

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

STAFFING COMMITTEE

17/23 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Tuesday 10 October 2017 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Whiteknights House

Present:

Professor R Van de Noort (Chair)
Professor D C Berry
Mr J J Brady
Professor S Chandler-Wilde
Dr K Henderson
Professor R Jackson
Professor O Kennedy
Dr R J Messer
Mrs C Rolstone
Mr T Spencer
Dr C Tissot
Professor D Zaum

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Mrs C L Bennett, Mrs A Hackett, and Mrs J Rowe.

The Committee welcomed Dr Karen Henderson, Director of Technical Services, Professor Rob Jackson, Head of School, School of Biological Sciences, and Mr Tristan Spencer, President of the Students' Union to their first meeting.

17/24 Membership, Terms of Reference and Disclosure of Interests

The Committee received a copy of its membership and Terms of Reference and a copy of a memorandum from the University Secretary in respect of Disclosure of Interests and the Committee's obligations in respect of the University's Risk Register.

17/25 The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2017 were approved.

Arising from the minutes:

**Minute 17/13 (17/02, 16/20, 16/10, 16/01, 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 the Committee that the USS pension scheme had undertaken its triennial valuation and reported a deficit in the region of £5 billion. The deficit was lower than previously anticipated and this was due, in part, to a re-assessment of risk by the USS Trustee. He reported that the USS scheme was currently consulting with the employers' associations.

The Committee discussed the possible outcomes of the latest valuation including, at one extreme, the possibility of closing the USS pension scheme to the need to increase either employers' contributions and/or employees' contributions. The Director of Human Resources had reported that UCU had undertaken its own independent valuation, and had a different view of the health of the scheme. It was currently consulting its members' with a view to taking industrial action should any proposals to change the scheme be taken.

The Committee discussed internal communications and agreed that whilst the USS scheme was in consultation with employers' associations, the communications should remain light touch. However, if changes to the scheme are proposed, it was agreed that it was important to translate any outcomes in an understandable way.

Minute 17/13 (17/02 (16/21): People Strategy

The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that a Project Board had now been established to take forward the programme of activities and projects to enhance the working experience of its staff. The University was now seeking volunteers to become members of the Board. He confirmed the first meeting was scheduled for the 3 November 2017.

Minute 17/13 (17/03): Campus Jobs

The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that Mrs Cherry Bennett was leaving the University to [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] On behalf of the Committee he wished her well in her new role and thanked her for her hard work and valuable contributions including most recently the development and delivery of Campus Jobs.

He reported on the successful launch of Campus Jobs on the 18 September and reported on the significant interest from students in the facility. From its launch to the end of September Campus Jobs had received 1,241 visits to its reception desk, 5,675 logins to its on-line portal and received 537 applications for 25 different roles. He did report that there have been some

teething problems and these were being addressed. However, for the vast majority of students and recruiting managers, the introduction of Campus Jobs has been successful and would inevitably enhance the student experience.

The President of RUSU confirmed that all the feedback he'd received from students had been positive.

The Director of Human Resources registered his thanks to the Campus Jobs team who have worked around the clock up to and since its launch.

Minute 17/13 (17/04): Staff Survey

The Director of Human Resources reported that the findings of the Staff Survey and the focus groups had now been discussed with the UEB and published on the Staff portal. He confirmed that some of the findings will now be fed into the People Strategy (see above item) and re-iterated the intention to run further surveys over the coming years. Colleagues welcomed the recent launch of the Organisational Processes project that will look to identify, resolve and map internal, cross-departmental processes that need clarification or are not working as well as they might within the new organisational structures.

Minute 17/13 (17/08): Impact of Brexit on staff

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that the University continued to provide support and guidance to those colleagues and their families who were impacted by Brexit. An updated series of FAQs had been generated and was now available on-line. He reported that there was no significant evidence as yet to indicate that colleagues had left the University or planned to leave the University as a result of Brexit.

He confirmed that he would keep the Committee informed of any further developments.

Minute 17/14: Review of the Personal Titles process 2016-17

The University Secretary reminded the Committee that a group had been established to consider a number of issues arising from the 2016-17 Personal Titles process. He confirmed that the group has done its work and had made a number of recommendations for the UEB to consider and approve.

