

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

STAFFING COMMITTEE

22/10 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Wednesday 15 June 2022 at 2.00 pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Dr R J Messer (Chair)
Professor C Harty
Dr K Henderson
Mr S Hunt
Professor F Hwang
Dr A Laville
Professor H Parish
Mrs C Rolstone
Mrs J Rowe
Mrs S Thornton

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Mr Knowles.

The University Secretary thanked Mr Knowles and Professor Harty for their contributions to the Committee.

22/11 The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022 were approved.

Arising from the minutes:

22/03 Recruitment and Retention of Staff

The Committee noted that the Director of Human Resources had discussed the recruitment challenges facing the University with the UEB. They were supportive of the initiatives being considered.

22/12 HR Strategy

The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that she had discussed the emerging HR Strategy with the UEB and with colleagues in the HR function. She stated that it comprised seven themes that support the “People” element of the University Strategy and builds on the ongoing work across the HR function, and the current HR projects and priorities.

She set out the seven themes and some of the key priorities against each theme. These are:

Staff engagement & wellbeing

Key priority: advice, knowledge and activities to inspire staff wellbeing, encouraging conversations about mental health and also supporting physical health and wellbeing.

Recruitment & Retention

Key priority: Develop and promote a strong employer brand which promotes our values, attracts world class talent and provides an excellent candidate experience.

Leadership, Management and Development

Key priority: Develop skilled, responsive and representative leadership management, with a focus on skills and competency.

Diversity & Inclusion

Key priority: To deliver on the recommendations, expectations and action plans already in place.

Performance and Change

Key priority: Through supporting the people aspects of change, ensure the development of a supportive change culture.

Pay, Benefits and Reward

Key priority: Provide reward and recognition processes which support the University's strategic ambitions, giving leaders the flexibility to offer rewards and take ownership for their decisions.

Infrastructure, Core Services and Processes

Key priority: Ensure effective core HR systems which are efficiently utilised and managed.

She planned to engage with Heads of School and Function as well as Staff Networks and Staff representatives over the Summer with a view to publishing the HR Strategy and framework in the Autumn Term.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to discuss the emerging HR Strategy and agreed that the themes were sensible and relevant.

A number of comments were made and these are summarised as follows:

- How will HR / the University be able to determine whether the Strategy or elements of the Strategy has been achieved and will there be a timeframe for when we expect the Strategy or elements of the Strategy to be completed? The Director of Human Resources confirmed that identifying and agreeing success metrics was an important consideration and would be further developed over the Summer.
- The Committee discussed the merits of conducting staff surveys – some members of the Committee questioned their usefulness.
- The HR Strategy looks quite ambitious – how realistic is it to deliver on all these themes? Do they need to be simplified?
- Does HR have the resources to deliver the HR Strategy and if it doesn't will the University provide additional resources?
 - The University Secretary stated that the UEB will be considering finances over the Summer. The HR Strategy will form part of these considerations alongside the other University Strategies (such as the Digital Strategy and Estates Strategy).
- The Committee noted that the University had recently signed up to the Mental Health Charter and this would closely align with the staff engagement & wellbeing theme in the HR Strategy.
 - The Committee agreed that the University already offered a wealth of wellbeing support and resources. However, do staff know how and where to access these resources?

It was agreed that the Director of Human Resources would consider whether a further meeting of the Staffing Committee over the Summer would be required. The purpose of the meeting would be to discuss and share with the Committee the progress made on the HR Strategy.

The Director of Human Resources thanked the Committee for their comments.

22/13 SMART Working

The Director of Human Resources reminded colleagues that the SMART working policy was introduced in the Autumn Term 2021 as part of the University's commitment to supporting flexible ways of working, supporting staff wellbeing and capturing the benefits of working in different ways.

The UEB agreed that the policy would be reviewed every three years by the Staffing Committee, and during the first year of operation the policy would be regularly reviewed. She said the intention at this stage is to seek the views of Heads of School and Function, and to seek the views of all staff during the Autumn Term.

The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that she would be sending an email communication to all Heads of School and Function in the coming weeks.

Members of the Committee were invited to share their experience of how SMART working has been operating in their areas. The following feedback was shared:

- The consensus was that it would be better to seek the views of all staff in the Autumn Term. Over the Summer more staff are likely to be working remotely;
- In some areas the perception is that staff are required to be on campus a minimum of 3 days a week;
- During the pandemic Technical Services have picked up additional responsibilities normally undertaken by academic staff. It is anticipated that now the restrictions in place as a result of the pandemic have been lifted these responsibilities will be given back to the academics;
- In some School buildings Technical staff have been asked to relinquish space to free up room for new School staff. However, as a result of the pandemic these rooms remain largely unoccupied as academic staff, in general, appear to be working remotely;
- The two Heads of School highlighted the challenges of operating SMART working arrangements for academic staff especially when setting minimum expectations for attending the workplace. It was acknowledged that academics have always enjoyed a degree of flexibility when determining their working arrangements;
- As we have moved to a post-pandemic world members of the Committee have observed that there appears to be fewer staff and students on campus – it was suggested that staff feel less inclined to return to the campus if there are fewer students;

The Director of Human Resources thanked the Committee for their comments and confirmed that a fuller review would take place during the Autumn Term.

22/14 HR System (Trent)

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Talent and People) informed the Committee that the University is looking to re-tender the University's HR System (Trent). She reminded colleagues that the University has been using Trent for many years and acknowledged that certain elements of the system need updating. Another driver for changing the HR System was that Midland HR, the current provider, was phasing out support for Trent. The University Secretary stated that the University viewed this as a priority and confirmed that a budget had been allocated.

It is proposed that the new system would incorporate a payroll system, a learning management system (the University currently uses UoRLearn) and a job applicant tracking system (the University currently uses Jobtrain). She confirmed that consideration would also be given for an HR system that also incorporates an Occupational Health system and a system for tracking temporary jobs (Campus Jobs).

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Talent and People) stated that the re-tendering exercise only applied to our HR systems and not to other University systems such as RISIS, agresso etc.

She confirmed that the Major Systems Project Board was overseeing the project with Mr Robert Morrison, HR Systems Manager acting as project manager. To date, HR Systems had worked closely with a number of functions including colleagues in Procurement, Legal Services, DTS and Finance in order to map out a project plan and to generate a tender specification. Given the scope of the project the University has approved new roles to support the tender process and these roles are currently being advertised.

The Committee were informed that a tendering process was due to commence shortly with potential suppliers invited to tender for a new HR System. The new system will be cloud based as this will make it easier should the University decide to change systems in the future. She indicated that it was anticipated that a new HR System provider would be identified by the end of August 2022. The next phases of the process would include building the new system, migrating the data from the existing system, and testing the new system to ensure everything works as it should. She confirmed that current users of Trent would be consulted to better understand their needs, to identify what works well and what improvements can be made.

The Committee thanked the Assistant Director of Human Resources (Talent and People) for the update.

22/15 Staff Development

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Talent and People) informed the Committee that she would be bringing a revised version of the University Policy Statement on Staff Development to the next meeting of the Committee for its consideration.

22/16 Provisional dates of meetings for the 2022/23 Academic Session:

Thursday 6 October 2022	2.00 pm to 4.00 pm
Tuesday 22 November 2022	10.00 am to 12.00 pm (reserve)
Tuesday 7 February 2023	2.00 pm to 4.00 pm
Wednesday 26 April 2023	11.30 am to 1.30 pm (reserve)
Wednesday 14 June 2023	2.00 pm to 4.00 pm