

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

JOINT UNIVERSITY/UCU COMMITTEE

19/09 A meeting of the Joint University/UCU Committee was held in Committee Room 1, Whiteknights House, on Wednesday 22 May 2019 at 10.30am.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair)
The Acting President of Reading UCU (Dr M Schroeter)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor G Brooks)
Mrs S Pellow

The University Secretary

In attendance:

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

Apologies were received from Ms R Balestrini and Mr S Alexander. Dr C Fuller had advised that she was no longer a member of Senate.

The Committee noted that Dr Paul Hatcher had recently stepped down as President of Reading UCU, and expressed its thanks to him for his valuable input on this committee over a number of years.

19/10 The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2019 were approved and signed.

Updates were noted in relation to actions arising from the Minutes. In addition, the following comments were made:

Minute 19/02: the Acting President of Reading UCU reported that a recent survey had been conducted to ask University staff their views on the proposed Code of Practice on the REF, and 65% of the responses indicated rejection of the proposals. She would forward the results and comments to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Professor Yaqoob) and summarise the findings for the consultation group.

Minute 19/03: The University Secretary reported that the information on Working Groups would be published as soon as possible, together with any updates.

Minute 19/03: In relation to screen usage for electronic marking and feedback, the Acting President of Reading UCU reported that the UCU Equality Officer had met with Dr Mayhew, the EMA Programme Director, and would take the discussion forward informally.

Minute 19/03: the Acting President of Reading UCU asked for further clarification on the process which would be followed if a member of staff exercised their right of appeal against redundancy when a fixed-term contract was coming to an end. The Director of HR undertook to arrange a meeting to discuss this further with UCU representatives.

19/11 **Report of the Vice-Chancellor**

The Vice-Chancellor stated that he would welcome UCU engagement with the ongoing discussion about the University Strategy and hoped that an official response would be possible before the deadline of the end of May. The official report of the responses to the consultation would be submitted to the University Executive Board and then to Council. The Acting President of Reading UCU undertook to attempt to obtain feedback from members before the deadline.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Voluntary Redundancy scheme had not met the target savings, but senior management had decided against pursuing the possibility of compulsory redundancies at the moment and would wait to make any further decision until the University's recruitment position was known. An announcement would shortly be made to staff. The Acting President of Reading UCU commented that the scheme had been launched at a time of political uncertainty, which might have affected staff response to the scheme; she stated that UCU maintained its opposition to compulsory redundancy.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University had submitted its formal response to the Universities Superannuation Scheme and had recommended the third of the three options proposed, which involved the lowest immediate cost to the University. He anticipated that this would be a position shared across the sector.

19/12 **Report of the Acting President of Reading UCU**

The Acting President of Reading UCU raised the following concerns which she felt members were likely to contribute as feedback on the consultation over the University Strategy:

- (a) strong feeling was still being expressed by members about the vote of no confidence in senior management which had been passed recently. This had arisen from the sense that high-level decisions were being made without sufficient input from staff, who were adversely affected by the decisions taken and who felt disenfranchised. In her view the sense of community within the University had been damaged over the past few years, with Schools being set up to compete with each other, to the detriment of collaboration on joint programmes. The use of external consultants at high cost was seen as problematic.

In response, the Vice-Chancellor commented that he welcomed the opportunity to engage with criticism of senior management's decision-making, and concurred that the use of external consultants should be minimised; internal staff were being employed in relation to devising and pursuing the University Strategy, for example. He noted that the introduction of student fees and the external competitive environment had been significant factors in changes to the internal financial model;

- (b) concern was being expressed nationally about governance and representation on University decision-making bodies, and the suggestion had been made that Senate might be a more appropriate place than Council for certain types of decisions, given the greater representation of staff on Senate. She also wondered whether the current process for alerting staff to vacancies on Senate was working effectively and might usefully be reviewed. The staff survey on the strategy had indicated that this was a general area of concern.

In response, the University Secretary commented that the Charter determined the decision-making powers and responsibilities, and there was a sector requirement for Council to make the ultimate decisions on financial matters. He undertook to ask the Head of Governance, Ms Sharman, to discuss with Dr Schroeter the dissemination of information about Senate vacancies.

