

**Notes of meeting no 5 of the special, combined JNC held on Tuesday 31 March 2020**

**Present (virtually)**: Adam Tickell, Vice Chancellor (AT/VC) (Chair); Stephen Shute, Pro Vice Chancellor, (Planning and Resources) (SS); Tim Westlake, Chief Operating Officer (TW); Peter Brook, Interim Director of HR (PB); John Hallam, Interim Assistant Director of HR (ER) (JH); Andrew Chitty (UCU) (AC); Daniel Millum, (UCU) (DM); 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); Caroline Fife, UNISON (CF).

**Apologies**: Chris Chatwin (CC); Elaine Stephen (ES).

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| 1/5 | **Notes of the previous meetings (Meeting notes 1,2 and 3)**  These were agreed. |  |
| 2/5 | **Update**  AT said that in recognition of the significant efforts made by staff an additional minimum service day was to be granted on 11 May 2020 to follow the Bank Holiday on 8 May 2020.  AT said that the HE Minister had confirmed no financial support would be provided for loss of income from accommodation fees – which alone ran into millions of pounds. It was also very unlikely there would be any financial support for lost income from international student fees. The VC said the University was in a very difficult moment in its history. It was important the gravity of the situation was clearly understood. |  |
| 3/5 | **Financial Regulations Guidance (FRG) – Update on informal meeting held on 30 March 2020 / Joint Union statement**  It was noted AC had circulated a paper just before the meeting from the combined unions setting out the joint unions’ position on the FRG.  SS said that the meeting the previous day had seemed useful and constructive but that the union position statement did not seem reflective of that discussion.  The VC noted the paper was seeking financial commitments that could not possibly be safely delivered – i.e. they would potentially endanger the University’s future.  UCU responses included:   * Suggestion that the proposals set out in the FRG had led to reputational damage for the University; * Statement that financial sacrifices should be made from the top down, not the bottom up; * The joint unions wished to protect casual / precarious workers; * They had made alternative proposals in the document for the top earners in the University earning over £100k p.a. to take a temporary, voluntary cut of 20% of their pay for 3 months. * Doctoral tutors should be guaranteed the same amount of teaching in 20/21 as in this academic year;   The VC said he had already acknowledged in the previous meeting that the FRG as originally drafted was not helpful and needed refinement. The VC noted many institutions were adopting exactly the same approach to that proposed by Sussex – the response of the TUs at Sussex appeared to be different to the responses from TUs in other institutions. The VC had been in touch with around 30 other institutions. The VC remained of the view that reductions in pay for senior staff would only be a ‘symbolic’ gesture - it would not yield much in savings and it was important to retain senior staff who were the most mobile amongst the workforce.  The TUs responded by saying the concerns were around principles and process and lack of prior consultation and the insensitive language used in the guidance. The charge was again made that the University had been planning such changes for some time. The VC repeated that this was not true. The planning to address the challenges previously faced could not be and were not conflated with the challenges arising from covid-19 which had developed at extreme pace in only the last three weeks.  ClCol raised the issue of the Student Services review, which she said had been hanging over staff now for more than two years, which she argued had undermined good will and confidence. TW said that the 1PS project was around establishing the most efficient and effective way of delivering services – but we were now in a completely different world. AT said this would be revisited as a future agenda item.  In response to a question from MM, the VC reiterated the commitment given in the last meeting to ensure that staff employed for four years or more on successive, continuous fixed term contracts would be offered permanent employment.  A discussion took place about the level of challenge posed by the current circumstances. AC said that he did not accept that there was an ‘existential challenge.’ There needed to be a pause to reflect carefully on decisions which would have a significant impact on staff. Both the VC and SS said the position remained very uncertain. Student numbers for 20/21 were highly uncertain; the Government was not giving any indications of providing financial support for the sector; the pandemic was creating a significant global financial shock; every HE institution would be affected. Decisions had already been taken to reduce avoidable expenditure and capital commitments but the loss of income in areas such as accommodation meant that the University was under real financial pressure now. It was vital to act to protect the long term viability and interests of the institution.  Further discussion took place about the timing of the VS process, and the section in the FRG (SC1, 2 and 3). PB said it was the intention to consult with the joint trade unions shortly about the VS scheme. Further details would be sent shortly. PB noted that details about the Government’s proposed ‘furlough’ Job Retention Scheme (JRS) were being explored by HR and might go some way to meeting principles 2 and 3 set out in the joint unions’ statement. AC welcomed PBs comments on principles 2 and 3 but said that the first principle in the joint statement remained important also.  AC said he was disappointed the meeting was not more receptive to the proposals put forward in the joint statement but the unions remained open to further discussions. TU members noted it was the role of the TU to protect vulnerable members. This was fully accepted and acknowledged. |  |
| 4/5 | Date of next Meeting  An informal meeting would be arranged shortly to discuss VS  The next joint combined meeting was scheduled for Friday 3/4 @ 2.00 p.m. |  |

1 April 2020