

UCU/University Negotiating Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 04 July 2019

Present: Dr Gregory Lane-Serff (G L-S) [in the Chair] Professor Wendy Olsen (WO), Dr Adam Ozanne (AO), Ms Caroline Martin (CM), Professor Linda Davies, Professor Luke Georghiou (LG) Patrick Hackett (PH), Karen Heaton (KH), Graham Smith (GS), Shelley Khan (SK) [minutes]

Apologies: Andrew Mullen

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2019

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

2. Action Log

This is to be taken together within part 3- matters arising.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Academic Probation

Following UCU concerns on the timing of NAP sessions which sometimes clash with probationer's teaching commitments they had requested for this to be reviewed. Having received data relating to cases not confirmed at the end of the third and fourth year with a breakdown by gender and ethnicity, UCU requested data showing the total numbers of probationary cases of which this group formed a sub-set. Following receipt of this additional data UCU asked for further clarifications as follows:

Humanities

- a) There are zero appeals- are colleagues aware that they can appeal probation decisions?
- b) For the two female staff members in AMBS who were put onto T&S contracts due to not having met research expectations, how do we know that the University met its obligations to provide a sufficient environment for them to undertake research?
- c) What does 'no HNAP completion' mean?

FSE

- a) Why does no one pass probation after 4 years? In several Schools there are more people up for confirmation after 4 years than 3, all unsuccessful. Again, there are no appeals.
- b) Was anyone put onto teaching-focused roles, as explained in the Humanities notes?

It was agreed that the University have not had the chance to consider and provide a response to these issues; therefore, these points are to be taken forward to the next meeting.

3.2 Research expectations, performance management and P&DR

UCU welcomed the message from Colette Fagan that RRE scores are not to be used in a formal process such as performance management and disciplinary processes.

UCU noted that there are still concerns about the RRE process as it refers to 3* papers. LG reiterated the University position that RRE grades are not to be used in these circumstances. However, the University expects everyone to have some research output of international quality, which is policy. This is set out in the Statement of Expectations which was extensively consulted upon and agreed by Senate. UCU do not agree and suggested that it does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment. UCU have concerns that, as staff do not receive individual papers and scores that they cannot identify if they have been scored properly.

UCU raised issues on how under performance is being managed and organised. AO noted that some staff who have publications in RRE not rated at 3* are then being performance managed.

University responded that the RRE is largely accurate and that quality of outputs can be assessed outside of the RRE.

UCU noted they had not agreed to the rating/self-assessment box on the PDR form with the University and have said that this was rolled out to PS staff. The union's objections to the tick box are that it causes biases in terms of origins, types of contracts and the risk is that some may underscore themselves. The UCU suggested consulting on this and reviewing the PDR process.

The University side disagreed and have pointed out that it is where the manager would discuss with the individual and often relay the message that the employee has underscored themselves. KH disagreed that it was appropriate to consult at this point on the PDR process as we are currently rolling out to the final areas; however, KH has said she would be happy to have that discussion on the review next year.

UCU noted they would like to be in a position where they can recommend the PDR process to their members and to take part in the process.

PH stated that he is disappointed at the low completion rates and has noted that this does not feel that it is in the best interest of the members of the union not to take the opportunity to participate in the PDR process.

3.3 Equality and Diversity Action plan and the Gender Pay Gap

Following the previous agreement to meet to discuss the GPG findings and action plan, it was noted that a meeting had not yet taken place due to lack of availability in diaries.

KH has stated that AM has been chasing a date for this to take place. KH has suggested that if there can be at least one representative can attend then they would like to go ahead with the meeting. It would be helpful if it was the same person that can attend each meeting and matter can then move on.

The request for data on starting salaries is to be looked at within the meeting.

3.4 Redeployment Policy

It was agreed that this matter is to be kept under review.

3.5 Teaching Assistants

UCU would welcome an update on the claim the union submitted last year.

