

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

JOINT UNIVERSITY/UCU COMMITTEE

18/07 A meeting of the Joint University/UCU Committee was held in Committee Room 1, Whiteknights House, on Wednesday 23 May 2018.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor
The President of Reading UCU) (in the chair)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor R Van de Noort)
Dr M Schroeter
Mrs S J Pellow

In attendance:

Director of Human Resources
Head of Student Information Systems (Secretary)

Apologies were received from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor S Mithen), the University Secretary, Dr C Fuller and Mr M McAulay.

18/08 The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2018 were approved and signed.

Arising on the Minutes:

Minute 18/02 (17/20, 17/11, 17/05): Report of the President of Reading UCU

The Vice-Chancellor reported that three post-project reviews had been completed and had been submitted to Senate and to Council. The post-project reviews for Systems Engineering and for Efficiency and Effectiveness would be considered in the next academic session.

Minute 18/02 (17/20, 17/11, 17/06): UCU post-Brexit Policy Charter

The Director of Human Resources reported that the new online form to capture exit information from staff would be available in July; he would be happy to demonstrate the functionality once it was live.

Minute 18/02 (17/22): Report of the President of Reading UCU

The Director of HR reported that guidance would be issued to Schools over employing lecturing staff paid on hourly rates or on fractional contracts. There were a few outstanding issues over the appropriate rates of pay in certain circumstances, and it was still necessary for Schools to make a choice over paying staff from the one or the other system, but he did not anticipate many problems this summer.

Minute 18/04: Report of the President of Reading UCU

The Director of HR reported that a comparison document outlining the changes to contracts and probation arrangements for professional and managerial staff would shortly be circulated to UCU

representatives. Resolution was expected soon on the issue of the non-competitive clause for Henley staff.

18/09 **Report of the Vice-Chancellor**

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the industrial action taken by UCU had had a significant impact on the University. He expressed his gratitude for the sensible attitude taken by the local branch.

He reported that:

- (a) a review of Archaeology was being set up to look at the factors around the declining numbers of students in this area and to come up with recommendations which an Implementation Group would take forward. He confirmed that the full report of the review would be circulated to UCU representatives;
- (b) a review of modern language provision had begun, which included the activity both in the Department of Modern Languages and European Studies and in the Institution-Wide Language Programme in ISLI, with the aim of considering language provision as a whole across the University. The outcome was expected to be reported to the University Executive Board before December. In response to a query about the timescale for implementation of recommendations, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) acknowledged that some changes could only be scheduled for the appropriate point in the academic cycle, especially with programme specifications now built into student contracts; he confirmed that applications would be honoured, whatever the outcome;
- (c) the University was preparing to submit its registration to the Office for Students (OfS), which required more detail *inter alia* on plans for widening participation and on operational policy for removing programmes. He expected that the UKRI would also require engagement from universities on changes relating to research, but this was less explicit at present. He acknowledged that there was concern among staff about potential UKRI-driven changes and suggested that a paper to Senate on approaching such challenges would be the best way forward;
- (d) the forbearance of staff during the substantial building work on campus had been appreciated. Students had welcomed the provision of additional study spaces, and the main Library was expected to re-open partially in September;
- (e) the review of Senate arrangements was entering a second phase in the next session. The first phase had focussed on how business was conducted, ensuring that more voices were heard in the meetings, and the next phase would look at membership, particularly in the context of the OfS requirement for universities to initiate greater interaction between corporate and academic governance;
- (f) the University had submitted its response to the Government's review of post-18 education and its funding. There was uncertainty around the timescale for decisions and the direction which would be taken.

The President of Reading UCU commented that the lack of teaching space while building and renovation work was under way was placing constraints on the teaching timetable at the same time as student numbers were increasing. He urged that the staff experience be considered along with the student experience; staff were significantly affected by the conditions in the Library during the building work, which had been disruptive to research. In response, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) stated that the efficient use of teaching space and time was a priority; the current 40% utilisation of space needed to be improved to allow student numbers to grow and thereby provide opportunities for investing in staff. The decision to refurbish the

Library, rather than build new elsewhere, had meant that the work would take longer but would have a better long-term outcome.

The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Committee that savings from the Efficiency and Effectiveness programme had been invested in the new welfare team which would provide support for students and reduce the academic staff workload associated with tutoring.

18/10 **Report of the President of Reading UCU**

The President of Reading UCU commented that he welcomed the establishment of a joint expert panel as the outcome of the pensions dispute. He felt the the University had been measured in its communications during the dispute, which was appreciated. He suggested that more clarity on the calculations for pay deductions would be helpful for a future occasion, and the Director of HR agreed that this could be considered.

He highlighted some specific issues:

- (i) the draft Relationships Policy, which appeared to have been made public while in draft form;
- (ii) the latest pay offer of 2%;
- (iii) the reviews initiated for Schools which had difficulty in meeting their obligatory payment contribution to central funds;
- (iv) the extension of the Staff Forum to Grades 6-9, along with misinformation on its status;
- (v) the apparent delay in setting up the working group to review sexual harassment, which was a particular concern because the existing procedures were felt to be unsatisfactory.