In the course of its work the group noted that there is a perception that there is a broad range of expectations placed on teaching intensive staff, and this makes it difficult to be certain that the teaching criteria are fit for all kinds of teaching intensive staff. The UEB had agreed that a group be established to report on the breadth of requirements and demands placed

upon teaching intensive staff; whether it is possible and helpful to categorise different kinds of teaching intensive staff; what good practice exists which could be shared more widely; and what, if anything, the consequences be for the Personal Titles process. The UEB further agreed that the views of the Staffing Committee be sought.

The Committee had an in depth discussion and made the following points:

- Research intensive staff also have a broad range of requirements and demands;
- It is easier to measure outputs for research intensive staff than it is to measure and quantify the outputs for teaching intensive staff;
- The introduction of the new Personal Titles process has been positively received and the changes made following the first year will further improve the process. We should be mindful not to undo the excellent work undertaken thus far.

The University Secretary thanked the Committee for its views and said he would now consider what, if anything, should be done.

Minute 17/19: Out of Hours / On-call payments

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) informed the Committee that following the comments made at the last meeting, the framework document had been revised to make it clear the types of situations where the framework would apply. The Committee discussed the changes made to the document and sought clarity on payments received for any work done under these arrangements and the normal expectation that overtime would not be paid in these type of situations.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) thanked the Committee for its comments and confirmed that the on-call rota framework would now be further revised taking on board their additional comments.

17/26 Employment Legislation Developments

The Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with an update on a number of recent employment law developments.

Deductions from pay

The Supreme Court has recently ruled that deductions from pay for the purposes of industrial action should be made at the rate of 1/365th. This decision turned on the interpretation of the specific contract of employment (teachers) and does not necessarily apply to the HE sector. The Director of Human Resources indicated that the University will err on

the side of caution and, should the need arise, deduct at 1/365th rather than 1/260th which has been the University's recent practice.

Fees for DOCAS (deductions of contributions at source)

The Trade Union Act (2016) included new regulations for the administration of what is commonly referred to as "check-off", i.e. the facility to deduct trade union subscriptions via the payroll. This is intended to come into force from March 2018 (but has not yet been enacted) and would require employers to levy a reasonable charge from relevant trade unions for this facility. The Director of Human Resources indicated that he is discussing this with Reading UCU with a view to the very small number of members who pay their subscriptions this way switching to direct debits, thus removing the need to comply.

Facility time reporting

The above Act also introduces a requirement to publish data relating to the use of paid facility time for union officials. The first reporting period will cover 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, and must be published no later than 31 July 2018. The data should be published via the University's website, in the University's annual report and on a website to be maintained by or on behalf of the Government. He indicated that we are still awaiting further guidance, due in the "early Autumn" and will be liaising closely with Reading UCU to produce this information.

Employment Tribunal fees

The Supreme Court has ruled recently that tribunal fees were unlawful and, as a result, they have been abolished. Those individuals that have brought claims and paid fees since 29 July 2013 will have them refunded. It also seems to be that case that those deterred from bringing a claim by the fee requirement will be allowed to submit outside the normal time limits. He asked the Staffing Committee to note the possibility of new claims against the University emerging in this context.

"Pay averaging"

The John Lewis Partnership has recently fallen foul of the National Minimum Wage Regulations (2015), to the tune of some £36m. This relates to their policy of "pay averaging", whereby an employee's annual pay is calculated and then paid in equal monthly instalments regardless of any variations of hours worked in particular months. He confirmed that this is not a particularly unusual arrangement, and would continue to monitor developments.

Voluntary overtime and holiday pay

A body of recent case law has cast a light on the circumstances in which regular patterns of overtime should be reflected in the holiday pay accrued by relevant employees. This has the potential to increase costs in some areas. UCEA have issued some preliminary advice on this matter and the Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that he was monitoring the University's arrangements to determine whether any additional action is required.

17/27 Mandatory Staff Training

The University Secretary reminded the Committee that all new staff joining the University are required to complete a number of on-line training modules. In addition, mandatory training is also in place for those colleagues in certain roles and/or who take part in certain activities. He said the paper accompanying this item provided a summary of some of the mandatory training currently in place and confirmed that this matter was a feature of two Working Groups/Project Boards established in respect of the Prevent Duty and Cybersecurity.

