**Minutes of the School Policy and Resources Committee (SPRC) meeting**

**Wednesday 08 June 2022**

**12:00 – 14:00 [Room 2.53, HBS]**

**Present:** Mark Baker, Laura Black, James Evans, Martin Evans (Chair), Kay Hodgson, Steve Jones, Sarah Lindley, Andy Milne, Khalid Nadvi, Kelly Osgood (for second hour), Fidel Peacock, Edita Pymm, Juup Stelma, Stephen Walker, Kevin Woods, Isabella Machin (minutes)

**Guest Speaker:** Terry Hanley

 Jenna Mittelmeier

 Gareth Clay

1. **Apologies:** Jonny Huck, Laura Ingleby, Lizzy Langton & Kerry McCann
2. **Minutes of SPRC Meeting held on 27 April 2022**

The minutes were approved.

It was agreed that actions 241121-05, 160322-01, 110522-02, 250522-01 and 250522-02 are now complete.

The committee were reminded to encourage their departments to complete the EDI Pulse Survey in regards to the Athena Swan submission.

1. **Head of School Report (ME)**
* Workforce planning was discussed at FLT with the new Head of Workforce Planning, Helen Ashley. Discussions particularly centred on the lack of interest in the Head of Department role as well as succession planning and difficult areas of recruitment.
* Space remains an ongoing conversation.
* Professorial academic promotions were announced w/c 30th May, with all those that were nominated being successful. This includes 6 new Professors.
* Recruitment continues throughout SEED. It was noted that MIE have successfully recruited for 3 new roles.
1. **Head of School Operations Report (KH)**

Key aspects of the report included:

* **SEP**

The Trade Union consultation has now closed. The Programme Team were still accepting feedback and questions from those that were impacted up until Monday 6th June and staff are now aware that the deadline has passed. It was noted that this was a smooth consultation process and there will now be detailed sessions for Grade 6 and 7 managers who are closely involved in the job matching process of colleagues into posts.

An article will be available on Staffnet shortly, authored by Patrick Hackett, providing a brief overview on the delivery of the tech process section of the SEP. This covers the University’s challenges on both SEP and the Finance transformation programme, in relation to Oracle. The latter underpins all work in Finance and therefore, a decision has been made to delay some aspects of SEP tech & process in order to prioritise the financial issues. Both of these programmes are dependent on IT resource and the University’s resources cannot facilitate both at this current time. There will be more detailed replanning of SEP aspects in due course. The people and structure project will continue.

It was noted that discussions will continue with local managers on resource levels and staff workload. KO has set up departmental engagement meetings with academic colleagues to support any further issues.

* **Finance**

The Authorised Signatory approvals deadline is 23rd June 2022. There have been particular issues with the submission of Cash Passports and colleagues were advised that requests for these should be made at least 21 days before scheduled travel.

* **Estates**

ME and KH are now on a Faculty group in relation to strategic space options for Humanities.

The HBS foyer and quad refurbishments will commence imminently after the exam period. Dates are to be confirmed for the work in B12 as an extension of the B15 Architecture workshop. The Kantorowich library space will be refurbished in July as Harrow Green will need to remove book collection in the first instance. KH will be meeting with Kate McNamee to discuss student communications regarding the disruption over summer, as the library will be closed in Semester 1.

The A and B block foyers in EWB will be refurbed; KH met with SJ and Bee Hughes to discuss potential for an update to the EWB quad. A brief will be drafted for the Estates team to consider.

The ALB common room will be redecorated and furniture will be replaced. It was suggested that a similar mural may be proposed for HBS.

**Action: KH to circulate details regarding ALB mural and the artist's work to SLT for information**

* **Travel**

Key Travel is still the primary contact for booking travel, with Diversity travel as a secondary option. FP was thanked for his hard work on the vast amount of risk assessments. Structures and process in School Office has had positive support from staff.

ME advised the Committee that discussions continue on the £20m to be spent by the Faculty in regards to Size and Shape. There are discussions of the balance of staff and student space ongoing. SEED and SOSS would like this spent on staff space due to departmental constraints. There was suggestion to pilot a Humanities option for a more open plan working space – a ‘reimagining’ of how we use office space. Positives and negatives of this option will be explored. The University’s carbon zero agenda means that Humanities will have to reimagine existing space as both the environmental and financial impact of a new build is not viable.

JE added that findings from the Geography office survey indicated little support for sharing offices however, more than half of the respondents supported a radical rethinking of the current space. It was suggested that a forward-thinking redesign of campus buildings may prove popular with staff. The Faculty are working with a consultant on multi-use work space to establish potential options. KW added that staff have lost confidence in the completion of architectural changes and drawings from Architects may help to positively inform staff about future plans and their benefits. The importance will be to complete the works to a high standard to avoid further reluctance, especially with those in their own offices.

SJ added that PGC secondary colleagues in EWB relocated to a shared office and vacated separate offices with a positive outcome. There is potential to reproduce this model across the building however, there is a need to reconceptualise the impression around office sharing. JS suggested a replication of the PS hybrid model, taking into account differing needs of Academics. A breakout area/designated meeting room space would reduce timetable clashes within shared offices.

KN raised the ongoing issue aroundattendance at forum meetings and seminars due to the hybrid option after lockdown.

**Risk and Compliance / Health & Safety / Information Governance (FP)**

Communication has been sent to all staff regarding the Policy Awareness Programme. HoDs were advised to remind staff of this communication.

1. **Admissions update (EP)**

Please refer to the document circulated.