The University stated that AM is leading on this and the last update was that the matter is almost at conclusion with Matt Arrowsmith of UCU. The main change is the issue around payment for training and the matter around what is compulsory training and what is not. The University have agreed to pay for all attendance on compulsory with effect from the new academic year.

The UCU welcomed this commitment and are pleased that this matter is in a much better place.

4. General Update

4.1 Augar Review

LG noted the Augar Review has suggested a fee reduction in some subject areas without compensation to universities for the loss in revenue. Understandably, this has not been received well by the sector. The present Parliament would not be expected to pass this through. The other recommendation is that there is a freeze in fee at £9,250 per year; this has been downgraded as a risk.

Both the University and UCU recognise that the sector is dealing with a national problem.

4.2 Pensions

The University is drafting its response to the consultations but the position is that we move quickly to 2020 evaluation and this will allow the JEP 2 to report. PH has stated that the University are going to endorse option 3 and whilst it is not ideal this gives us time to allow JEP 2 to find a solution for the long term viability of the scheme. The University are being very supportive of JEP 2 as there were concerns with JEP 1 and the challenge with JEP 2 is that this has to provide a sustainable future for USS.

UCU noted that there has been a change in tone from the University. The union highlighted that Sheffield University would argue that there isn't a problem and that they have reluctantly agreed to option 3. UCU would like the University to stand up to USS more as to why they are not upholding JEP.

4.3 League Table

LG highlighted that the University achieved 3rd place in Times Higher Impact Ranking (based on contribution to the UN SDGs), 27th place in the QS World University Rankings table and 9th place in the Times Higher Education table for teaching in Europe. LG highlighted that there was a 1 point increase in the NSS table. However, this was still in the bottom half of that table.

5. Financial and institutional support for international staff

The UCU noted their concerns and have asked for a) more financial support for the international staff, b) more advice and practical support for example, with visas and immigration issues. The UCU stated that some other universities in the North West are now providing more financial support and better general support. The challenge is for this University to provide them with good quality advice on visa matters.

The University stated that its aim is for its provision to remain amongst the best in the sector. This matter was reviewed in a recent meeting of the HR Sub-Committee and

the aim is to keep this under review. In terms of quality advice at the University, we are not qualified to give this advice and therefore, only basic advice can be given and try to help and support where we can. In relation to the UKVI the University have requested numbers in order to try and identify if it is a particular area which may need further clarity on this matter.

The University is to check its website and the new starter packs to ensure this is clear and guides international colleagues appropriately.

The UCU have concerns with fixed-term/casual staff suffering from NHS surcharges.

The University stated that it will be monitoring the support provisions for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) applications but the cost is very high.

The UCU requested an update on the University's position regarding the policy of making reimbursements for the dependant's visa costs as these are not currently being reimbursed.

The University responded that the relocation expense is dependent on salary and there is a cap. The HMRC have provided a list of items which would be covered and for most staff this works well. AM to summarise.

The UCU concern is that people have left or will not join the University due to this issue.

The University have requested UCU to provide examples and numbers of any such cases as there is little evidence of this.

6. Small World Café Closure

The UCU expressed their concerns over the closure of the Small World Café as this has for many years provided a dedicated meeting/eating place for international staff and students. The UCU requested a timescale.

PH responded that the University is in the middle of this situation as it is not the University's decision but one for the Trustees of that cafe.

In response to general comments about wider catering across campus, PH highlighted that University-run catering outlets need to be self-financing but too many are loss making which are not therefore sustainable and that there are a number of new privately run outlets on campus which are now increasing quality and choice for students and staff. PH added that if the University-run catering units are in demand and self-financing then we will look at that, however, he suspects that this is not the case.

The UCU asked that is it reasonable for outlets to make a profit and also asked if the rent charged is increasing?

