

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

JOINT UNIVERSITY/UCU COMMITTEE

19/16 A meeting of the Joint University/UCU Committee was held in the Maths building, room 304, on Tuesday 10 December 2019 at 2.00pm (postponed from 8 November 2019).

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor
The President of Reading UCU (in the Chair)
Dr M Schroeter
Mrs S Pellow
Professor K Lesnik-Oberstein
Mr M McAulay
The University Secretary
Director of Human Resources

In attendance:

Head of Student Information Systems (Secretary)

Apologies were received from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor C Collins, Ms R Balestrini, Dr S Knox and Ms H Schaumberg.

The Committee received a statement of its membership for 2019-20. The Committee welcomed Deepa Driver as the new President of Reading UCU to her first meeting, and also welcomed Professor K Lesnik-Oberstein who was attending in place of Ms Schaumberg on this occasion.

The Committee noted the requirement to disclose any interests.

19/17 The Minutes of the meetings held on 22 May 2019 were approved and signed.

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

Minute 19/10: Code of Practice for the Research Excellence Framework: the Vice-Chancellor reported that Reading UCU's comments on the code of practice had been considered before its final submission to REF, but that the code had not been amended. He undertook to confirm to the President of Reading UCU the details of the final outcome of the discussions on policy.

Minute 19/10: Right of appeal against redundancy: this action was reported to be complete.

Minute 19/12: Draft social media policy: the Committee noted that discussions needed urgently to be concluded, since this was an evolving area and there had already been incidents where the resolution would have benefited from a clear policy. Mrs Pellow undertook to send Reading UCU's comments on the draft policy to the Director of HR in advance of a meeting in early January when it would be finally resolved.

Minute 19/12: Draft relationship policy: the Committee noted that this also needed a speedy resolution, and would be dealt with in a similar time frame.

Minute 19/12: Review of non-academic contracts: the President of Reading UCU asked for the papers to be re-sent, and the Director of HR undertook to arrange this, with a request for agreement as soon as possible.

Minute 18/17: Publication of a list of working parties: The Committee noted the list of working parties set up by and reporting to central committees, and welcomed the provision of this information. The University Secretary undertook to circulate the link to the governance web page where the information would ultimately sit.

19/18 **Report of the Vice-Chancellor**

The Committee noted the Report given by the Vice-Chancellor to Senate at its meeting on 6 November 2019.

The Vice-Chancellor further reported that the University Strategy would be finalised by Council in March 2020. An updated document would be posted on the University website shortly, and colleagues would be invited to consider how they could contribute to, and get involved in, the implementation of the strategy.

In response to a request from the President of Reading UCU for access to Council Minutes, the University Secretary undertook to send her the link to the website where Minutes of Council meetings were published, once they had been formally approved.

The President of Reading UCU also requested information about the University's debt to income measures, which the Vice-Chancellor undertook to provide.

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

The Committee noted that there was an ongoing dispute between the Reading UCU and the University, following a ballot co-ordinated nationally. The President of Reading UCU reported that there was strong feeling from the UCU members over the issues of pensions and pay, along with four key issues, namely the gender pay gap, casualisation, workload and pay at or above inflation. The Committee's discussion covered the following issues:

- (i) The President of Reading UCU urged the Vice-Chancellor to support the UCU request for action by UUK over the USS Board's dismissal of a board member. She felt that a resolution to the disagreements was in the interests of all parties, and that any blocks to progress should be dealt with as quickly as possible, with the aim of avoiding either members or institutions paying increased contributions to the fund, which was arguably in a relatively positive position. She suggested that a working group might be set up within the University, as had been done at some other institutions, to discuss and clarify some of the complex issues. She requested copies of the University's formal response to UUK over the 2014 and 2017 disputes.