Due to changes in staged admissions and other factors, it was confirmed that there cannot be complete confidence in conversion rates until September. Recently, conversion rates have been more mobile than the static rates of previous years.

The conversion rates are calculated using data from offers to registrations on 1st December, building in the attrition rate. There are no attrition rates for PGT on an individual basis due to this calculation.

When discussing geographical diversity and income, it was confirmed that all students from cohorts apart from China had been prioritised.

Simon Merriwest will be prioritising applications and admissions whilst changes occur within the SEP tech process.

1. **Research update (TH / JM)**

Please refer to the document circulated.

FP was reassured that a Health and Safety training course is included on EProg, when students register for the course. LB will revisit this at the beginning of each academic year however, there was a suggestion to do further training when students move to fieldwork in Year 3.

SL questioned whether PGRs are requested to provide feedback on training that they would have liked to see included in the course. JM confirmed that this would partially be included in the annual review process. JM distributed a survey to first years to collate reflections on the current programme with minimal take up. The prominent suggestion was that the courses are overrun with Education. Work will continue with student reps to map out the training that is required.

1. **Vice-President for Research visit to SEED (SL)**

The information pack was received by SL and ME on 7th June. This included data on:

* REF
* Applications and Awards
* Income
* Citations
* PG Research
* PS Support (tbc)

SEED have been requested to complete a two page document by 20th June 2022 detailing:

* REF 2021 headlines
* Research strength and areas of concern
* Strategic actions and directions
* Research funding
* Impact
* PGR
* Research style

It was suggested that SL complete a draft of this paper and circulate to SPRC for feedback.

The question around attendance at the SEED visit was raised after an initial group of colleagues were suggested by SL and LG. The core research team is currently included however, SEED may want to include HoDs and departmental leads. KN requested the input of departmental leads due to the mention of future strategies in the paper.

**Action: Research Strategy and School visit: Two-page headline self-assessment to be drafted and circulated to HoDs/SLT for input**

**Action: HoDs to nominate colleagues to attend Vice-President for Research visit and advise SL accordingly**

1. **New PGT Geography field trip (Gareth Clay)**

Historically, these course proposals would be submitted to PAG for approval however,

this does not take on board the financial obligations accurately. Courses have been signed off as within budget despite the TLSE budget not existing.

JS advised that TLSE are trialling processes to sign courses off in a more cogent way. The dimensions are:

* Ethics
* Sustainability
* ILOs
* Health and Safety
* Cost of equipment
* Planning for Plan B
* Staffing

This will be integrated into the PAG process. SRAT will not be contacted at this current stage however, they may be involved if recruitment is affected.

It was agreed that finance sign off should be added to the TLSE process requiring approval of the financial plan from HoD and HoS.

**Action: Gareth Clay to be contacted regarding PGT Geography field trip and criteria for PAG submission.**

GC pitched to SPRC for a new residential field course for one of the core Masters programmes, EMMR. EMMR has been running for 15+ years with principles around monitoring, modelling and reconstruction. It was noted that the course does not provide high levels of monitoring experience outside of the classroom and that a residential field course is not currently included within the programme.

There are 30 students on the course with consistent sign up year on year however, sister programmes are growing more rapidly. Furthermore, other Universities run these field courses.

UoM students on EMMR are needing more support on field based activity due to lack of

experience when completing the dissertation.

The UG trip to Northumberland, in place of the planned trip to the Pyrenees, identified the need for the proposed programme and the ability to do so due to the experience with finding sites and accessibility.

GC proposed a 3-5 day field trip for 2023/24 estimated at £875 per student. This would be a core credit bearing unit with a focus on field based activity followed by an in-classroom write up. A site in Northumberland has been scouted and there is a strong group of staff to support this. It would be run early Semester 1 as an induction or pre-induction trip to avoid disruption of the teaching programme. Pedagogical and financial elements around this course will need to be clearly defined.

JE noted that the experience from Green Infrastructure this year, which implemented a change of trip from Berlin to London, was found to be more popular. This was confirmed by MB, who organised PEM courses in Inverness and Glasgow. A suggestion was made for GC to explore if a UK based trip increased overseas interest.

KO noted the sensitivity around increased fees because of inclusion of fieldwork, as there may be issues around any refunds requested. It is important we do not connect fieldwork directly to fees.

1. **International Fieldwork (KO)**

A decision is required on the running of international fieldwork for the next academic year in South Africa, Uganda and Seattle. This will need to be decided imminently due to the opening date for applications. If these do not go ahead, SEED will need to provide an alternative.

KN confirmed that the Uganda trip and one of the South Africa trips will remain next year. The Cyprus trip may need to be altered due to lack of uptake however, there is not a clear rationale to cancel this now that COVID restrictions have lifted, except if a certified alternative was suggested. MB stated that the trip to Seattle will be decided during the PEM departmental meeting on 14th June.

It was noted that Plan B arrangements must be considered, particularly for long-haul trips.

Communications will be cascaded from EP’s team by end of July 2022.

1. **Any other business**

Andrew Walsh is coordinating a SEED workshop to discuss the wider issues surrounding Research services and its support to academic staff. It was noted that Neil Humphrey will be in attendance.

SL has produced a paper to advise HoDs on how to make decisions about Consultancy. The University policy has not changed however the current system works with the new guidance.

**Action: Consultancy paper to be circulated for feedback to SL.**

SPRC were advised that if they were impacted by the strike during the SLT away day and required an additional hotel booking, to advise accordingly.