractional contracts where a regular pattern of work has been evidenced.

In respect of teaching at Grade 6:

- the establishment of a common understanding of the scope of activity that can reasonably be expected at Grade 6, and a revised Role Profile that reflects these expectations.
- a jointly-agreed questionnaire to all current G6 Teaching Fellow colleagues will shortly be distributed, to establish the extent to which their current responsibilities match or exceed the agreed role profile. Where it is agreed that colleagues are now exceeding the new profile they will be converted to a Lecturer role, with a teaching-intensive classification.

He confirmed that joint work on addressing the University’s gender pay gap has remained on hold and will follow in due course.

20/06 Staff Survey 2020

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) reported that a paper was taken to UEB on 2nd December 2019 to seek their agreement to the third staff survey, under contract with Capita, to be conducted in late spring/ early summer 2020. She confirmed that the Board agreed that the survey should go ahead at that time and discussions with Capita are taking place to agree the precise date.

20/07 Annual Diversity and Inclusion report

The Committee noted the D&I Annual Report for 2018-19, and noted the snapshot summary as reported to the UEB in January 2020, including:

- In October 2019, School of Agriculture, Policy and Development (SAPD) receiving a Bronze Athena SWAN Award, and the School of Chemistry, Food & Pharmacy (SCFP) receiving a Silver (previously awarded a Bronze), in recognition of their work on gender equality.
- A Race Equality Action team (RE-ACT) has led work on the University's Race Equality Charter (REC) Action Plan. They have set ambitious targets to address the diversity differentials in 5 years and an Access and Participation Plan has been agreed with the Office for Students (OfS) with a target to narrow the attainment gap between our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and White undergraduate students to 5% by 2025/26.
- The University has focused on community engagement and developed partnerships with local employers such as Oracle, Thames Water and Berkshire NHS Trust to set up the Thames Valley Race Equity and Cultural Harmony (REACH) Network. The network brings together over 30 companies from the Thames Valley region that have committed to working together to attract, progress and retain diverse BAME talent at every level across their businesses, by ensuring that workplace cultures are inclusive for people from diverse backgrounds.
- Percentage of female professors at the University has increased from 30% in 2015 to 35.08% at the end of 2018-19 (compared to a national figure of 25.5%).
- We have increased our ranking to 80 in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2019 across all employers.
- Important D&I-related work continues to be undertaken across the University, illustrated by these three examples:
 - a review of Grade 9 pay and grading structures has been completed. We will continue to monitor the impact of this review on the gender pay gap in the longer term.
 - a project identifying further actions to address undergraduate attainment gaps, involving the University and RUSU;
 - the #NeverOK campaign that has been launched jointly by RUSU and the University to highlight our values of respect, tolerance and inclusivity for all.

20/08 Employment law update

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) reported on a number of employment legislation changes being introduced on 6th April 2020. These relate to:

Parental Bereavement Leave

This will give all employed parents the right to 2 weeks leave if they suffer the death of a child under the age of 18 or a still birth from 24 weeks of pregnancy. The right to leave is available from day one of employment and can be taken as one block or 2 single weeks up to 56 days after the death of the child.

She confirmed that Human Resources is currently in the process of updating policies and processes in relation to this new right. It is noted that the background to the legislation was driven in particular from parents in employment sectors with far less generous absence and compassionate leave arrangements.

Holiday Pay reference periods

The reference period to calculate a 'week's pay' for holiday pay purposes for those staff who work flexible and variable hours across the year will be extended from 12 weeks to 52 weeks. The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) indicated that this will only affect a very small number of holiday pay calculations as the majority of staff are not paid holiday pay in this way, but we are currently reviewing procedures where it may apply.

Changes to written statements of employment particulars

There are three changes to written statements, which will apply from April 6th 2020:

- Firstly all workers, as well as employees, are entitled to a written statement of employment particulars. The University already provides workers, such as those engaged through Campus Jobs, with a written statement.
- Secondly, employees and workers must be provided with their written statement on or before their first day of employment. She indicated that the University's processes and procedures already require that written statements are provided in advance of commencing work, however there are occasions where SRFs are not submitted in a timely way before the commencement of work. Human Resources will continue to engage line managers to improve process and practice.

- Lastly, there are requirements in terms of the information to be included in written statements, the majority of which are already covered in the University written statements. One however is that written statements should be “explicit about the hours and days of the week the worker/employee is required to work, whether they may be varied and how”. Current written statements do not provide this information although we capture working patterns as part of the recruitment and appointment process. She indicated that contracts for Grades 1-5 staff could be revised so that they are more explicit on this point, however this is more complex in relation to academic and P&M staff contracts which are not explicit about working hours or working days.

20/09 Remaining dates of meetings for the 2019/20 Academic Session:

Tuesday 28 April 2020 at 11.00 am (reserve)

Wednesday 17 June 2020 at 2.00 pm

It was agreed that the next meeting will focus on staff wellbeing.