In response to the last point, the Director of HR undertook to check on preparations for the working group and to report back to Dr Schroeter.

The Vice-Chancellor concurred with the concern over misinformation about the Staff Forum and the need for precise language in this area. He commented that, although there was an argument for draft policy documents to have been well thought-through before circulation to UCU representatives, there was also a case for early sight of documents in order to provide an understanding of the context and progress. He suggested that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) might meet UCU representatives to explain in more detail the financial flows, as they related to the reviews of Schools.

18/11 **Progress with measures to close gender pay gap by 2020**

The President of Reading UCU requested information on progress with the measures being taken by the University to close the gender pay gap.

In response, the Director of HR pointed to a range of initiatives, including the professorial review, the review of fixed-term contracts, the trial of anonymised recruitment for Grades 1 to 5, and the work of the Deans of Diversity. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) commented that there had been an equal promotion rate between male and female in the previous year's round.

Dr Schroeter said that Reading UCU acknowledged and welcomed the long-term strategy but felt it needed to have more detail on progress towards the goal. The Vice-Chancellor concurred that the University should be held regularly to account on this matter.

18/12 **Formal status and transparency of university Working Groups**

The Committee agreed to discuss this item at a supplementary meeting.

18/13 Review of the support provided for UoR staff seconded to UoRM

The Committee noted a paper brought forward by Reading UCU which detailed concerns raised by staff about the support available to members of staff on secondment to the University of Reading Malaysia.

It was agreed that a small group should be convened to discuss the paper in detail, and the Director of HR undertook to arrange this.

18/14 Staffing Committee

The Committee agreed to receive the report from the Staffing Committee at a supplementary meeting.

18/15 Dates of meetings in the Session 2018-19

It was noted that the meetings of the Committee in the Session 2018-19 had been provisionally scheduled for:

Friday 9 November 2018 at 2pm, later amended to 2.30pm
Tuesday 5 February 2019 at 10.30 am
Wednesday 22 May 2019 at 10.30 am

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

JOINT UNIVERSITY/UCU COMMITTEE

18/16 A supplementary meeting of the Joint University/UCU Committee was held in Committee Room 1, Whiteknights House, on Monday 25 June 2018.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor
The President of Reading UCU (in the chair)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor R Van de Noort)
The University Secretary
Dr C Fuller
Dr M Schroeter
Mrs S J Pellow

In attendance:

Director of Human Resources
Head of Student Information Systems (Secretary)

Apologies were received from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor S Mithen), and Mr M McAulay.

The Committee noted that this supplementary meeting had been convened to discuss two items on the agenda from the meeting on 23 May 2018; the items had been postponed due to lack of time.

18/17 Formal status and transparency of university Working Groups

The Committee noted that there was a range of working groups in operation within the University, some of which had been set up by a committee and therefore had a formal status, while others were more informal. The expectation was for all working groups to have a named membership, remit and clear line for reporting; they should also have a timescale for the work, ideally established at the outset, though potentially subject to change. In some cases, the working group might involve UCU representatives, and in other cases their involvement would come after the working group had submitted its report.

The Committee noted that there was no central list of currently-operating working groups and the University Secretary undertook to compile a list of the centrally-supported groups, noting that he would not have knowledge of groups set up within Schools. He also undertook to draft some guidelines for working groups, including guidance on the timescale to be set for each and, where appropriate, the involvement of UCU representatives. The Vice-Chancellor suggested that the list should include a note about the progress being made by each group, to enable tracking.

18/18 Staffing Committee

The Committee noted that the Staffing Committee had met on 20 June 2018 and had received an update on the following matters:

- Universities Superannuation Scheme
- People plan
- Working Group on Teaching Staff
- Visa and immigration costs for non-EU staff
- Draft relationship policy
- Information for recruiting managers
- Research performance metrics from the Research Board
- Discussion on appeals from the Re-Grading Committee
- Closure dates in 2020-21.

In relation to the relationship policy, Dr Schroeter asked what progress had been made with finalising this after UCU representatives had provided comments. The University Secretary explained that it would shortly be considered further by UEB, following input from various committees; he undertook to share the latest version with UCU representatives.

Dr Schroeter also asked about progress with the Working Group on Teaching Staff. The Director of HR responded that some issues were still under consideration, including the potential route for Grade 6 staff to progress to Grade 7. Currently, this relied on a Grade 7 post becoming available and a successful application, which was not felt to be a satisfactory situation. The Committee noted that it might be necessary to have different strategies for dealing with new and existing staff.

In response to a query about the appeals from the Re-Grading Committee, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) explained that there was a proposal to introduce more transparency into the process for appealing.

The President of Reading UCU asked about the research metrics discussion, and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) explained that these were being used in conjunction with other factors to make judgements about the quality of research work and to contextualise it. He undertook to circulate further information about the metrics.