

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

STAFFING COMMITTEE

18/18 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Tuesday 9 October 2018 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 1, Whiteknights House

Present:

Dr R J Messer (Chair)
Professor D C Berry
Dr K Bicknell
Mr J J Brady
Professor S Chandler-Wilde
Mr J Dabydoyal
Ms C E Eckett
Dr K Henderson
Professor R Jackson
Mrs S Thornton

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Professor A Bell, Mrs C Rolstone, Mrs J Rowe and Professor C Tissot.

18/19 Membership, Terms of Reference and Disclosure of Interests

The Committee received a copy of its membership and Terms of Reference and a copy of a memorandum from the University Secretary in respect of Disclosure of Interests and the Committee's obligations in respect of the University's Risk Register.

Given that there remained a vacant position to the Committee's membership, it was agreed that Mr Stuart Hunt, the new Librarian would be invited to join the Committee.

Action: The Committee Secretary to invite Mr Stuart Hunt to join the Committee.

It was further agreed to structure future meetings so that items were either for consideration, for approval or for noting.

18/20 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2018 were approved

Arising from the minutes:

Minute 18/04: Working Groups looking at Teaching Staff

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services). It noted that two of the Working Groups were intending to report to the UEB (Working Group looking at Teaching Fellows is due to report to the UEB on the 3 December 2018, and the Working Group looking at Teaching Intensive staff is due to report to the UEB on the 12 November 2018). The Chair undertook to write to the Working Group Chairs to remind them of the importance of delivering the reports on time. The Committee welcomed the intention to present the recommendations of the Working Group looking at Sessional Staff to the next meeting of the Staffing Committee.

Action: The Chair of the Staffing Committee to write to the Working Group Chairs looking at Teaching Fellows and Teaching Intensive staff respectively to remind them of the importance of delivering the reports on time.

The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that he and the University Secretary were due to meet with Reading UCU branch members the following week to discuss UCU's pay claims in respect of gender pay, and the employment of staff on Sessional contracts.

Minute 18/09: Visa/Immigration costs

The Director of Human Resources reported on the progress made in respect of the introduction of a loan scheme (by way of a salary advance) to cover individual visa application costs. He confirmed that he was working with Finance / Internal Audit colleagues to discuss tax and other implications prior to implementation and would report back to the Committee once the scheme has been introduced.

Minute 18/10: Relationships policy

The University Secretary informed the Committee that the University was consulting widely and was planning to meet with the President, Reading UCU and with Staff Forum colleagues shortly. Following a thorough consultation process, the policy will go to the UEB for approval.

18/21 Pay and Pensions Update

The Committee welcomed the report from the Director of Human Resources and noted the progress made in respect of i) the 2018-19 pay award, ii) the changes being made to the USS pension scheme and iii) to the local pension schemes.

18/22 People Plan Update

The Committee received the report from the Director of Human Resources and noted the progress made to date. In particular, the Committee welcomed the recent articles appearing on the Staff Portal from members of the People Plan Programme Board.

It was noted that one of the Committee's terms of reference was to monitor the progress of the People Plan and so the Committee requested that the next reserve meeting of the Staffing Committee (scheduled for Tuesday 27 November 2018) be set aside to discuss the People Plan. It agreed to ask the Chair of the People Plan Project Board and the Director of HR to determine how best to present, but that it wanted the opportunity for discussion.

Action: The next reserve meeting of the Staffing Committee (scheduled for Tuesday 27 November 2018) to be set aside to discuss the People Plan, and the Secretary to communicate the Committee's request to the Chair and Secretary of the People Plan Project Board.

18/23 HR Policies

It was reported that the Harassment and Bullying policy and procedures would be launched on the 12 November to coincide with Anti-Bullying Week.

The Committee welcomed the changes made to the contractual probation policy and asked that a form of words be added that requires the probationary member of staff to complete all mandatory training as expected of the role before probation is confirmed. On that basis, it agreed to approve the policy.

The Director of Human Resources reminded the Committee that currently the policies in respect of Sabbatical / Study leave for non-academic staff are incorporated into the policies for academic staff. Whilst there are no policy changes in the revised policies, HR has taken the opportunity to provide clarity on how they apply to both academic and non-academic staff.

The following comments were made in respect of the proposed Sabbatical / Study leave policies:

Whilst the Committee did not like the term "non-academic" staff, it could not think of a more appropriate and acceptable term to use;

The Academic Sabbatical policy requires the academic making the request to obtain approval from the Head of School. It was noted that in some cases, approval for taking time off may be made by Committee's outside of

the School. The Committee asked that the policy be refined to reflect that there other routes for approval.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful to monitor and review the number of requests made including the number of requests approved/not approved, the pattern of activity (including diversity metrics).

The Approving Authority should be changed to the Staffing Committee.

The Committee then considered the Non Academic Staff Study leave policy. They liked the transparent aspect of the policy and the fact it is not over complicated. The consensus was that the policy should principally apply for requests made for extended periods of leave and that the expectation would be that most requests would be for paid leave.

The Committee asked that a form of words be added to manage expectations regarding the limited opportunity to grant an extended period of study leave.

The Director of Human Resources thanked the Committee for their comments and agreed to feedback to the Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services). He confirmed that once the changes had been made, the policies would be communicated to staff via the leadership Group.

The Director of Human Resources indicated that it was agreed with the UCU that the policies in relation to Discipline, Grievance, Performance Management and Restructuring would be reviewed after two years in light of practical applications. He confirmed that discussions with the UCU would take place in due course.

18/24 Mentoring Scheme

The Committee thanked the Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) for the paper and noted the changes to the mentoring scheme to reflect the addition of a provision to support staff who identify as LGBT and who are seeking mentoring support.

18/25 Reward Committee - Structural Changes

The Committee considered the paper in respect to proposed changes to the structure of Reward Committees. They agreed the following:

- Two meetings per year was deemed appropriate and should be about 6 months apart;

- The timing of the meetings should be in February or March and in September or October with an effective date for salary increases being the 1st April or 1st November
- The Committee agreed that there should be no right of appeal;

The issue of merit based promotion for non-academic staff was discussed in full. The Director of Human Resources provided colleagues with the background to the introduction of merit based promotion for non-academic staff on Grade 6 and above and confirmed that the number of merit based promotion cases for non-academic staff was small. The Committee discussed the merits of removing this promotion route for non-academic staff and the feasibility of undertaking a significant review of the process and concluded that for now the existing arrangements should remain in place.

18/26 Rewarding Excellence - 2017/18

The Committee welcomed the report from the HR Manager (Rewards and Benefits) and noted the 5% increase in the rewards budget for 2018/19.

18/27 Ideas for Items for Future Meetings

The Committee was asked to let the Chair or the Committee Secretary know if they had any ideas for future meetings.

The Dean for Diversity and Inclusion informed the Committee that the University was planning to submit its Athena SWAN application in November 2019 and suggested this matter might be discussed at a future meeting. The Committee welcomed the suggestion.

18/28 Remaining dates of meetings for the 2018/19 Academic Session:

Tuesday 27 November 2018, 10.00 am (reserve)
 Tuesday 12 February 2019, 2.00 pm
 Tuesday 30 April 2019, 11.00 am (reserve)
 Wednesday 19 June 2019, 2.00 pm