

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

STAFFING COMMITTEE

19/01 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Tuesday 12 February 2019 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Whiteknights House

Present:

Dr R J Messer (Chair)
Professor A Bell
Professor D C Berry
Mr J J Brady
Mr J Dabydoyal
Dr K Henderson
Mr S W Hunt
Professor R Jackson
Mrs C Rolstone
Mrs J Rowe
Mrs S Thornton

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Dr K Bicknell and Professor S Chandler-Wilde.

19/02 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2018 were approved

Arising from the minutes:

Minute 18/20 (18/04): Working Groups looking at Teaching Staff

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) informed the Committee that the Working Group looking at Teaching Fellows submitted a report to the UEB just before Christmas 2018. The report recommended a promotion route for Teaching Fellows on Grade 6 to go to Grade 7. The UEB accepted the recommendations in principle but asked the Working Group to review the overall process and the promotion criteria.

Once the process and criteria have been reviewed further discussions with the Acting Vice-Chancellor will take place. She confirmed that the UCU would need to be consulted before the new process is implemented and launched.

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 18/22: People Plan

The Director of Human Resources reminded the Committee of the plan to use the reserve meeting in November 2018 to have a dedicated discussion in respect of the People Plan. However, due to the large number of colleagues who were unavailable this meeting had to be postponed.

19/03 Social Media Policy

The Committee was asked to comment on a draft Social Media policy for staff and students. The University Secretary explained that the policy was created to govern the use of social media platforms involving the University including personal accounts and those using the logo and/or name of the University.

The Committee welcomed the policy and made the following comments:

- Some of the links referred to in the draft policy are now out of date;
- The list referred to in 2.1. appears to be random. Would it be better to rank them in terms of use / importance;
- Some colleagues felt the policy was quite technical and was not very user friendly and wondered if a flow chart could be added as it was felt this would provide greater clarity.

The University Secretary thanked the Committee for its comments and said these would be forwarded to the policies and procedures working group for consideration.

19/04 Gender Pay Gap

The Director of Human Resources explained that the University has been required to publish key gender pay gap data for its employees annually. The Committee was asked to comment on the draft report that sets out the gender pay gap data at the snap-shot date of 31 March 2018.

The Committee welcomed the report and made the following comments:

- It was difficult to get a sense of i) whether there is a gender pay issue at the University and ii) the steps the University is taking to address any issues;

- It was difficult to get a sense of whether the University was making good progress in some areas e.g. females on Boards;
- There seem to be a lot of Aurora placement testimonials although it was noted that it was important to tell a story and to obtain the testimonials from a cross section of colleagues;
- The format made it difficult to follow. The Director of Human Resources agreed with this view but indicated that there was a requirement to generate the report in this format.

The Committee agreed to consider the issues arising from the report and asked Professor Chandler-Wilde to bring a report to a future meeting

Action: Professor Chandler-Wilde to bring a report to a future meeting that sets out the key issues arising from the gender pay gap report.

19/05 Staff Survey

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) confirmed that the key findings from the Staff Survey benchmarking report had been shared with the UEB and the Leadership Group. She said she was working on the verbatim data and planned to share the results of the survey with Heads of School and Function in the forthcoming weeks. A University wide communication was also planned that would identify the key findings and outline what the University will do next.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) reported that the percentage of staff who rated the University as a good employer had increased to 90%. She also confirmed that the University's rating as an employer of choice had increased from 3.32 to 3.38 (out of 4) compared to a sector average of 3.36.

The Committee noted the drop in response rates from 64% to 59% and was asked to comment on ways of improving the University's response rate for future surveys. The following points were made:

- i. The University has too many surveys and staff get survey fatigue. It was acknowledged that many surveys are out of the University's control as they are either generated locally or are external surveys;
- ii. Staff need to see change and perhaps there is a feeling that not enough has been done since the last staff survey;
- iii. Staff are still afraid to respond as they fear the survey is not confidential or anonymous;
- iv. It is important that the University puts an action plan in place.

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

19/06 Pay Bargaining and related Industrial Action

The Director of Human Resources updated the Committee with an update on matters relating to national pay bargaining.

He mentioned that the 2019 pay bargaining round is scheduled to commence on 26 March 2019. In advance of that UCEA (the sector's employers' association) will be consulting with participating HEIs in the forthcoming months.

Contemporaneously the UCU has opened a ballot for industrial action. This is described as a continuation of the dispute in respect of the 2018 pay settlement (the formal process was closed some time ago), but is likely designed to place early pressure on the 2019 process and build on momentum garnered from the recent pensions dispute. A disaggregated ballot (i.e. a ballot of members at each HEI) in late 2018 failed to reach the required 50% turnout threshold. The current ballot is being conducted nationally. The ballot closes on 22 February; the University's Strike Operations Group is meeting shortly to plan for the possible action.

The Committee thanked the Director of Human Resources for the update.

19/07 Pensions Update

The Director of Human Resources updated the Committee with an update on matters relating to ongoing consultations in respect of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).

He reminded the Committee that the proposed changes to the USS, arising from the 2017 valuation process, provoked a significant period of industrial action in a number of HEIs, UoR included.

The dispute concluded with a collective agreement to establish a Joint Expert Panel (JEP) to re-visit the proposed changes, and the subsequent JEP recommendations were supported by relevant employers.

He reported that the USS Trustee has agreed to consider those recommendations by carrying out a further valuation (based on the 2018 actuarial position) which it hopes can be completed in time to avoid (in part) the increases in employer and member contributions scheduled to be phased in from 1 April 2019.

