

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

**STAFFING COMMITTEE**

18/01 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Tuesday 13 February 2018 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 J Rowe  
Mr T Spencer

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from, Mrs A Hackett, Mrs C Rolstone, Dr C Tissot and Professor D Zaum.

18/02 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2017 were approved.

Arising from the minutes:

**Minute 17/25 (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 UCU industrial action**

The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that the USS Joint Negotiating Committee had concluded its negotiations and with the casting vote of the Chair, had voted in favour of the following proposal, to take effect from 1 April 2019:

- A move from the current arrangement to a market-leading defined contribution scheme, with *future* benefits to be delivered by the USS Investment Builder.

- To construct the proposal in such a way that allows for a range of options (including the possible re-introduction of defined-benefit arrangements) if scheme funding improves at future valuations.
- To maintain the provision of death and incapacity benefits on a defined basis so that employers continue to carry the risk in these most difficult of circumstances.

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that the UCU had formally advised the University of its intention to undertake strike action as part of its opposition to the proposed changes to the USS scheme. The strike action was due to commence on Thursday 22 February 2018 and would total 14 days (ending on Friday 16 March 2018). He confirmed that UCU had also given notice of continuous strike action short of a strike (ASOS).

He informed the Committee that a comprehensive internal communications plan was in place and information/updates had been placed on the staff portal and circulated via all-staff emails. He also confirmed that an Operations Group had now been established. The Operations Group, chaired by Professor Gavin Brooks, would be looking at practical issues and would be issuing guidance to relevant Heads via the leadership group.

He stated that it was difficult to predict the level of disruption but should all of Reading's UCU members choose to participate in strike action, significant disruption of activities, would be unavoidable.

The RUSU President confirmed that RUSU had met with University representatives to discuss ways of minimising the disruption to students and voiced his concerns on behalf of the student population.

### **Minute 17/25 (17/13, 17/02, 16/21): People Plan**

The Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that the People Plan Project Board (PPPB) had met three times since being established last term. He confirmed that Professor Mithen was the Chair and 19 staff volunteers had now been co-opted onto the PPPB. The Project Board reported to the UEB.

He informed the Committee that bids for funding the various projects would now be developed and cases would be taken to the University Strategy & Finance Committee (USF).

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that he anticipated the Staffing Committee would be provided with updates and would be asked to discuss developments and agree actions / recommendations, where appropriate.

He informed the Committee that the PPPB had discussed internal communications and would be putting in place a plan to update staff. He also confirmed that Victoria Pearson, Head of Corporate Communications, was a member of the PPPB.

*Action: The Director of Human Resources to share relevant PPPB documentation with members of the Staffing Committee*

### **Minute 17/25 (17/13, 17/08): Impact of Brexit on staff**

The Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with a further update on the support and guidance offered to those colleagues and their families who were impacted by Brexit.

The Committee asked if there was any evidence that staff were resigning from the University due to Brexit. The Director of Human Resources stated there was no evidence to indicate this and confirmed that the University would continue to monitor the situation. He also made the Committee aware that Human Resources was developing an exit interview process for capturing data when staff leave the University (including their reasons for leaving) and this would help for monitoring purposes.

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

### **Minute 17/30: Teaching Hours**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor informed the Committee that a communication regarding teaching availability for the 2018-19 academic session had now been sent to Heads of Schools for onward circulation to relevant academic staff. He reminded the Committee that there continued to be strains on the available teaching space on campus, especially at certain times e.g. Friday afternoons.

The communication will encourage staff, where possible, to make themselves available from Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 6.00 pm during term time. He acknowledged that there may be understandable and justifiable reasons why a colleague is unable to teach at certain times, and in these instances it was appropriate to approve such requests. He confirmed that Heads of School were being asked to oversee the timetabling arrangements and staff were being discouraged from liaising directly with the Timetabling team.

The Dean, Diversity & Inclusion asked if the University would be collecting any data relating to requests made by colleagues who indicate they are unavailable to teach at certain times, and the outcome of these requests i.e. whether cases were approved or rejected. It was agreed that he should

contact the HR Partner team in the first instance to discuss how best to obtain this data and engage with the Schools.

*Action: The Dean, Diversity & Inclusion to liaise with Claire Rolstone to discuss the most appropriate way to obtain data relating to requests made by colleagues who indicate they are unavailable to teach at certain times*

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

#### 18/03 Closure days

The Committee approved the proposed closure days for the 2019-20 academic session. The dates are:

Friday 20 December 2019: Normal working day  
Monday 23 December 2019: Closure Day 1  
Tuesday 24 December 2019: Closure Day 2  
Wednesday 25 December 2019: Christmas Day  
Thursday 26 December 2019: Boxing Day  
Friday 27 December 2019: Closure Day 3  
Monday 30 December 2019: Closure Day 4  
Tuesday 31 December 2019: Closure Day 5  
Wednesday 1 January 2020: New Year's Day  
Thursday 2 January 2020: Normal working day

Wednesday 8 April 2020: Normal working day  
Thursday 9 April 2020: Closure Day 6  
Friday 10 April 2020: Good Friday  
Monday 13 April 2020: Easter Monday  
Tuesday 14 April 2020: Normal working day

The Committee Secretary thanked the Committee and said, as a courtesy, he would inform the President of Reading UCU and the Co-Chair (employee representative) of the Staff Forum.

The Committee discussed the varied custom and practice across the University on the last day of work before the University closes for Xmas. In some areas it was acknowledged that staff are allowed to finish early whereas in other areas there is a requirement and expectation that staff work until the end of the working day.

It was agreed that a communication would be sent to all Heads of School / Function in the Autumn Term reminding colleagues that the University remains open for business as usual and appropriate arrangements should be in place to ensure a reasonable level of service throughout the day, would be helpful.

*Action: A communication to all School / Function Heads in the Autumn Term reminding colleagues that the University remains open for business as usual and appropriate arrangements should be in place to ensure a reasonable level of service throughout the day - author to be decided*

#### 18/04 Working Groups looking at Teaching Staff

The Committee discussed the 3 working groups established to consider teaching related matters. These related to:

- Teaching Intensive staff (Chair: Professor Julian Park);
- Teaching Fellow staff (Chair: Professor Gavin Brooks)
- Sessional Lecturers (Chair: Professor Elizabeth McCrum)

It was agreed that the Committee would receive an update at a future meeting.

*Action: The Committee will be provided with an update on the progress made by the three working groups looking at TI staff, Teaching Fellows and Sessional Lecturers at a future meeting*

#### 18/05 Maternity/Shared Parental leave – Replacement Costs

The Dean, Diversity and Inclusion reminded the Committee that since 1 August 2016 Schools have been fully reimbursed for the replacement costs when staff take shared parental leave or maternity leave, with the requirement that 25% of this funding be ring-fenced to aid return to work for the individual. He explained that he had recently written to all Heads of School to find out how this arrangement was working and to identify good practice.

The Committee sought clarify on whether this arrangement applied to staff in Functions. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed that this arrangement has applied to Functions since this academic session (2017-18).

***Post-script: Following the meeting, it was confirmed by Finance that the arrangements on the full refund of maternity and shared paternity leave for staff in the Function will come into effect in August 2018.***

#### 18/06 Remaining dates of meetings for the 2017/18 Academic Session:

Tuesday 1 May 2018, 11.00 am (reserve)  
Wednesday 20 June 2018, 2.00 pm