

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

STAFFING COMMITTEE

16/09 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Wednesday 22 June 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
Mr J J Brady
Professor R H Ellis
Professor M D E Fellowes
Mrs A Hackett
Mrs N J Johnson
Dr E McCrum
Dr R J Messer
Mrs C Rolstone

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

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

16/10 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2016 were approved.

Arising from the minutes:

Minute 16/02 (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 informed colleagues that all the planned pensions changes discussed at the last Committee had now been completed and thanked Mrs Bennett and her team for their hard work.

He stated that further changes to the USS pension scheme would take place from 1 October 2016 and confirmed that Mrs Bennett and her team were working closely with USS colleagues to ensure the process is smooth.

The Committee welcomed the update and noted the planned USS changes from October 2016.

Minute 16/02 (15/23): The Living Wage and the National Living Wage

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) informed the Committee that the Council had rejected the student body led campaign for the University to become an accredited Living Wage employer and pay the Living Wage for its staff. He said a key reason for the Council's decision was that the University would have no control over future pay increases to the Living Wage and would be signing up to an unknown future cost.

The Director of Human Resources reported that the focus within the HE sector is now on the National Minimum Wage and the impact on University pay and grading structures. He said by 2020 it is likely that Grades 1 and 2 on the University's grading structure would be redundant and a significant body of work was required to address these challenges, including a review of the University's pay and grading structure.

Minute 16/02 (15/26): Personal Titles Arrangements

Dr Messer reported on the progress made regarding the review of the Personal Titles procedure. He informed the Committee that the Senate and UCU had commented on the planned changes and the new arrangements would be taken to Council this Term.

He informed the Committee that a comprehensive training programme was scheduled from July 2016 for Heads of School, School Committee members and academic staff more broadly, and indicated that a review of the new arrangements would take place at the end of the first year.

The Committee thanked Dr Messer for the update.

Minute 16/04: Towards an HR Strategy

The Director of Human Resources reported that since the last Committee, HR colleagues had run several internal sessions to identify key themes.

The Committee agreed that given the significance of the strategy, the views of the UEB would be sought and a paper would go to the UEB during the Autumn Term.

Minute 16/06: Tier 2 Certificates of Sponsorship

The Head of HR Operations reported on the planned changes being made to the Tier 2 immigration route following the Government's response to the recommendations of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC). These were:

- The Immigration Skills Charge (ISC) is set at £1,000 per annum per Tier 2 employee and will be introduced in April 2017;
- The ISC will not apply to jobs skilled at PhD level or to international students undertaking post-study work. For non-PhD roles, Universities have their contribution capped at £364 per annum, per Tier 2 employee;
- The minimum salary threshold will remain at £20,800 per annum with the threshold for experienced workers increasing to £25,000 per annum from autumn 2016.

The Committee thanked Mrs Johnson for the update.

Minute 16/07: Future Arrangements for the Staffing Committee

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) reported on the new line management arrangements for professional service Directors to take effect from the 1 January 2017. He indicated that he didn't want to develop a new Staffing Committee structure until there was greater clarity regarding the wider governance arrangements.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) agreed to report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

16/11 Efficiency and Effectiveness (PAS) update

The Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with an update. He confirmed that formal consultation with the UCU and the Staff Forum had now closed although the University continued to meet with both bodies on an informal basis.

He reported that as a result of the PAS exercise there was one individual who remained "at risk" of redundancy. He confirmed that each of the key Functions was now preparing to implement the new structures from 1 August 2016. He also confirmed that formal offer letters were now being sent to those individuals matched or appointed to a role in the new structure. He stated that although the majority of vacancies have now been filled, there is still ongoing recruitment activity to fill the remaining vacancies.

16/12 National Pay Bargaining and UCU Industrial Action

The Director of Human Resources reported on the UCU's 2 day strike in May 2016 following the trades union's rejection of the employers' pay offer of 1.1% and confirmed that a further day's strike was planned for today (the 22nd June) with the intention of targeting the staff celebrations. He informed the Committee that he had asked relevant Heads to feedback to him if there was any disruption as a result of these strikes.

He made the Committee aware of the proposed new legislation that would mean that the UCU would need a 50% mandate in order to take strike action.

16/13 Long Service Awards

The Director of Human Resources sought the Committee's views on a proposal to modernise the University's current Long Service Award (LSA) scheme. Currently, eligible colleagues receive a £200 gift voucher and the proposal is to align the LSA scheme to the Celebrating Success scheme whereby awards can be redeemed via an on-line portal.

The Committee welcomed the proposal and agreed that the level of the award (£200) was appropriate and reasonable.

16/14 Season Ticket Loans

The Director of Human Resources set out a proposal to add to the University's current suite of travel friendly schemes by offering a facility for all eligible staff to apply for a season ticket loan.

He outlined the potential benefits for staff, namely improving the affordability of public transport, supporting the University's carbon reduction and Travel Plan targets, as well as helping to support recruitment and retention by providing a holistic package of travel benefits.

The Committee discussed the proposed scheme and were broadly supportive. It was noted that staff with less than 6 months' service would not be eligible to apply for a season ticket loan and whilst they understood the slight risk should a colleague fail probation, it was felt that this would run counter to the stated benefit of helping to support recruitment.

The Committee thanked the HR Manager (Reward and Benefits) for the work she had undertaken and approved the proposed scheme. The Committee asked that the proposed restriction that only staff with 6 months' service can apply, be removed.

16/15 ISLI and Academic Probation Requirements

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Operations) reported that a number of colleagues who work in the International Study and Language Institute (ISLI) are academics on probation and are required to meet the requirements of the APP. She argued that given the nature of the courses taught and the students undertaking these courses, the ISLI academics on probation are not able to meet the University's requirements.

She sought the Committee's approval to make a slight variation to the probationary requirements for these academics working in ISLI, namely to enable a review to be undertaken after the first year, and to have an opportunity to waive the Level 4 requirement where appropriate.

The Committee supported the proposal, recognising that arrangements needed to be fair and proportionate and where appropriate should be flexed.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) said he regarded this as a decision for Human Resources and not the Staffing Committee.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Operations) thanked the Committee for their views.

16/16 Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

The Head of HR Operations provided the Committee with an overview of Jobtrain, the University's Applicant Tracking System (ATS). She stated the principle driver for implementing an ATS was to facilitate the centralisation of HR processes as part of the PAS review and outlined the benefits of the new system, including:

- The ability to readily report on current workload to assist in smooth service provision;
- To provide a user-friendly process for online shortlisting;
- A method of providing feedback on applications via the ATS to reduce the requirement for form-filling at decision stages in the recruitment process.

She informed the Committee that the ATS is currently being piloted in some areas of the University with vacancies being advertised and the ATS Project Steering Group will meet in mid-July to sign-off the pilot phase of the project and agree a date to roll-out the use of the ATS to all University departments.

The Committee thanked the Head of HR Operations for the update.

16/17 Proposed dates of meetings for the 2016/17 Academic Session:

Tuesday 11 October 2016, 2.00 pm
Tuesday 29 November 2016, 10.00 am (reserve)
Tuesday 14 February 2017, 2.00 pm
Tuesday 2 May 2017, 11.00 am (reserve)
Wednesday 21 June 2017, 2.00 pm