He provided a summary of the revised schedule of contributions, the employer contribution is set to increase to 19.5% from 1 April 2019, 22.5% from 1 October 2019 and 24.9% from 1 April 2020. The concomitant changes in member contributions are 8.8%, 10.4% and 11.7% respectively. Additionally, the 1% matched additional contribution is set to cease with effect from 1 April 2019. The recovery plan proposal is to address the deficit by contributions of 6% of pay over fourteen years from 1 April 2020.

He informed the Committee that the USS has now opened a consultation in respect of the technical provisions for the 2018 valuation. The proposed University response will be discussed at the UEB in late February.

19/08 VC Appointment

The Director of Human Resources provided the committee with a summary of the process adopted to recruit a new Vice-Chancellor. He confirmed that final interviews are scheduled for Friday 15 February 2019.

He reported that a Selection Committee, reflecting different aspects of the University's activities, was overseeing the appointment, and included:

- four lay members of the Council,
- two academic members - one nominated by Senate and one agreed by the Selection Committee itself to ensure a balance of background and skills with the Senate nominee;
- the President of the Reading University Students' Union (RUSU).

The University Secretary and the Director of Human Resources attend the meetings of the Selection Committee to support and advise it.

He indicated that the Selection Committee had long-listed twelve candidates from a strong pool of candidates, and had now short-listed five candidates for final interview,

He indicated that the short-listed candidates will meet with three separate panels comprised of Academic colleagues, Professional and Administrative colleagues and Students (covering different subjects and levels of study). The candidates will also meet with members of the Leadership Group.

19/09 UCU Local Claim

The Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with a summary of the work being carried out via the local University and UCU Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

He stated that the Reading branch of UCU submitted a pay and equality claim in September 2018 with a request to open negotiations on three topics of interest: precarious contracts of employment, gender pay gap and “grade drift”.

An initial special meeting of the JNC was convened to better understand the claim, and subsequently a sub-group of the JNC has been meeting at regular intervals to address the issues raised.

He said that although described as a local claim the issues raised are consistent with a number of UCU national campaigns, particularly in respect of “casualisation”.

He pointed out that for practical reasons it had been agreed to prioritise work on precarious contracts (in effect the arrangements for sessional staff). As a first step UCU have been working with HR to extract relevant data to better understand the use of sessional staff across the University. Finance have also provided useful data in respect of the School by School spend on sessional staff.

He explained that the likely outcome of these negotiations will be the creation of a more consistent framework for the appointment of sessional teaching staff, an hourly rate of pay aligned to the University’s grade structure, a multiplier applied to the hourly rate to reflect the full range of sessional duties (broadly preparation, delivery and assessment), and conversion to fractional contracts where a regular pattern of work has been evidenced.

He reported that the joint work on addressing the University’s gender pay gap will follow in due course, and stated that the remaining strand of work, what UCU have described as “grade drift”, has yet to be fully discussed. He reminded the Committee that work carried out by a University working group during 2018 in respect of Grade 6 Teaching Fellows and proposed progression routes will provide a useful starting point for discussions.

The Director of Human Resources agreed to keep Staffing Committee members informed as the local negotiation continues.

19/10 VR Scheme

The Director of Human Resources reported that to date applications had been made of which were from academic staff and confirmed that the closing date for receipt of VR applications had had been extended to 22 February 2019.

He reported that a Voluntary Redundancy Group had been established and the Group would make final decisions. He confirmed that a comprehensive suite of information, updates and documentation had been made available including Frequently Asked Questions. He confirmed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) had circulated a follow up communication to all staff clarifying:

- The difference in payment under the University's VR scheme and the statutory redundancy pay;
- Confirmation that an ex-gratia payment will be made to colleagues considering reducing their working hours;
- Clarity in respect of emeritus and other honorary titles.

19/11 REF Code of Practice

The following developments were reported to the Committee:

The UK Funding Bodies have now published the Guidance on Submissions setting out the requirements of UK Higher Education institutions for submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. The deadline for submission is November 2020, with assessment taking place during 2021.

The University is required to develop a Code of Practice establishing the principles that will guide our submission, including how we will:

- adhere to the REF principles of transparency, accountability, consistency and inclusivity
- determine which eligible staff have/do not have significant responsibility for research (i.e. T&R staff with/without significant responsibility for research)
- determine research independence for research only staff
- selects outputs for submission
- apply circumstances for requesting reduction in outputs
- undertake, interpret and use interim equality impact assessments

A REF Code of Practice Group, chaired by Professor Parveen Yaqoob, has been established to develop the Code, which will be submitted to the

funding bodies in June 2019. As part of the development of the Code, the group will be discussing and updating staff and necessary committees.

19/12 Visa/Immigration

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) reported that the University is an A listed sponsor with a licence to issue a limited number of Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) under Tier 2 (General). She reported that the University has to apply directly to the Home Office and a limited number of CoS are allocated each month.

She made the Committee aware that the University has only a small number of CoS remaining and has applied to the Home Office for more certificates.

19/13 Remaining dates of meetings for the 2018/19 Academic Session:

Wednesday 19 June 2019, 2.00 pm

Action List from the meeting on Tuesday 12 February 2019

Minute Number	Action	Action for
19/04	<u>Gender Pay Gap</u> Professor Chandler-Wilde to bring a report to a future meeting that sets out the key issues arising from the gender pay gap report.	Professor Simon Chandler-Wilde