He sought the Committee's views on the current arrangements in place and whether colleagues felt that further work was needed to be done. A useful discussion took place and the following points were made:

- Line managers / relevant Heads are not necessarily aware of all the mandatory training requirements new staff need to undertake;
- It is not easy to capture the relevant data although it was acknowledged that it is possible to obtain this information from HR Systems;
- It was noted that capturing this information, and monitoring uptake will be greatly improved with the introduction of a Learning Management System (LMS) - steps are in place to purchase an LMS;
- An acknowledgment that it is easier to ask new staff to undertake mandatory training compared to the requirement to ask existing staff to undertake this training and/or to undergo refresher training;
- A perception that nothing happens if staff do not undertake mandatory training;
- The uptake rates are likely to differ depending on the nature of the training requirement and the area an individual works e.g. there is likely to be 100% uptake for those colleague who handle food and who are required to undergo the food handling training;
- The mandatory on-line modules - how much knowledge and information is retained by staff, and for how long. Is there any evidence to demonstrate the positive impact of this training;
- A perception that taking a more hard line approach will have a significant cultural impact on the University;

- Balancing the risks of taking a more hard line approach as opposed to a more relaxed approach to mandatory training.

It was agreed that further work on this matter would be useful and in the first instance it would be helpful to generate a paper capturing the current position. The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) agreed to progress this and a paper would be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee. It was noted that an LMS needed to be in place before any detailed work could be undertaken.

Action: The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) to generate a paper for submission to a future meeting of the Committee, noting that no detailed work could be undertaken until an LMS was in place

17/28 Annual immigration Report

The Committee noted the report to go to the UEB detailing the numbers of employees sponsored by the University under Tier 2 (General) and Tier 5 (Sponsored Researchers) during 2017. In particular it noted the increase, from 70 in 2016 to 78 in 2017, in the number of employees sponsored by the University under Tier 2 (General). It also noted the increase to the Tier 2 (General) minimum salary threshold to £30,000 from April 2017.

17/29 Science Council Employers Champion

The Director of Technical Services informed the Committee that the University had signed up to the Technician Commitment, a sector wide initiative led by the Science Council, to help address the key challenges facing technical staff working in research.

She also confirmed that the University was now formally recognised as a Science Council Employers Champion, having demonstrated its commitment to supporting its scientific staff to become professionally registered. A celebratory event attended by the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning) and [REDACTED], [REDACTED] was held on the 9 October 2017 at which the University received its Employers Champion plaque.

She confirmed that all Technical staff are encouraged to achieve professional registration and to take up the continuing professional development opportunities on offer by the Science Council. She was delighted to inform the Committee that at the Celebratory event, 7 Technicians were formally recognised for achieving professional registration, and over 30 of her staff had now achieved, or were working towards professional registration.

The Committee welcomed this development and congratulated the Director of Technical Services for raising the status and visibility of the Technicians working at the University.

17/30 Teaching Hours

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor informed the Committee of his concern that some teaching staff were limiting their availability for teaching and this was limiting the availability of space on campus. As a consequence the Lecture Theatre in URS had to be re-opened and some classes were having to take place after 6pm.

He informed colleagues that a communication to relevant Heads was circulated at the start of the academic year encouraging Heads of School to ensure that where possible, teaching takes place from Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 6.00 pm and that all teaching staff make themselves available between these times. It was acknowledged that there will always be cases where colleagues may request to work particular hours for understandable and justifiable reasons, and in these instances it was appropriate to approve such requests. It was also accepted that if there was no justifiable reason, colleagues should not be excluding themselves from teaching on particular days/times.

It was pointed out that those academics who were on a T&R contract needed to allow sufficient time for research.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor thanked the Committee for their views and agreed to keep them informed of progress.

17/31 Disability Staff Network

The Dean for Diversity and Inclusion made the Committee aware of the launch of the Disability Staff Network, a group specifically designed to represent the views of disabled colleagues and to instigate positive change across the University.

The Committee welcomed the establishment of this network and agreed that this built on the excellent work already in place to support diversity and inclusion.

17/32 Remaining dates of meetings for the 2017/18 Academic Session:

Tuesday 28 November 2017, 10.00 am (reserve)
Tuesday 13 February 2018, 2.00 pm
Tuesday 1 May 2018, 11.00 am (reserve)
Wednesday 20 June 2018, 2.00 pm