Staff Forum

A meeting of the Staff Forum was held at 11.00 am on Tuesday 21 February 2017 in Room 201, Carrington Building.

Present:

- Rhiannon Vaughan (Co Chair and Employee Representative)
- Michelle Hargreaves (Co Chair and Employee Representative)
- Debby Livermore (Employee Representative)
- Dawn Turner (Employee Representative)
- Gail Gilbert (Employee Representative)
- Alice Williams (Employee Representative)
- Helen Robson (Employee Representative)
- Juliette Dack (Employee Representative)
- Luke Cantellow (Employee Representative)
- Nick Crouch (Employee Representative)
- Sharon Burton (Employee Representative)
- Sinead O’Flynn (Employee Representative)
- Tracy Lunn (Employee Representative)

- Professor Robert Van De Noort (Co Chair and Employer Representative)
- John Brady (Employer Representative)
- James Magee (Employer Representative)
- Julia Munro (Employer Representative)
- Marguerite Gascoine (Employer Representative)
- Cherry Bennett, Assistant Director of HR, HR Operations (Guest)
- Jay Russell, Campus Jobs manager (Guest)
- Emma Mayhew, Academic Director for Electronic Management of Assessment)
- Rachel Thorns (Secretary)
- Alex Benneyworth (Note taker)

17/01 Welcome and introductions and apologies (Chair – Rhiannon Vaughan)

Apologies were received from Becky Kite (Employee Representative) and Chris Harris (Employee Representative).

17/02 Review minutes/actions from last meeting

The minutes were approved with no other changes. The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed as per the below.

Action – CB to check what may impact online leave (in terms of any change of contract and position on Trent) and provide update to RV so she can report back to Staff Forum.
Acton completed - Rhiannon Vaughan (RV) stated that Cherry Bennett had confirmed that the impact of online leave had been fed back under PAS and leave has now been transferred across so it should all be working correctly. Action closed.

Action - Debbie Livermore to feedback on Staff Survey, covered under the Agenda so will be discussed during the meeting. Action closed.

17/03 Working Groups – updates from employee representatives on progress with actions and activities

- Subgroup 3 – Extended membership/expansion of Staff Forum to be representative for staff grades 6+ and revision of information and consultation agreement.

MH informed the group that a small working group had met for the first time in February to discuss expanding the staff forum for grades 6 and above. Last year PAS had highlighted that a pocket of people had not been included in communications due to their grade, as individuals fell outside the existing staff forum and UCU. The staff forum representatives had first-hand experience of receiving emails from Grade 6 and above staff members seeking advice.

The next meeting will be held in March to consider how the new meetings will be run and the impact on the current format. Initial concerns were that voices for Grades 1 – 5 may not be heard but taking it by a step by step approach. The timetables was to launch the expansion of the staff forum for Grades 6 and above in September.

JB stated that the Staffing Committee feedback was broadly supportive but wanted to ensure that UCU was not undermined. JB advised he had met with PH to discuss the expansion and that UCU were wary but the aim was to be complimentary to UCU and not to replace. JB advised that group discussions with members of staff were to be held to understand for Grades 6 and above staff members what they would like out of the staff forum.

Action - RT advised the arrangement of setting up the working groups should be added onto the subgroup agenda to discuss.

17/04 Update on Faces at Reading Project

SOF informed the group that the Faces at Reading was being led by the Diversity Inclusion Deans and a webpage had been set up based on the Royal Society of Chemistry. The purpose was to showcase staff members based on diversity, inclusion and flexibility and would cover staff members of all grades and roles. The initial launch date had been put back by a month and would now be mid-April. There had been discussion to do 90 faces to co-side with the Universities 90th anniversary but the project had been scaled back and would be for 12 profiles and build up from there. An email had been set up ‘faces@reading’ so staff members could either suggest themselves or colleagues.

SOF advised the group to look at the Royal Society of Chemistry website as it was very interesting and provided a useful guide to what the University was aiming to achieve.
17/05  Update on Sexual Harassment Taskforce

RVDN informed the group that the BBC report by the Sexual Harassment Taskforce was published in October about how Universities deal with sexual incidents on campus. RVDN advised that the University gets a number of formal complaints but other incidents may other hate crime may have taken place but not reported. It was important as a University that we had strong levels of communication. The working group was being chaired by Richard Messer and Deans of Diversity Inclusion. The group met in December and meets again this week to agree clear guidance before this academic year.

17/06  Update University Pay Gap

RVDN informed the group that the gender pay gap is an action from Athena Swan. The working group reported back at the end of December to UEB for consideration and recommendations. HR are developing people strategy so any recommendations will be considered as part of the strategy.

RVDN advised that grade by grade there were no gender pay gap and between men and women it was very small with the exception of Grade 9 where the pay gap goes up by 15%.

RVDN informed the group that the University did not want a quick fix as other Universities had approached any gender pay gap and wanted to make fundamental changes. Want to achieve positive action in all areas of gender diversity and to remove gender segregation.

MH commended the University in not taking the quick fix.

JB informed the group met with a number of HR Directors and it was acknowledged as part of the group that short term fixes aren’t a solution but have to start somewhere.

Action - RVDN to report back at the next meeting.

17/07  Update on Executive Support Development

RV informed the group that Erin had been on leave but training had taken place on 1 hour sharing knowledge sessions on Agresso and community of practise. There is a lot of work being done within the work stream.