Mrs Pellow noted that there was national interest currently in the question of representation on governing bodies in universities, together with concern that representatives might not have a clear mandate to consult their constituents.

The Vice-Chancellor responded that members of Council took these issues seriously, were aware of the need to engage with staff in Schools and were happy to do so;

- (c) the results of the staff survey, published recently, suggested that staff were still dissatisfied with senior management. There was frustration at the perception that the University considered this could be resolved by an increase in top-down communication.

The Acting Preseident also raised the following issues:

- (d) the draft relationships policy was felt to need some revision, and she undertook to provide detailed feedback in writing. The University Secretary undertook to circulate for comment the draft social media policy once it had been considered by UEB. The Director of HR undertook to arrange a meeting to look at the changes proposed as part of the review of non-academic contracts;
- (e) staff had expressed widespread concern about the new parking regime, which involved the levying of a fine without further warning for a parking infringement. This was likely to disadvantage staff with caring responsibilities and those with disabilities, since it was not always possible to find a space at busy times of the day, and some staff needed to park close to their work location in case of an urgent summons. The Vice-Chancellor commented in response that the regime was primarily aimed at cars parked without permits, and that staff with specific requirements should be able to apply for a designated space. He undertook to ask the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) (Professor Fellowes) to take the matter forward, as Chair of the Estates and Environment Committee. He suggested that UCU representatives might wish to take up contextual parking issues, such as the proposed town-wide car park levy, with the local council.

19/13 Report from the Sub-Committee considering the Reading UCU local claim

The Committee heard that the work of its Sub-Committee was making slow but steady progress with the issues under review.

19/14 Matters from the Staffing Committee

The Committee noted the report from the Staffing Committee at its meeting on 12 February 2019, and in particular that the Committee had considered how to report more usefully the Gender Pay Gap data. The Project Committee on Learning Capture would consult UCU representatives in due course on policy issues.

19/15 Dates of meetings in the Session 2019-20

It was noted that meetings of the Committee in the Session 2019-20 had been provisionally scheduled for:

Friday 8 November 2019 at 2 pm
Tuesday 4 February 2020 at 10.30 am
Wednesday 20 May 2020 at 10.30 am

JOINT UNIVERSITY/UCU COMMITTEE

Minute and action	Action for	O OutcomeO
<p>19/10 <u>Matters arising:</u></p> <p><u>Code of Practice on the REF</u> The Acting President of Reading UCU reported that a recent survey had been conducted to ask University staff their views on the proposed Code of Practice on the REF, and 65% of the responses indicated rejection of the proposals. She would forward the results and comments to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Yaqoob and summarise the findings for the consultation group.</p> <p><u>Right of appeal against redundancy</u> The Acting President of Reading UCU asked for further clarification on the process which would be followed if a member of staff exercised their right of appeal against redundancy when a fixed-term contract was coming to an end. The Director of HR undertook to arrange a meeting to discuss this further with UCU representatives.</p>	<p>Acting President of Reading UCU</p> <p>Director of HR</p>	
<p>19/11 <u>Report of the Vice-Chancellor</u></p> <p><u>University Strategy</u> The Acting President of Reading UCU undertook to attempt to obtain feedback from members before the deadline for responses.</p>	<p>Acting President of Reading UCU</p>	
<p>19/12 <u>Report of the acting President of Reading UCU</u></p> <p><u>Staff representation on Senate</u> The University Secretary undertook to ask the Head of Governance, Ms Sharman, to discuss with Dr Schroeter the dissemination of information about Senate vacancies.</p> <p><u>Draft relationship policy</u> The draft relationships policy was felt to need some revision, and the Acting President of Reading UCU undertook to provide detailed feedback in writing.</p> <p><u>Draft social media policy</u> The University Secretary undertook to circulate for comment the draft social media policy once it had been considered by UEB.</p> <p><u>Review of non-academic contracts</u> The Director of HR undertook to arrange a meeting to look at the changes proposed as part of the review of non-academic contracts.</p> <p><u>Car parking issues</u> The Vice-Chancellor undertook to ask the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) (Professor Fellowes) to take the matter forward, as Chair of the Estates and Environment Committee.</p>	<p>University Secretary</p> <p>Acting President of Reading UCU</p> <p>University Secretary</p> <p>Director of HR</p> <p>Vice-Chancellor</p>	