**JNC(UCU)06/11/19M**

**UCU Joint Negotiating Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 9.30 am on 6 November 2019**

**in the Sussex House Committee room (v 1.0)**

**Present:**

**University Management:** Stephen Shute (SS), Pro-Vice-Chancellor; Philip Harris (PH), Head of School; Sheila Gupta (SG), Director of HR; Bridget Edminson (BE), General Counsel; Keith Hart, (KH) Deputy Director of HR; John Hallam, (JH) Assistant Director of HR – Employee Relations.

**UCU representatives:** Chris Chatwin (CC)- Chair; Charlotte Skeet (CS); Andrew Chitty (AC); Simon Williams.

**1. Welcome & apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Philip Harris.

**2. Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the previous JNC meetings held on 8 May 2019 and the emergency JNC meetings of 18 July and 2 September 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

2.1 Urgent Matter Raised for Discussion - Teaching Only Contracts

AC referred to para 2.1.7 of the University’s REF Code of Practice (CoP) and expressed concern that University managers, particularly in the Business School, were not operating in line with the CoP.

(For reference, para 2.1.7 states: “For any individuals who have a variation of contract between the date of submission of this Code of Practice (7 June 2019) and the REF census date (31 July 2020), this will be done through the appropriate existing processes, and the full range of relevant circumstances will be taken into account. A contract can (and will) only be changed by mutual agreement; neither party can change any contract unilaterally. The interests of the REF submission will not alter, reduce or distort the University’s responsibilities in this area, or the integrity of its processes. Re-use of REF outputs assessments in other contexts is restricted by the provisions of the University’s existing Code of Practice for Research Assessment”).

AC noted that the CoP said that any changes would be consensual. AC alleged that around 20 staff in the Business School alone were being told they need to move to teaching only contracts. AC said this was a form of contractual ‘off-rolling’ which was contrary to REF rules. CC also said that a number of these staff were probationers or Early Career Researchers who consequently were more vulnerable to pressure to move to teaching only contracts. There were also gender and international issues to consider in relation to impact.

Stephen Shute responded by saying that the University absolutely stood by the REF Code of Practice. It was very positive and welcome that UCU had been involved with drawing up the CoP. There was no wish to do anything that contradicted or undermined the voluntary nature of the change to a teaching contract. Contracts would not be changed unilaterally.

There was then some discussion around how objectives might need to be changed or varied during the course of a probationary period. CC said changes to objectives were being imposed rather than emerging from a joint discussion. Both AC and CC alleged that e-mails were being sent which clearly suggested that REF potential was being used as a criterion for continuation on a Teaching and Research contract and that this was unacceptable. SS said that it would be helpful if UCU could provide an example of such an email. It was not the University’s intention that anyone should be coerced onto a teaching only contract. SS said that the new Academic Pathways agreement was clear that an objective was ‘parity of esteem’ between the Teaching and Research and Teaching only pathway. SG said that if UCU could provide specific examples, these would be investigated and addressed. **ACTION: CC/AC**

CC said it seemed there was agreement about the policy position and practice therefore needed to be checked, clarified and possibly corrected. SG said if UCU could provide examples and details, she would look into this and clarify any guidance that needed to be clarified.

AC asked if the UoS draft REF Code of Practice, approved by Council, could be published on the UoS web site in advance of approval by Research England. SS said he would discuss this with Prof Gordon Harold (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (REF)).

SS thanked UCU colleagues for advising of these concerns.

3. Other Matters

3.1 UCU Office Accommodation

CC referred to the difficulties raised at the previous meeting and noted that UCU did not have access to adequate office facilities. The two administrators in the UCU office needed secure accommodation and the information and files needed to be secure also. JH advised that he had been informed by Facilities of possible temporary alternative accommodation that might be available shortly. BE noted that space was at a premium across the campus and a space and storage priorities were being evaluated and a plan was being developed. **ACTION: JH to confirm Estates offer.**

3.2 Remission Time

CS said membership numbers had increased and casework had doubled. It was agreed UCU / CS would need to submit a more detailed business case. **ACTION: CS**

3.3 Concerns around Bullying and Harassment

SW raised concerns on behalf of 3 members. It was agreed SW would provide further details to HR. **ACTION: SW**

3.4 Staff Survey Confidentiality

A proposed joint staff statement had been circulated with the agenda for future use in 2020. This was supported. It was agreed the reference to GDPR should be amended to say ‘applicable data protection legislation’ for any changes arising from Brexit. **ACTION: JH**

3.5 Dignity and Respect (D&R) Policy

SG said there had been an extensive process of consultation across the University to develop the new D&R Policy. The new Policy had been formally launched on 21 October by the Vice Chancellor. A key element of the new Policy was the express requirements around values and behaviours. The Policy launch would continue to be supported by on-line training courses (Equality and Diversity; unconscious bias; recruitment). BE said that the appraisal system also now supported this approach in that it was necessary to demonstrate not just *what* had been achieved but also *how* it had been achieved. CS noted that some concerns remained around some colleagues with a disability. SG asked for CS to provide further details. It was noted that the UoS was applying for four charter-marks around equality, including disability. **ACTION: CS to provide SG / JH with further details.**

AC expressed appreciation in respect of the changes suggested by UCU which had been accepted to the Policy. AC expressed regret, however, at the points which had not been taken up – in particular the need for compulsory management training. There was nothing in the Policy which referenced the effect that management decisions may have. SG noted this and commented that behaviours and style of management were ‘front and centre’ – embodied not least by the Sussex Leader programme. SG also noted that proposals on a new Mental Health strategy would be considered by UEG shortly, which would also focus attention on staff well-being.

3.6 People Strategy

CC said that UCU would not support the People Strategy as it stood.

It was agreed there was insufficient time for this to be discussed further. It was agreed a further meeting should be arranged to allow discussion of outstanding items. **ACTION: JH**

SG said that she would be taking the People Strategy to UEG in the next couple of weeks and therefore invited UCU to submit any written comments, if they wished to, as soon as possible.

**4. Any other business**

There was no other business

**5. Date of next (re-convened) meeting**

As it was not possible to conclude all the business on the agenda, a revised additional date to meet was agreed as **5 December 2019 @ 3.00 p.m. in the Sussex House Committee Room.**