

**Notes of meeting no 6 of the special, combined JNC held on Friday 3 April 2020**

**Present (virtually)**: Stephen Shute, Pro Vice Chancellor, (Planning and Resources) (SS); Tim Westlake, Chief Operating Officer (TW); Peter Brook, Interim Director of HR (PBr); Keith Hart, Deputy Director of HR (KH); John Hallam, Interim Assistant Director of HR (ER) (JH); Andrew Chitty (UCU) (AC); Joanna Pawlik (UCU) (JP); Michael Moran, Regional Officer, UCU (MM); Paula Burr (UNITE) (PB); Daniel Hyndman (UNITE) (DH); Max O’Donnell- Savage (UNITE) (MOS); Claire Colburn (UNISON) (ClCol); Holly Foster, UNISON (HF); Luke Murphy

**Apologies**: Adam Tickell; Chris Chatwin (CC); Elaine Stephen (ES); Caroline Fife

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| 1/6 | **Notes of the previous meetings (Meeting notes 4 and 5)**These were not reviewed at this meeting. |  |
| 2/6 | **Government Job Retention ‘Furlough’ Scheme (JRS)**SS said that the University was working on the development of a furlough scheme. Details of the Government scheme were still quite limited and more needed to be understood before this was fully rolled out. It was hoped the University would be in a position to share more about its proposals early next week. The HE Minister had confirmed on a number of occasions that the scheme did apply to HE but some issues remained to be clarified. The national joint trade unions has sent a note to UCEA requesting national level discussions about the Government’s scheme. |  |
| 3/6 | **Update on Current Situation**PB noted the OfS had been approached about providing financial protection for Universities and asked what the view of local management was about how this would be received. ClCol also referred to the HESA data set published recently showing the relative reliance, by University, on international income. SS said the University had been in a relatively strong financial position but that the impact of the covid-19 pandemic placed very real and increasing challenges on the University’s finances. For example, the decision not to charge students for accommodation in term 3 represented millions of lost income. The University had enjoyed strong income from international students but this income was now vulnerable and uncertain. |  |
| 4/6 | **Fixed Term Contracts**MM asked about processes and timescales to deliver the commitment given by the University to offer open ended contracts to all staff employed on successive and continuous fixed term contracts of four years or more. KH reported that HR were developing a detailed project plan to implement this, part of which was the need to identify relevant staff and to carefully cross check the data – for example some staff on internal secondments were recorded on the HR system as being fixed term. This work was being progressed as quickly as possible.AC and PB referred to agreements at University of Sheffield and University of Loughborough where the ‘furlough’ scheme was being used to protect staff whose fixed term contracts were ending. MOS argued that all FTCs where they had less than four years service should be extended for one year. |  |
| 5/6 | **Financial Regulations Guidance (FRGs)**SS confirmed the University was redrafting the FRG – specifically SC1, SC2 and SC3.**SC1** – SS explained this was intended to cover those not in a direct or on-going employment relationship with the University (i.e. temporary agency workers, contractors). AC said UCU would be content with this with the proviso that judgements should be made on the basis of whether the work was needed and not the criterion of ‘business critical.’ Additional work should not be loaded on to other colleagues. Assessments should be made on a case by case basis. The Trade Unions expressed some concerns about the issue of out-sourced workers, such as SEF and Sussex Food where the University was the majority shareholder. It was noted the Sussex Conference Centre had furloughed its staff.S**C2** – SS said this had related to Associate and Doctoral Tutors and casual staff. SS said the Minister of State had asked Universities to support hourly paid staff and students. Most contracts were due to end in July 2020. AC said it was accepted there had been some misunderstanding and confusion on this – it was now understood that existing contracts will be honoured but that renewal was not guaranteed. AC expressed particular concern about PGRs and the impact that any reductions might have on the reputation of the University. AC said the DT programme should be maintained at the same level as now. SS said there would be fewer Doctoral students for 20/21 and no assurances could be given until the position on student numbers was clearer. JP asked about summer school tutors and the possibility of using the ‘furlough’ scheme. It was noted these workers would not be eligible under the current date limited terms of the scheme.**SC3** – SS said this related to Fixed Term Contracts (FTCs). The University would honour FTCs to their term – these will not be ended prematurely. SS said external adverts had been suspended. Internal (only) adverts would be open to existing staff, including those on FTCs. AC argued that the default position should be that all FTCs should be extended for a year except where employed specifically for time limited cover (e.g. maternity leave). TW confirmed he and other colleagues were currently working through a list of FTC staff so reviews could be undertaken on a month by month basis.ClCol said the unions shared concerns about what was meant by ‘business critical.’ This was very open to interpretation and lack of consistency. She argued the criteria for ending contracts should be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and that teams should be risk assessed for the any impact loss of FTC workers might cause them in terms of workloads.AC asked that the former and next set of FRGs be published to staff to aid transparency.SS said the meeting needed to conclude promptly due to a briefing of Council. SS thanked everyone for their contributions. |  |
| 6/6 | **Date of next Meeting**The next joint combined meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 7/4 @ 12.00 noon |  |

6 April 2020