In response, the Vice-Chancellor commented that, while he had some criticisms of the way in which UUK had handled the dispute, he was not convinced that the UCU's view of the pension fund situation was correct, given the judgement of the pension regulator that the fund needed action to be taken. He would consult over the possibility of releasing the formal responses to the UUK, and would let her know what was decided;

- (ii) The President of Reading UCU also urged the Vice-Chancellor to support the UCU request for UCEA to take seriously the deep concerns about the casualisation of employment, particularly for those on fixed-term research contracts.

In response, the Vice-Chancellor commented that the local UCU dispute with the University over issues which had been the subject of extensive and positive local negotiations over the past year was disappointing. The sub-committee had addressed casualisation, along with issues such as the gender pay gap, and had made good progress towards agreement; some issues, such as fixed-term contracts for research staff, could not easily be resolved locally, since they were largely driven by the funding practices of the research councils.

Mr McAulay commented that, while the ballot had been at local level, the issues were clearly sector-wide. The University's engagement with the issues was welcomed and the investment of considerable time and effort acknowledged, but resolution had not yet been reached. The progress locally had been shared with members, but action had not yet been taken to make changes, so staff might feel some frustration.

The Director of HR commented that UCEA had no mandate to discuss pay bargaining since not all institutions were part of the industrial action at present, though he recognised that this might change after the expected UCU re-balloting of universities which had not met the threshold last time;

- (iii) The President of Reading UCU requested information on how the implementation of the re-structuring of staff roles in IT had been working out, and the University Secretary undertook to provide an update; he noted that there had been no redundancies;
- (iv) The President of Reading UCU requested a copy of the risk register relating to the implementation of Microsoft Teams, which was due to replace Skype and telephony in the near future, and the University Secretary undertook to provide this;
- (v) The President of Reading UCU asked for clarification about facilities time, and a possible increase in the provision, in acknowledgement that some staff were involved in union work at national level. In response, the Director of HR stated that the Recognition Agreement did not provide for paid backfill for national activities and that the total facilities time had been increased in the past year from 1 FTE to 1.25 FTE, in acknowledgement of the increased case load for UCU committee members. Any proposal to change the current arrangements should be submitted to him in the first place, and would then need to go to UEB for a decision. He suggested that information about arrangements at other universities would be useful to the discussion;
- (vi) The President of Reading UCU reported that she would be making a formal request under the 1992 Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act, sections 181 and 207, for the following information:
 - Management Accounts from 2014-2019
 - Documents provided to Council relating to two trusts: the Research Endowment Trust Fund (RETF) and the National Institute for Research in Dairying (NIRD)
 - Council papers from 2014-2019
 - Strategy documents for 2020

In relation to the trusts, the Vice-Chancellor explained that the RETF was wholly owned by the University. The circumstances of the NIRD trust had required some adjustments to the arrangements, which had been notified to the Charities Commission and to the Office for Students; no financial impropriety had been involved. He undertook to share the recent update to the OfS on the formal process, which was ongoing.

- (vii) The President of Reading UCU asked for clarification on the Promotions Appeals process and the guidelines on disclosure of any personal circumstances which were relevant to the promotions process and appeal process. The Vice-Chancellor explained that an individual could choose not to disclose circumstances other than to the Head of School who would make a judgement on reasonable adjustments, and the detailed information would not be made available to the members of the panels. This had been endorsed as best practice by the current Dean of Diversity. Professor Lesnik-Oberstein commented that, as Reading UCU equalities officer, she would be interested in discussing some procedural issues and would contact the new Dean of Diversity to do this in due course;
- (viii) Dr Schroeter asked for clarification on the apparent need to put in a flexible working request to avoid on the grounds of childcare responsibilities being asked to teach between 5 and 6 pm. The Director of HR undertook to share the detail of this, which he suspected related primarily to the timetabling form, rather than to the formal HR process;
- (ix) Mrs Pellow commented that the tone and content of recent emails to staff relating to actions following the strike days had been varied and in some cases conflicting. The Director of HR suggested he could share the text of an email which would be sent imminently to staff on re-scheduling teaching and other actions to mitigate the effect of the strike period. He advised that he would also be sharing with Heads of School a list of their staff who had taken industrial strike action. The President of Reading UCU suggested he should ask Heads of School to bear in mind the potential reaction to the requests to re-schedule teaching, particularly if the recipients were in precarious employment;
- (x) The President of Reading UCU commented that, since it was conceivable that a new wave of strike action would be under way in the New Year, she would be happy to have more frequent meetings to maintain a dialogue.