17/08  Update on launch of Campus Jobs

A question was raised would it be the Line Manager’s responsibility to provide Job Descriptions and Person Specifications to Campus Jobs. JR advised depending on the nature of the role was how much information was required and it may just be a headline of what individuals would be doing if successful in being appointed to the role. Information required would be proportionate to the role.

JR informed the group that Campus Jobs would not be available to permanent members of staff as the purpose of Campus Jobs was to offer work to students in the first instance. Equally the terms and conditions of workers would be different for things like sick pay, annual leave entitlement.
17/09  Update on Staff Survey, timeframes for launch, role of Staff Forum

DL informed the group that she was part of the working group for the Staff Survey. The survey was launching on 6 March, and is the biggest staff engagement activity the University has undertaken in nearly six years. Over 4000 staff, across three continents, will be invited to take part in the survey.

The University was aiming for 60% completion and as a guide the survey will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. The survey is completely confidential and any sub division or group below 10 is ignored so individuals can’t be identified.

The results will be analysed and reported on and depending on what comes out of the survey action groups will be set up.

Managers will be encouraged to talk to staff, impressing on people to complete the staff survey as it’s a chance for staff to have their say and will help the University understand what is working well, what is not working so well and what needs to improve.

DL informed the group the survey is owned by everyone and not an HR survey.

JB stated the survey will close on 17 April 2017 and it will be a few weeks before we get the results back from Capita. Capita have done surveys for 57 other Universities so useful to bench mark the results by other Universities. When Goldsmiths completed their survey they had a return rate of 78% so JB reiterated important managers allow staff the right time and support to encourage all members of their team to complete the survey. Following the main survey the intention is for Capita to do another two shorter surveys to assess how the University has moved forward on areas that have been identified from the main survey.

JB advised the People Strategy there will be space to deliver outcomes of staff survey.

17/10 The Electronic Management of Assessment programme (EMA)

EM informed the group that EMA programme has just got authorisation to proceed and entering into meaningful consultation. Looking to get integration between Blackboard and RISIS in ensuring students will have a feedback dashboard.

EM informed the group there will be a launch event taking place on 14 March 2017.

Please refer to attached presentation slides.

Action - JB advised EM to speak with UCU informally to get their buy in early and JB would be able to assist with facilitating the meeting.

17/11 Update from Director of HR

• The University Strategy – key Organisational Change – People Strategy

JB informed the group the proposed People Strategy had been to UEB and UEB had broadly welcomed the proposals contained in the Strategy, whilst acknowledging that the proposed programme was ambitious. Consideration was being given to refine the overall ambitions and objectives of the People Strategy. In ensuring the People Strategy objectives were correct would
use focus group and JB informed the group it would be useful to have a dedicated session with the Staff Forum representatives to discuss the matter.

**Action - JB to arrange dedicated session with staff forum to discuss People Strategy**

- **UCU Joint University meeting and Staffing Committee**
  
  JB informed the group that met with UCU on 31 January 2017 and that UCU had requested statistical turnover data from 01 August from when the new arrangements took effect. The outcome from the data when analysed was there was less turnover than the previous year. Factored into the data was finance had been using a number of temporary staff which had left in that period and students on short term contracts had made turnover look higher but when factored out turnover was lower. JB advised he was happy to share the data with the staff forum.

  JB informed the group that UCU had concerns from staff across the sector re Brexit and with this in mind a number of sessions had been organised for staff that might be affected. JB advised that over 200 people attended the session that took place last week and a similar number were attending the session taking place on 22 February 2017.

  JB informed the group that at the Staffing Committee it had been discussed the People Strategy, Campus Jobs and Staff Survey. Alison Hackett from People and Talent spoke about the staff survey and the apprenticeship levy and effectively shifts the cost of funding apprenticeships from the government to large employers. However, employers will be able to offset an allowance of up to £15,000 allowance. Currently discussing how to make best use of apprenticeship, ongoing piece of work and JB agreed to keep the group updated.

  JB advised Claire Eckett discussed salary sacrifice and the biggest loser was the bus plus scheme so currently looking at ways to work with the bus companies.

  The University continues to look at ways to provide good benefits for staff. JB advised currently reviewing rewarding excellence and looking at statistics and the reward arrangements.

  **Action – JB to update the staff forum on apprenticeship levy.**

- **New Equal Opportunities Policy**

  JB informed the group that there were no substantive change and it was an overarching statement from the University. JB advised he was happy to take feedback on the policy if the Staff Forum representatives wished to pass any comments via JB. There were no immediate comments from the group on the matter.

17/12 **AOB**

A discussion was held around Campus Jobs not being available to staff. It was discussed that the focus was where there are jobs that could be done by students they should be done by students. Otherwise would lead to staff doing full time jobs plus additional hours in another role.

The principle behind Campus Jobs was to try and support the student population. At the moment the service would be a no fee service but over time could be an active temporary bank of staff
outside the realms of the University and could be an income generating activity although be it a few years away.

The group was made aware that an Intellectual Property Working Group had been set up to review the University’s Code of Practice for intellectual property and Copyright Policy to review and rewrite these. Three meetings had been held to date and the aim was to produce an easier document for students and staff to refer to. The Working Group will be consulting with UCU and RUSU.

The next Staff Forum meeting would be held on 8 June 2017, 10.30 am to 12.30 pm, Carrington, room 101.