PH replied that we are not asking them to make a profit; however, we require them to at least break even. PH confirmed that the rent is not increasing as these are University owned facilities, where some have been leased by Bruntwood for example under contractual arrangements. The University believes sthat there are too many Food on Campus outlets which are loss making.

The UCU replied that the issue is about the student experience and that it would be better to have something for them.

The University side disagreed and state that if the students were happy with the outlets then they would be using them and they wouldn't be making a loss.

7. Transfers from fixed-term to open ended contracts

The UCU are concerned about the language used for those who have been on FTC's for more than 4 years and that there has apparently been some confusion in Human Resources in some cases.

KH has asked for PB to raise this matter within the contract working group. KH asked the UCU for numbers and where the issues are. As this should be a contract working group matter, KH is to ask Heather Graham and Sarah March to arrange a meeting with PB on the subject.

8. SALC Language Tutors

UCU raised concerns about the message regarding the Language Tutors in relation to how they are being organised and fit into SALC. This is an area where the UCU have stated would be useful for them to be consulted about. Some of the issues UCU are concerned about are restrictions on working practices, workloads and that people are being told that they have to take holidays at certain times of the year.

KH replied that they will need to look into this matter in terms of contract status and practice, work load, holidays and restructuring.

The UCU raised a further concern on the grading and the promotion criteria from Grade 5 to Grade 6 as the staff are being told that this is not available to them. UCU believe that academic promotions criteria should apply to this group.

9. Personal property cover under the University travel insurance

The UCU have concerns that the University travel insurance cover no longer covers the personal property of staff travelling on University business.

The University is already looking into into this matter, however, this is not under any terms and conditions of employment and therefore, it will not be subject to negotiation.

10. Student mental health and suicides.

The UCU have concerns over student welfare and in particular regarding the increase of suspected student suicides over the past six years. The UCU are concerned that there may be issues relating to the Residential Life restructure and the effect this will have on pastoral care. ~~It was noted that~~The UCU have received information via a Freedom of Information request ~~and there had~~ ~~and the matter has been referred to~~ ~~been a dedicated special briefing on the subject at a recent meeting of Senate.~~ Whilst these numbers are small and it can be difficult to draw conclusions, they are questioning what the cause for these suicides may be. To that end, UCU have asked for more data on age, circumstances and the support the students have received. The UCU also have concerns on staff mental health. Although the University have a model to do this and that and have Occupational Health to deal

with the issues on an individual basis, the UCU are concerned that the University overlooks the potential causes of staff mental health issues such as restructuring processes.

The University stated that we need to be careful around the language and the assertion of data on mental health, suicide and residential life. The issue of staff wellbeing is increasingly being pushed forward on the agenda for all our staff.

11. Arrangements for retired academics

The UCU raised matters relating to retired academics who continue to contribute to University via research, supervision of Masters and PhD students, ad-hoc training and international projects. The UCU requested for a clause or procedure to make this clearer for retired staff and to grant them some basic status at the University.

The University highlighted that there is an Honorary Procedure however, that this is not automatically given to all retired staff. The procedure does cover all those with Honorary and Emeritus status, which is used for those academics who are retiring. The University have suggested that they will review the wording of the policy and associated procedure to make sure it is clear and that it covers the retired group.

12. Climate Change

The UCU welcomed the declaration from Nancy. The UCU have working groups in this area and have stated that they are disappointed with the University decision not to allow staff to attend the climate day event on 27 September and to rearrange their work so they are able to attend. The UCU have noted that this decision does not sit well with what the University do already.

The University noted that there will be activities around this; however, it is a matter of personal choice and not within their rights to mandate this for staff to attend.

13. MECD

The UCU raised some concerns in relation to the MECD building and the decision to have open plan offices for all PS staff and shared offices (with at least 4 staff) for all academics. The issues related to noise levels, overcrowding and perceptions about students being able to speak on a one to one basis with an academic. It was UCU's view that these decisions should be reconsidered.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 4 November 2019 at 10.00am