

## UCU/University Negotiating Committee

### Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 7 July 2020

Present: Simeon Gill (SG), Eva Herman (EH), David Swanson (DS) [in the Chair], Abbie Winton (AW), Patrick Hackett (PH), Karen Heaton (KH) Andrew Mullen (AM), Professor Nalin Thakkar (NT), Anna Line (AL) [minutes]

Apologies: None

#### **1 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2019**

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

#### **2 Matters arising**

##### **2.1 Language Tutors**

It was noted that UCU had submitted a collective grievance in relation to the payment/grading of Language Tutors and Senior Language Tutors, and their access to academic promotion procedures. AM stated that arrangements were being put in place to consider the collective grievance as soon as possible. He also undertook to respond to UCU's outstanding query regarding the basis for the use of fixed term contracts for some of these staff.

**Action: AM**

##### **2.2 Fossil fuels and greener transport practices**

UCU congratulated the University on its recent decision to end investments in fossil fuel reserve and extraction companies by 2022, and to 'decarbonise' all investments by 2038

UCU noted that Bolton University was offering a free bicycle to new international students and suggested that the University might consider offering a free bicycle to all new international students.

In reply, NT noted that the Campus Re-opening Group had judged that this wasn't feasible. As well as the significant cost of purchasing thousands of bicycles, it would represent a huge logistical issue. For example, the campus did not have the storage space to safely secure that volume. It was noted that Bolton had many fewer students.

#### **3 General University Update**

It was noted that a comprehensive general update had been provided by PH at the previous day's meeting of University representatives with campus trade unions,

#### **4 Performance and Development Reviews and revised PDR forms**

SG noted that UCU had proposed the adoption of a P&DR form at the previous meeting for use for academic and research staff. The University had since reviewed its form and launched a single version for all staff. UCU was concerned about adoption of this form based on grounds of its views on the need for differentiation as well as content.

SG suggested consideration should be given to differentiation of forms between T&R and T&S staff. It was felt the form was aligned to needs of PS staff and that it didn't consider academic staff. UCU also believed forms for academic staff should differentiate further between Teaching Focused staff and Teaching and Research staff.

In terms of content, UCU objected to the use of rating and that the rating didn't relate to personal development or progress against development objectives. UCU would like the word customer removed.

PH stated academic promotion and PDR should be closely aligned and suggested the university should have a standard template that covers all staff with sub-sections and guidance that makes clear some colleagues would complete different parts of the form. UCU collectively would like to see two different forms, one for academics and one for academic related and differentiation between two main scopes would be useful to address the differences in the roles, areas of performance and development.

It was agreed that the matter would be discussed further with KH and HR colleagues, with a separate group set up to discuss and UCU would nominate colleagues to take part in those discussions and would submit its views based on our consultation with members, other University P&DRs and, consideration of P&DR practices more generally.

NH agreed with what was said about the form and stated that training needs such as Data Protection and Health and Safety should be picked up as part of P&DR process and more targeted forms for PS and academic staff would be good.

**Action: KH/UCU**

## **5 Teaching Assistants**

### **5.1 Use of zero hours contracts**

It was confirmed that after the discovery of incidences of use of contracts which in FSE and FBMH which contained no reference to minimum guaranteed hours, immediate measures were taken to address the matter, which was now resolved. It was also noted that casual contracts would continue to be used in a very limited circumstances such as when there was a need to cover TA work at short notice.

### **5.2 Payment for scheduled and contracted work**

Following the University's undertaking in March that TAs would receive payment for any scheduled and contracted work even where classes were cancelled, it was confirmed by both UCU and the University that sufficient measures has been put in place to fulfil this undertaking.

UCU reported that payments for TAs in Architecture and Politics were not made until June and undertakings were sought that late recruitment of TAs next year would not delay payments. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed outside of the meeting in more detail (see also 5.4 below).

**Action: AM/UCU**

### **5.3 Request for additional payment to be allocated to those GTAs who have had to work extra hours due to Covid-19**

UCU reported that a survey of members in Humanities indicated that some GTAs had to devote extra time to supporting the transfer of teaching online in Semester 2, but that the University had rejected a request for additional payment following consultation with relevant colleagues and advice that the paid time allocated should have been adequate. Specifically, UCU reported that colleagues had told them that significant additional time was required in supporting students.

It was agreed that AM would organise a meeting with relevant Faculty colleagues to discuss the matter further.

UCU also reported that PGR students In Chemistry had been asked to volunteer in June for up to a day to support development of online material for next year and is one of the things being pushed at Faculty board and something for discussion in FSE. The University representatives stated that unpaid work was not appropriate and the matter would be investigated.

PH noted that it would be helpful to issue a reminder to all Schools on our policy regarding employment and payment of TAs.

**Action: AM/UCU**

5.4 Loss of current and future earnings as a result of Covid-19

UCU reported uncertainty and contradictory messages about whether there will be work available for GTAs next year. Some departments have stated that GTAs will recruited and trained, though there will be no guarantee of work being provided due to uncertainty about student numbers. Other messages suggested that there may not be funds for GTA support while others suggested that more GTA input may be required.

AM undertook to organise a meeting with relevant colleagues from each Faculty to discuss arrangements for next academic year and to explain in more detail the reasons for current uncertainty.

**Action: AM**

5.5 Concern about communication

UCU reported concerns about receiving relevant communications for staff and being omitted from consideration of matters that affect them. It was agreed that the matter would be discussed in more detail at a meeting with AM.

**Action: AM/UCU**

5.6 Health and safety, risks assessments, equipment audits: Concerns over returning to work policies.

UCU sought and received assurances that GTAs would receive appropriate consideration and guidance ahead of any return to small group teaching in Semester 1. AM stated GTAs are considered teaching staff in this context with the same consideration and protocols as any other group. NT noted that appropriate plans, risk assessments, guidance and communications were put in place for all staff and students returning to campus.

5.7 Additional paid training to provide online teaching

UCU noted that AMBS was offering payment to GTAs for time spent undertaking mandatory training designed for staff providing online teaching, UCU proposed that the approach to such training and payment should be consistent across the University. AM undertook to investigate the matter further.

**Action: AM**

5.9 Unreasonable marking deadlines/Changing marking deadlines

UCU reported issues in Politics of GTAs receiving short lead times for completing marking and, more recently, a bringing forward of a marking deadline with little notice. It was reported that this placed PGR students under significant pressure and stress at a busy time

of the year in their studies. AM undertook to follow up the matter with relevant colleagues with a view to understanding and seeking to prevent any such issues recurring.

**Action: AM**

**6 UCU facility time**

It was noted that in order to support increasing demand due to a 50% rise in membership and casework, UCU had requested an increase in facility time to reflect sector norms and workloads of union members in respect of issues of Covid and other uncertainties currently ongoing.

As part of this request, it was seeking additional representation to support health and safety activities and other issues. KH requested details of the current arrangements by way of a baseline for considering the request. KH undertook to then assess and respond to the request.

**Action: UCU/KH**

**7 Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 3 November 2020 at 2 p.m.