

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

**STAFFING COMMITTEE**

19/14 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Wednesday 19 June 2019 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Whiteknights House

Present:

Dr R J Messer (Chair)  
Professor A Bell  
Dr K Bicknell  
Mr J J Brady  
Miss M Cleaver  
Mr J Dabydoyal  
Dr K Henderson  
Mr S W Hunt  
Professor R Jackson  
Mrs C Rolstone  
Mrs J Rowe  
Professor C Tissot

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Professor D C Berry, Professor S Chandler-Wilde and Mrs S Thornton.

The University Secretary welcomed Miss Cleaver, the incoming RUSU President, to the meeting and thanked Mr Dabydoyal and Dr Bicknell for their contributions to the Committee.

19/15 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2019 were approved. It was noted that Professor Tissot had sent her apologies to this meeting.

Arising from the minutes:

**Minute 19/04: Gender Pay Gap**

It was noted that Professor Chandler-Wilde would bring a report setting out the key issues arising from the gender pay gap report to its next meeting in the Autumn Term.

19/16 Learning Management System (UoRLearn)

The Director of Human Resources introduced \_\_\_\_\_, Project Support Officer, People and Talent. He stated that the Learning

Management System was one of five People Plan projects overseen by the People Plan Project Board (PPPB). He indicated that the membership of the PPPB would be refreshed at the start of the 2019-20 academic session.

gave a demonstration on the University's Learning Management System (UoRLearn), the University's new learning platform that went "live" in May 2019.

She described how UoRLearn is now the one place to go to search for all types of courses; e-learning, classroom and blended learning. The Committee were shown how to navigate around UoRLearn and how to access and book onto training courses.

showed the Committee how the training courses are split into different categories e.g. Health & Safety, mandatory, Estates, Leadership and Management, Research, CQSD.

She described how managers will have the visibility of their teams' development and the ability to be able to suggest courses/e-learning to their teams.

Another feature of UoRLearn was the ability to capture an individuals CPD and also follow up on suggestions of courses individuals might like to take.

also explained how it was possible for anyone to export their training records to Excel.

The Committee thanked for her comprehensive demonstration.

#### 19/17 Attending Conferences - reimbursement of childcare costs

The Director of Human Resources sought the Committee's views on whether the University should consider changing its Expenses/Hospitality policy in respect of:

- allowing the University to reimburse University staff attending a conference for the additional childcare costs required to attend;
- allowing the University to reimburse external visitors to a conference for the additional childcare costs required to attend;
- allowing the University to reimburse additional childcare costs in any other circumstances;
- allowing the external funding body sponsoring the event to reimburse such expenses directly to the delegate.

The Director of Human Resources said this matter was brought to his attention by two academic colleagues who had organised a conference. A delegate (external to the University) requested reimbursement of their childcare costs incurred as a result of attending the conference but this was denied as the University's Expenses/Hospitality policy does not allow such costs to be reimbursed even though the funding body that sponsored the event was keen for such costs to be reimbursed.

The Committee noted the legitimacy of the question and thoroughly debated the issues. The following points were made:

- It was noted that other Universities enable delegates to be reimbursed for childcare costs incurred;
- It was also noted that the Personal Titles process allows candidates to outline personal extenuating circumstances including personal and familial circumstances, and how these circumstances may impact on an individual's work;
- A colleague who worked part-time and who was required to attend a conference (or an event as part of their role) on a non-work day would normally be paid or would swap their time;
- It was noted that academic / research colleagues are encouraged to attend conferences, and whilst some were more "essential" than others, there were many benefits including professional development, recognition as a researcher, and enhancing opportunities for research collaboration/funding;
- It was noted that funding bodies often write conference costs into the grant;
- Academic colleagues on the Committee agreed that if they were hosting a conference and invited someone who then requested reimbursement of childcare costs, they would be happy to approve this. They were concerned that the University's policy may not allow this;
- How do we determine the scope for paying childcare costs? What would we reasonably expect colleagues to pay/not pay?
- Professor Jackson informed the Committee that his School (School of Biological Sciences) now sets aside funds to enable early career researchers to bid for funds to pay for childcare costs for attending conferences. He stated that this arrangement had been introduced as it was an Athena SWAN outcome;

- Broad agreement that when considering this matter the starting point should be to focus on University of Reading staff. There was also agreement that we shouldn't limit the reimbursement of childcare costs to conference attendance. Other circumstances might warrant the reimbursement of childcare costs e.g. activities essential for career development.

The Director of Human Resources thanked the Committee for their comments. HR colleagues will investigate practices elsewhere with a view to making formal recommendations.

#### 19/18 Trainee / Development roles

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) facilitated a discussion in respect of trainee / developmental roles. She indicated this matter was discussed at Re-grading Committee where it was agreed that it would be useful to establish some clear principles and to develop University-wide guidance.

