

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

JOINT UNIVERSITY/UCU COMMITTEE

17/19 A meeting of the Joint University/UCU Committee was held in Committee Room 2, Whiteknights House, on Friday 10 November 2017 at 2pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor
The President of Reading UCU (in the Chair)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor R Van de Noort)
Dr M Schroeter
Mrs S Pellow
The University Secretary

In attendance:

Director of Human Resources
Head of Student Information Systems (Secretary)

Apologies were received from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor Mithen).

The Committee received a statement of its membership for 2017-18, and noted that Dr Carol Fuller had been appointed by Senate as the representative to this Committee. It was also noted that there were currently two vacancies for members of the Reading UCU, since Professor Mueller-Harvey had retired.

The Committee also noted the requirement to disclose any interests.

17/20 The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2017 were approved and signed.

Arising on the Minutes:

Minute 17/11 (17/05): Report of the President of Reading UCU

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Chair of the Audit Committee would be meeting the President of Reading UCU in the next few days to discuss the outcome of the independent review of the University's Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme. He also advised that Council had approved a policy for a post-project review to be initiated within eighteen months of the completion of a project, and that a set of seven objectives had been agreed which would be used as appropriate for each project. He undertook to circulate the list of objectives and information on the projects currently on the list for review.

The President of Reading UCU welcomed this initiative, and in particular the intention to publish the results of the review and to identify actions. He noted that some negative outcomes of the E&E programme had been identified by staff as risks at an early point in the project and urged that the views of staff be given due weight during projects.

Minute 17/11 (17/06): UCU post-Brexit Policy Charter

The Vice-Chancellor reported that senior staff had considered the UCU post-Brexit Policy

Charter and had concluded that other actions to support staff were more critical at present than adopting a policy. However, if no resolution to the situation of EU citizens in the UK post-Brexit had been announced by early in the calendar year, he felt it might then be appropriate to issue a joint statement with UCU.

Dr Schroeter suggested that consideration be given to monitoring the reasons cited by members of staff who were leaving the University, so that statistical information was available for planning purposes. The Director of HR advised that a new policy on exit interviews for staff was being finalised. Further guidance sessions for staff would be arranged once more information became available.

Minute 17/13: Report of the President of Reading UCU

The Vice-Chancellor reported that Council's plans for a review of PAS, including the criteria for the review, were covered by the policy outlined above in Minute 17/20 (17/11;17/05).

Minute 17/15: Gender Pay Gap Working Group

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) reported that UEB had accepted most of the recommendations made by the Gender Pay Gap Working Group in January 2017, and these would be incorporated into the People Strategy which was currently being finalised. He outlined for the Committee members some of the key objectives, and undertook to circulate the list. The President of Reading UCU welcomed the progress being made.

Minute 17/16: Staffing Committee

The Director of HR reported that staff on Grades 6 and above would be invited to participate in the Staff Forum to improve the exchange of views. He felt that this was a positive development which would be complementary to the UCU and would not encroach on the union's right to represent these grades in negotiations. In response, the President of Reading UCU commented that there was a risk of confusion for staff in this approach, but he would clarify the role of the Staff Forum in communications to UCU members.

17/21 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Committee noted the report, in a new format, which the Vice-Chancellor had circulated to the Senate for its meeting on 17 November 2017.

The Vice-Chancellor further reported that:

- (i) Student numbers at the University had between 2012-13 and 2016-17. He was aware of the pressures on teaching space which followed this positive growth, and various refurbishment programmes were under way or planned, which would shortly be communicated more widely;
- (ii) The national debate on the merits of different funding regimes for HE was ongoing, and the University would continue to position itself as best it could for the outcome;
- (iii) The invitation to staff to join the People Strategy Board had been met with a good level of interest;
- (iv) The role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) would shortly be advertised, initially as an internal post. Different models for holding the post, for example as a job share, would be explicitly encouraged. The President of Reading UCU welcomed this move.

The Vice-Chancellor also offered his congratulations to UCU on their recent 70th anniversary.

17/22 **Report of the President of Reading UCU**

The President of Reading UCU reported that there was a high level of concern among members about the proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme pension conditions. The fact that staff in pre-1992 universities were in a worse position in relation to pension provision than staff in post-1992 universities meant that the concerns needed to be taken seriously. The Committee noted that there were different views on the pension data and the implications for the fund's sustainability, and that the Joint Negotiating Committee would shortly be making its conclusions known.

The President expressed concern about the increased pressure on IT facilities in teaching rooms, which was having a detrimental effect on the delivery of teaching, despite the best efforts of IT support staff in the context of the T&L Strategy. In response, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) advised that the University was making a significant investment in its teaching facilities, aiming to replace equipment on a rolling basis; he was aware that the replacement programme would not show results for all Schools at the same rate and commented that the high percentage of students with a unique timetable posed particular problems for the optimum use of the teaching space.

Dr Schroeter raised concerns about ongoing issues relating to hourly-paid lecturing staff, following the implementation of Campus Jobs. There remained a lack of clarity, for example, on how preparation for teaching was being paid, and what rates were appropriate for different groups of staff, and she urged that the situation be regularised without delay, especially since problems had been identified initially in 2015. In response, the Director of HR acknowledged that the implementation of Campus Jobs had uncovered some inconsistencies in the level of pay being offered by Schools, but these were being addressed and convergence on rates of pay had been agreed with the Schools concerned. The Committee agreed that clarity on this was a matter of some urgency.

In relation to the gender pay gap, Dr Schroeter suggested that sessional lecturers should be included in the ongoing statistical work, and the Committee concurred.

17/23 **Matters from the Staffing Committee**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) reported that the following matters had been discussed by the Staffing Committee at its recent meeting:

- (i) Universities Superannuation Scheme;
- (ii) the People Strategy;
- (iii) Campus Jobs;
- (iv) the results of the Staff Survey;
- (v) the implications of Brexit;
- (vi) the review of the Personal Titles process;
- (vii) out of hours teaching;
- (viii) legal changes;
- (ix) HEFCE requirements to record mandatory staff training;
- (x) possible changes to teaching hours, in the context of the pressure on teaching rooms;
- (xi) teaching staff network.

17/24 **Dates of meetings in the Session 2017-18**

It was noted that further meetings of the Joint University/UCU Committee in the Session 2017-18 had been scheduled for:

Tuesday 6 February 2018 at 10.30am
Wednesday 23 May 2018 at 10.30 am