19/20 Report from the Sub-Committee considering the Reading UCU local claim

The Committee noted that the Sub-Committee had been meeting regularly to make progress with the discussions.

19/21 Personal Titles – outcomes from 2018-19

The Committee received and noted the report on personal titles conferred in the Session 2018-19, together with supplementary data on age, gender and ethnic origin of applicants.

19/22 Matters from the Staffing Committee

The Committee received and noted the report summarising the key matters which had been discussed by the Staffing Committee at its meetings on 19 June and 8 October 2019.

In response to a query about the trainee / development roles in Functions, the University Secretary explained that these were staff in Grade 3 posts within the Functions, hoping to progress to Grade 4 roles. The Staffing Committee were considering expanding the use of this approach, particularly since it might tie in with levy provision.

19/23 Dates of meetings in the Session 2019-20

It was noted that further meetings of the Joint University/UCU Committee in the Session 2019-20 had been scheduled for:

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	Outcome
<p>19/17 <u>Matters arising:</u></p> <p><u>Code of Practice on the REF</u> The Vice-Chancellor to confirm to the President of Reading UCU the details of the final outcome of the REF Code of Practice.</p> <p><u>Draft relationship policy and draft social media policy</u> Mrs Pellow to send comments on the two draft policies to the Director of HR as soon as possible, in advance of a meeting in early January to finalise the documents.</p> <p><u>Review of non-academic contracts</u> The Director of HR undertook to arrange for the papers relating to the review of non-academic contracts to be made available to the President of Reading UCU.</p> <p><u>Publication of a list of working parties</u> The University Secretary to circulate the link to the governance web page where the information about working groups would ultimately sit.</p>	<p>Vice-Chancellor</p> <p>Mrs Pellow</p> <p>Director of HR</p> <p>University Secretary</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete – notified that email originally sent on 5 November</p> <p>Ongoing action to create a link within A to Z list</p>
<p>19/18 <u>Report of the Vice-Chancellor</u></p> <p><u>Access to Council Minutes</u> The University Secretary to send to the President of Reading UCU the link to the website where minutes of the Council meetings were published, once formally approved. http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/imps/FOIA/Publicationscheme/Committees/imps-FOIA-pubscheme-Council.aspx</p> <p><u>Debt to income measures</u> The Vice-Chancellor to provide the President of Reading UCU with information about the University's debt to income measures.</p>	<p>University Secretary</p> <p>Vice-Chancellor</p>	<p>Complete – see url in main column</p>
<p>19/19 <u>Report of the President of Reading UCU</u></p> <p><u>University's responses to UUK over pension consultations</u> The Vice-Chancellor to consult over the possibility of releasing the University's formal responses to the UUK over pensions consultations.</p> <p><u>Re-structuring of staff roles in IT</u> The University Secretary to provide an update on the implementation of re-structuring staff roles in IT.</p> <p><u>Risk Register for Microsoft Teams implementation</u> The University Secretary to provide a copy of the risk register relating to the implementation of Microsoft Teams.</p>	<p>Vice-Chancellor</p> <p>University Secretary</p> <p>University Secretary</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>

<p><u>NIRD Trust update to OfS</u> The Vice-Chancellor to provide the recent update given to the OfS relating to the process for adjusting the arrangements for the trust.</p> <p><u>Flexible working requests</u> The Director of HR to provide information for Dr Schroeter on the circumstances in which requests for flexible working were invited in order to avoid teaching being timetabled between 5 and 6 pm.</p>	<p>Vice-Chancellor</p> <p>Director of HR</p>	<p>Complete</p>
--	--	-----------------