Colleagues reported that in some areas there is provision for the appointment of trainee roles e.g. in Technical Services (Trainee Technician) and in Library Services (Graduate Trainee Librarian). These roles have a clear learning and development plan, have explicit milestones for developing skills, gaining relevant experience, and undertaking structured learning. In the case of the Trainee Technician role there is a normal expectation that once they have met these requirements a case is made to the Re-grading Committee for promotion to the next grade.

Colleagues were also made aware of examples where a post was approved and advertised at one grade but as the recruiting manager was unable to appoint, it was decided to appoint at the next grade down. The Committee had some concerns that this approach felt uncomfortable and reactive as it could be argued that it not the same role and potentially denied individuals from applying.

The Committee further agreed that there was an opportunity for the University to be strategic and inventive in respect of recruitment, for example, when appointing and developing early career colleagues. At the moment there is no University-wide guidance in place and there appears to be evidence of inconsistent recruitment practices.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) thanked the Committee for its views and confirmed that HR would now develop guidance and a set of principles for the appointment of trainee / developmental roles. She agreed to keep the Committee informed of progress.

### 19/19 Pay Bargaining update

The Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with an update on the 2019 pay bargaining round. UCEA tabled a final offer of a minimum of 1.8% on all spinal points. The proposed settlement includes an element of “bottom loading” with a sliding scale of increases on points 3-16 from 3.65% to 1.83% and the deletion of spinal point 2 on the national spine by no later than April 2020.

He indicated that the deletion of point 2 will require a restructuring of the lower grades on our local structure, and would impact on a number of areas (Campus Services in particular). He reported that the University was currently modelling this and would be making recommendations to the UEB in due course.

The Director of Human Resources stated that he would keep the Committee informed of progress.

### 19/20 Pensions update

The Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with a USS pensions update. He reported that the USS Trustees had rejected the UUK proposals for contingent contributions and tabled a further three options. Following a period of consultation most respondents supported the offer which would see contributions rates of 21.1% (employer) and 9.6% (member) from 1 October 2019.

He reported that the UCU intends to initiate a trade dispute in respect of the USS, a formal precursor to opening a ballot for further industrial action.

### 19/21 UCU Local Claim update

The University Secretary reported that senior management colleagues were continuing to meet with UCU representatives fortnightly to discuss their pay and equality claim.

He stated that they were close to an agreement in respect of the future arrangements for the appointment of sessional teaching staff, and the terms of their employment.

He provided an update on the discussions in respect of the use of Teaching Fellows at Grade 6. The UCU’s initial stance was that Teaching Fellows must all be paid at Grade 7. However he reported that both sides have demonstrated a willingness to compromise, and discussions were edging towards a common understanding of the scope of the activity that can reasonably be expected of such staff.

### 19/22 VR Scheme update

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that as a result of the voluntary redundancy (VR) scheme there were 134 agreed departures, all scheduled to leave the University no later than 31 July 2019. He also reported that a number of colleagues also agreed to voluntarily reduce their FTE. He indicated that the net outcome saw an FTE reduction of 92.8 (49.2 FTE within Schools and 43.6 FTE within Functions).

The University Secretary stated that the exercise was positively received and well managed and thanked colleagues in Human Resources for their effective contributions throughout this process.

The Committee discussed the impact of the VR scheme on the number of vacancies / turnover levels across the University. It was noted that some colleagues whose requests for VR were rejected have now left the University. It was agreed that HR would generate a report on vacancy / turnover levels for submission to a future meeting, to determine the impact of VR on turnover levels.

*Action: HR to generate a report on vacancy / turnover levels for submission to a future meeting*

### 19/23 Staff Wellbeing

The Committee received an update on the progress made with various wellbeing initiatives. Of particular note was the creation of a wellbeing map of the Whiteknights campus and the planned introduction of a new staff network called Wellbeing Peer Support.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) explained the plans to improve the current webpages in respect of wellbeing so that all the University's offerings in respect of wellbeing can be accessed and visible from one site. Given the resource implications she was currently exploring possible funding streams.

### 19/24 Closure Days 2021-22 and 2022-23

The Committee noted the dates for closure days for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic sessions approved by this Committee in March 2019.

The University Secretary informed the Committee that UEB will be shortly discussing closure days and whether or not these days should be retained.

19/25 Provisional Date of Meetings for the 2019-20 Academic Session

Tuesday 8 October 2019 at 2.00 pm  
Tuesday 26 November 2019 at 10.00 am (reserve)  
Tuesday 11 February 2020 at 2.00 pm  
Tuesday 28 April 2020 at 11.00 am (reserve)  
Wednesday 17 June 2020 at 2.00 pm

## Action List from the meeting on Wednesday 19 June 2019

Minute Number	Action	Action for
19/22	<u>VR Scheme update</u> HR to generate a report on vacancy / turnover levels for submission to a future meeting	Director of Human Resources