

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

STAFFING COMMITTEE

16/01 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Tuesday 16 February 2016 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Whiteknights House

Present:

Professor R Van de Noort (Chair)
Professor M J Almond
Mrs C L Bennett
Professor D C Berry
Mr J J Brady
Miss C E Eckett
Professor R H Ellis
Professor M D E Fellowes
Mrs A Hackett
Miss N Hager (on behalf of Mr O Ratcliffe)
Mrs N J Johnson
Dr E McCrum
Mrs J Pich
Mrs C Rolstone

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Professor A R Bell, Dr R J Messer and Mrs J Rowe

16/02 The minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2015 were approved.

Arising from the minutes:

Minute 15/22 (15/11, 15/01, 14/25): Consultation in respect of proposed changes to USS and forthcoming pension changes

The Director of Human Resources reminded colleagues of a number of significant changes to the pensions landscape due to take place during 2016 including:

National Insurance (NI) and ceasing of contracting out – following the introduction of the new State Pension from April 2016, pension schemes which have chosen not to participate in the second tier of the State Pension no longer have this option – this includes USS, the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) and UREPF. As a result, from 1 April 2016 the employers NI contribution will increase by 3.4% and the employee contribution will increase by 1.4%.

Changes to USS – from 1 April 2016 there are significant changes to the USS benefits structure (as detailed at previous Committee meetings)

Auto re-enrolment – from the 1 July 2016 the University is required to automatically re-enrol all eligible workers in to a pension scheme (USS or URPS). In practice this will be all those eligible workers who have opted-out of a pension scheme since 1 October 2013 (estimated to be approximately 160 staff). Affected individuals will be written to in April 2016.

High-earners and tax implications – a small working group has been established by the University's Remuneration Committee to consider any potential issues / implications for high earners and report back with recommendations to its meeting in June 2016.

The Committee welcomed the update and acknowledged the importance of communicating these changes to all staff, particularly given the potential impact on salaries from April 2016.

Minute 15/23: The Living Wage

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) informed the Committee that since the last meeting the UEB has considered whether the University should become an accredited Living Wage employer and pay the Living Wage for its staff. He reported that whilst the Board was not minded to support this motion, it was agreed that the matter should be considered by the Strategy and Finance Committee for onward transmission to the Council for a final decision.

He agreed to keep the Committee informed of progress.

Minute 15/26: Personal Titles Arrangements

Mrs Bennett informed the Committee that the group established by the Vice-Chancellor to review the Personal Titles procedure was currently considering the criteria for promotion for wider consultation with relevant colleagues and onward transmission to the UEB in the summer term.

Minute 15/28: Diversity and Inclusion Development

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) reported that the diversity and inclusion e-learning tool was now up and running and indicated that the University would be targeting those areas where there has been a low uptake.

Minute 15/29: The GTA Scheme

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) confirmed that the University has now received comments on the proposed scheme from Deans and Heads of School and has now consulted with RUSU and UCU. He also reported that the UEB has now approved the scheme.

16/03 Efficiency and Effectiveness (PAS) update

The Director of Human Resources reported on the progress made with the review of its professional and administrative services (PAS).

He informed the Committee that the University was now nearing the final phase of the review process. He confirmed that each work stream has been busy with the process of matching colleagues to roles in the new structure and confirmed that all the work streams were due to complete matching and communicate outcomes to affected staff by the 4 March 2016.

He confirmed that those colleagues who have not been matched to a role in the new structure would be able to apply for vacancies that remain in the new services.

He confirmed that the University was continuing to consult with the UCU and the Staff Forum.

16/04 Towards an HR Strategy

The Director of Human Resources summarised the paper setting out the proposed themes for the next HR Strategy period. These were:

- Supporting the University's staff through a period of intense change, providing them with the skills, capabilities and resilience to prosper;
- Engaging with staff to rebuild (where necessary) the sense of community that serves us well as an institution, and reinforce the many things that make the University a good place to work;
- Providing colleagues at all levels with a clear sense of expectation from the University, investing trust, confidence and freedom to act in order to deliver against objectives whilst accepting accountability.

The Committee welcomed the paper and made a number of observations/comments.

The proposal to seek to offer a Staff Forum facility to staff on Grade 6 and above may be considered contentious. The Director of Human Resources reminded the Committee that the expansion of the Staff Forum to staff on Grade 6 and above was complementary to rather than in place of the University's recognition agreement with the UCU. Colleagues asked for evidence that the Staff Forum was successfully engaging with staff on Grades 1 to 5.

The paper refers to the development of key performance indicators for individual roles, aligned to the University's over-arching KPIs. Colleagues felt this would be hard to achieve. The Director of Human Resources acknowledged that the development and measurement of KPIs would be challenging but believed it was important for the University to develop processes that link the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process with pay and reward arrangements.

Colleagues welcomed the Strategy's focus on leadership development and sought clarity on learning and development provision more broadly. The Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) confirmed that People Development (PD)

provided a wide range of learning and development opportunities for staff at all levels.

The Committee noted the plans to review the existing pay and grading structure and acknowledged that a pay structure that linked incremental progression more explicitly to satisfactory performance was a positive step to take.

