

**Notes of meeting no 22 of the combined JNC held on Wednesday 5 August 2020**

**Present (virtually)**: Stephen Shute, Pro Vice Chancellor, (Planning and Resources) (SS) (chair); Siobhan O’Reilly, Director of HR (SOR); UCU: Andrew Chitty (AC); Nadya Ali (NA); Jackie Grant (JG). UNITE: Paula Burr (PB); Daniel Hyndman (DH); UNISON: Holly Foster (HF); Claire Colburn (ClCol); Elaine Stephen (ES); Tim Westlake (TW); Keith Hart (KH); Lauren Rodrigues (LR).

**Apologies**: Bridget Edminson (BE), Jo Pawlik (JP), Joanne Paul (JP), Mike Moran (MM)

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| 1/22 | **Notes of Previous Meetings**  Notes of the meeting (no 21) 24 July 2020 were agreed as correct. |  |
| 2/22 | **Feedback from Return to Work Guidance**  SOR had shared the guidance documents in advance of the meeting and asked for any comments. SOR noted that a request to voluntary return was something that had already been discussed and considered, but this was not the approach the University was proposing to take. It was explained that the process needed to work for all, especially as there was a considerable amount of anxiety around the return amongst staff.  CF asked what service would be provided and what that would mean for staff (balance between reduced services and staff being comfortable to provide services). CF explained that it was difficult for people to comment if they didn’t know what service they would provide. TW explained that the University was considering a blended model and each team was working on this and planning what that would look like.  AC said that in principal UCU believed that all teaching next term should be online, and if staff were invited to engage in face-to-face teaching this must be on a fully voluntary basis without the need for justification, with guarantees that those who opted out would not suffer any financial or career detriment. The same voluntary basis should apply to all other on-campus work. AC said that the Vice Chancellor’s communications on 15th May and 23rd July 2020 said that no-one was expected to work in an environment that was not safe, and that people should make that decision themselves.  AC said that the only alternative to a voluntary approach was a policy of systematic exemptions for those who are, or who live with those who are, at higher risk of death, severe illness, or prolonged illness (Long Covid or Post-Covid Syndrome) if they are infected. Here 'those who are at higher risk' would be identified by medical condition, age, gender, BAME-status or socio-economic factors. AC said that the current guidance did not consider those who may belong to two or more risk categories.  SS said that the Vice Chancellor’s communications AC had referred to had been in relation to the specific context of shutting campus and was not intended to extend beyond that and cover the Autumn term return of staff.  SOR said the document referred to staff returning to campus ‘wherever possible’. The University would consider individual concerns and circumstances but there needed to be a certain level of staff on campus otherwise the University would become unviable. AC appreciated that some roles were essential to campus and the guidance needed to be issued soon. |  |
| 3/22 | **Financial position of the University**  SS said that there was not great deal to add but Allan Spencer (AS) had set out potential scenarios for the University and there were two major components. The first related to fewer international students attending University in 2020, and fewer students paying for residence at the University. The second component related to student experience on campus. If significantly fewer students attended in September, the University would need to reduce costs considerably. |  |
| 4/22 | **Plans for staff engagement with the financial challenges ahead**  SOR was planning to hold staff engagement sessions from August – September. The focus would be to allow staff the opportunity submit written ideas about how to reduce costs. SOR explained that these would be interactive sessions so that staff could talk openly about their ideas to reduce costs and increase income. SOR recognised that PS staff were normally engaged in this but would like to get Academic input as well, and **encouraged the trade unions to ask colleagues to attend**.  **SOR would be sending out communications with a brief introduction as the new HRD but also reminding staff about the current flexible work policy especially during the financial challenges.**  JG said the financial challenges stemmed from home students not just because of Covid but also because of NSS/league tables. JG said that staff workload may be why staff may not be engaging voluntarily and perhaps the budget could be reviewed to invest in this.  SS said that a lot of the threat had come from international student numbers but also Covid uncertainty for both home and international students. The University was experiencing challenges in recruitment for undergraduates, applications had declined in the last 3 years. SS said that a lot of Universities hadn’t experienced this, and it correlated to league tables.  JG commented on an improvement to teaching scores in the NSS which was good. SS said that despite this, the University’s rankings had declined, the University was now looking at top 50 rankings as opposed to peaking at the top 20 in league tables statistics. AC responded that over the last 3-4 years, teaching faculty had changed very little so questioned why the applications had been declining. If NSS results were poor across the University perhaps UEG needed to look at this. AC said there was a feeling that the University thought that academics were to blame, however SS previously stated that it wasn’t a question of blaming people but the University working collectively to bring about an improvement.  TW said the University needed to respond to structural change, for example the market changing. The approach should be everyone working together. AC suggested perhaps a working group involving University Executive and unions to look at this matter. | **TU reps**  **SOR** |
| 5/22 | **Car parking charges**  SS said that no decision had yet been made on this, but options were actively being explored. TW said they had received a draft paper which would go to UEG.  PB queried staff who would not normally drive in and whether they would have to pay for the whole year. TW confirmed there was a proposal to bring in car parking charges from 1 October which would be discounted. |  |
| 6/22 | **Teaching next term** (UCU)  Already discussed. |  |
| 7/22 | **Request for review and EIA of contract transfers in run-up to census date** (UCU)  AC summarised a short paper (request for action in connection with REF 2021). UCU were concerned about pressure on faculty to move over to teaching-only contracts and that appeared to be an abuse of the REF process. AC requested that this issue was addressed and the REF code of practise was publicised, and a formal review conducted in the lead up to July.  AC mentioned that teaching-only contracts and changes have a significant impact on BAME and female staff (see document).  KH confirmed that the Provost wrote to the Heads of School to reinforce the Code of Practice and stress the importance for everyone to follow it. |  |
| 8/22 | **Transfer of FTC staff with four years continuous service to open-ended contracts** (UCU)  AC summarised the document (security of employment for hourly paid language tutors - HPLT’s) in the Sussex Centre for Language Studies**.** AC mentioned SCLS tutors on FTC for 4 years or more not being satisfied with how it has being dealt with.  KH explained to members that colleagues in HR were working on this and have a scheduled meeting. Other contracts, ongoing work behind the scenes and the HR Business Services team were working on a trigger point mechanism to get letters out to those effected by end of August. |  |
| 9/22 | **Use of DTs/ATs/STs next term** (UCU)  AC mentioned that in the Head of School meeting with Allan Spencer, they discussed the used of Tutors next term, and requested reassurance that UEG would not be intervening on decisions about DT contracts. SS that it was Heads of School who made decisions about employing DTs within their budgets.  JG explained that budgets may go over but will be less than DT budget and the impact on marking assessment would be big.  SS reminded members it was the responsibility of the Head of School on how to spend budget and the key would be how many students there were next year in order to understand the teaching workload. |  |
| 10/22 | **AOB**  SOR mentioned to members that the **Flexible Working Blended Policy was being rewritten and would be shared with all**. Sharon Neal was working on Wellbeing and would join the next SCJNC.  **SOR would be sharing the guidance document and toolkit for returning to campus but would also share information in between meetings with members and welcomed feedback** | **SOR**  **SOR/TU reps** |
| 13/22 | **Date of Next Meeting**  20 August 2020, 2pm via Microsoft Teams |  |

**Human Resources**

**14/08/20**