The Director of Human Resources thanked the Committee for their comments and views and stated that he would now be engaging with relevant bodies including the UEB, UCU, Staff Forum. He confirmed that a road map would be developed and shared with the Committee at a future meeting.

16/04 Academic Structures Implementation (ASIG) update

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Operations) reported on the proposals, agreed by the ASIG and the UEB as to how the various HR processes should be organised in line with the new academic structures.

She confirmed that a discussion paper on proposed changes to the arrangements for making honorary payments would be forwarded to the UEB for approval at a future meeting.

16/05 The Annual Diversity Report

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) summarised the Annual Diversity & Inclusion report (2014/15) and indicated that it was a mandatory requirement for all public sector bodies to publish information to demonstrate compliance with the general equality duty.

She confirmed that the report followed the same format as in previous years and included diversity information for both staff and students. She indicated that all those involved in the writing of the report recognised the need for changes to be made in relation to how the report is written and published in future years.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) confirmed that a review group had been established to consider how the gender pay gap at grade 9 and professorial zones 2 and 4 could be reduced and to better understand the reasons for the pay gap.

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

16/06 Tier 2 Certificates of Sponsorship

The Head of HR Operations summarised the recommendations of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) following its review of the Tier 2 immigration route and the impact this may have for the University.

She stated that the MAC is an independent, non-statutory, non-time limited, non-departmental public body that advises the government on migration issues.

Currently there are 72 individuals that the University sponsors under the Tier 2 route and the sponsorship of migrants under this route more than tripled from 2014 to 2015. The University meets the cost of issuing the Certificate of Sponsorship (£179), with the employee meeting the cost of the visa, NHS surcharges and any associated costs.

The main MAC recommendations are:

- a) a raise in the minimum salary thresholds from £20,800 to £23,000 (for new entrants) and £30,000 (for established workers) – 13 of the 72 employees sponsored by the University under Tier 2 had a starting salary of less than £30,000;
- b) an Immigration Skills Charge (ISC) is applicable to all employers recruiting migrants through the Tier 2 route and is set at £1,000 per annum – the intention is that the charge will incentivise employers to reduce their reliance on employing migrant workers. Should this recommendation proceed, the University will need to factor an extra £72K to staffing budgets per year;
- c) the introduction of applying the Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT) before a student sponsored under Tier 4 can switch to being employed under the Tier 2 route;

The Committee thanked the Head of HR Operations for the update and agreed that much more work was needed in order to train and develop UK PhD students and postdoctoral research staff.

16/07 Future Arrangements for the Staffing Committee

The Director of Human Resources summarised the paper regarding the future membership and purpose of the Staffing Committee and stated it was intended to prompt discussion.

He reported that the Staffing Committee was established in the early 2000's with a membership and terms of reference that have remained largely unchanged. At this time the Committee provided a dedicated space within which HR strategy, policy and practice could be discussed and proposals finalised before submission for approval by the Committee of Deans (the equivalent to UEB).

He outlined a number of reasons why consideration should be given to refresh the Committee's purpose and membership. These included:

1. Agendas tend to be dominated by long-standing matters arising, and updates on local or sector-wide developments for which other avenues for communication exist;
2. The membership is mostly *ex officio* combined with efforts to have a cross-representation of University management;

3. most HR project work now proceeds on a formal project management basis with dedicated Project Boards to monitor progress;
4. Professional services in the University are now accountable for service delivery in a way that didn't exist previously.

He asked the Committee to consider:

- a) Re-designating Staffing Committee as an HR Advisory Group;
- b) Establishing a smaller core membership, with senior HR staff having a right of attendance;
- c) Having a wider pool of colleagues who can be called upon to attend from time to time depending on the matters to be discussed;
- d) The possibility of inviting suitable externals from time to time;
- e) A greater focus on strategy and associated project work;
- f) Establishing a more formal link with the Staff Forum and UCU to allow for earlier discussion of key issues where required, and reduce the number of formal meetings elsewhere.

The Committee thanked the Director of Human Resources for the suggestions and prompted a useful discussion summarised below:

- It was agreed that HR has evolved greatly and is now driving HR policies and initiatives – it recognised the need to change the structure and format of the Committee;
- Thought needs to be given to the purpose and remit of the reformed Committee – will it advise HR or make recommendations to the UEB. This links to the issue of governance – the amount of accountability afforded to the reformed Committee will, in part, be dependent on its remit;
- Some colleagues felt that having an Advisory Group to oversee and advise the various project groups established as part of the HR Strategy was a sensible approach;
- Agreement that the various University-wide Committee's should have a consistent approach.

The Director of Human Resources thanked the Committee for their views and agreed to discuss this matter further with the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) and the University Secretary and report back to a future meeting.

Action: The Director of Human Resources to discuss this matter further with the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) and the University Secretary and report back to a future meeting

16/08 Remaining dates of meetings for the 2015/16 Academic Session:

Tuesday 3 May 2016, 2.00 pm (reserve)

Wednesday 22 June 2016, 2.00 pm