**JNC(UCU)/18/2/M**

**UCU Joint Negotiating Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 2.00 pm on 6 February 2019**

**in the Sussex House Committee room**

**Present:**

**University Management:** Stephen Shute (SS) - Chair, Pro-Vice-Chancellor; Philip Harris (PH), Head of School; Sheila Gupta (SG), Director of HR; Geraldine Ismail, Office General Counsel (GI); John Hallam, Assistant Director of HR – Employee Relations (JH).

**UCU representatives:** Chris Chatwin (CC); Charlotte Skeet (CS); Henry Neale (HN); Simon Williams (SW).

**In attendance:** Helen Kalkbrenner (notes)

**1. Welcome, introductions & apologies for absence**

SS welcomed everyone to the meeting. Bridget Edminson was unable to attend and Geraldine Ismail attended in her place. Apologies were received from Mike Moran. Chis Chatwin left the meeting after Item 10.

**2. Minutes of the meetings held on 10 October 2018 (JNC(UCU)18/1/M)**

The Minutes were approved.

**3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4. UCU remission time**

CC said that they rejected the offer of extra time that had been offered by the University. CC said that the University has more than doubled in size, and UCU membership is now approximately 1,100. Caseloads have increased and the remission time is necessary to encourage others to take on case work. He hoped that the University would reconsider remission time and give them more

CS said the Union was told that if they submitted figures they would be given more remission time. SS said that this was not minuted. The commitment was to consider the case and come to a conclusion. CS asked what the case was for not giving it. SG said that the University accepted that membership had increased but that the information to date had not offered actual data about the growth in case work. SG said that it would be really helpful if this could be provided. CS said there needs to be a link to how that impacts on UCU. SG was very supportive of this approach. CS said the Union would put in an argument to argue for more remissions time supported by this information. SS said this would be most helpful.

**ACTION: UCU to submit a case for more remission time. UCU**

**5. Staff survey data – action plan**

CC asked what plans the University has to obtain better scores and a higher rate of participation. He felt that the survey was ‘watered down’ compared to previously and that participation levels were low. SS agreed that participation was low, and said that the University wants to increase the level of participation in future. In particular, academic staff participation was low. It is in the University’s interests to get high survey response rates. He noted that this was a Pulse survey, with half the number of the questions of the full survey. The reason for running a Pulse Survey was a strategic approach agreed in 2014 not to have a full annual survey. Most questions were the same in each survey for reasons of continuity and good practice. If new questions are introduced it is difficult to track trends and see improvements. A few new questions had been introduced that were related to the new Strategic Framework, for example. By maintaining a mix between refreshing the survey it and keeping the core of existing questions, the University can obtain a cross-sector impression in comparison with other institutions. The University is committed to understanding what staff think and to taking action. There will be an institutional Action Plan and local Action Plans in all Schools and PS Divisions. This mirrors the approach adopted previously. It is important to state that the University is committed to taking actions in response to the survey findings and see improvement next time.

SG said that all data has been made available to all staff in the interests of openness and transparency. The University needs to better understand the feelings of staff. The University level Action Plan will be shared when finalised. The Action Plans for all Professional Services, Schools and Divisions will also be shared. Feedback was that last year’s survey was too long. There was also feedback that people would like free-text responses, which the University would ensure would feature in the next survey. Surveys also have to have the same repeat questions to enable benchmarking. The most recent survey therefore asked: whether staff felt able to report bullying & harassment. New questions related to the University’s KPI of a 5% year on year improvement on staff engagement; whether staff are aware of the new strategic framework; and whether staff felt the strategic framework was a compelling vision. Engagement is all about a collective sense around these issues of a shared vision and purpose. The University is happy to work with the Unions on these issues. SS said that the University wants to achieve positive changes.

CK said that some of the most vulnerable people felt too scared to complete the survey and asked what can be done to reassure people that responses cannot be traced back. SG replied that the survey is completely confidential and is run externally to maintain its confidentiality for these reasons. ORC, the survey company, will not release School or Divisional information if the numbers are too small and staff can be identified. There is a solid firewall between ORC and the University. CK said that people do not understand this and that the University needs to make people feel reassured. SG had spoken to colleagues in Communications and the University understands that there needs to be a variety of different communication approaches and interventions to address the needs of different staff. External facilitators can be used and local surveys can be helpful. The University has a lot of ideas and actions towards this end.

SS said the University is looking at the timing of the survey. It is always at the same time for consistency but it may be time to move it to get a better response rate. SW said he remembered that in the past it was possible to identify staff in Schools. SS said this was not possible. SG has access to all the data but, for example, it is impossible to link age profiles with answers. SG said there is no demographic data for each Division. SG agreed to look at the Communications to reassure staff about how the anonymity works. JH asked how we can improve response numbers. CK said people will respond if they think something will happen. Only 41% think action will be taken. SG suggested having a Staff Survey champion who could answer questions, could offer reassurance. SS said we could develop as FAQ system to offer reassurance.

**ACTION: Consider how Communications can reassure staff re anonymity. SG**

**6. Gender Pay Gap**

CS said that as the University were meeting with the TUs separately to take this work forward, it was not necessary to discuss this at the JNC.

**7. Casualization and sort term contracts**

CC said that this subject was very confused. If people have been employed continuously for four years they should be made permanent, but this is not happening. The Union needs to know what the University is doing and what the policy is. They would like to see people on short term contracts for four years moved to a permanent contract. SW said that some language tutors’ contracts are renewed termly and they want a permanent arrangement but nothing happens. They would welcome continuity. SS said that language tutors are on a contract for a period shorter than a year and they are employed when the work is available. SW said they do not have access to free courses at Brighton if they do not have a permanent contract. SS assume they do not fall within the legislation, or they would have the contract. SW said the tutors are losing patience and have put this in writing. CC would like to see HR automatically move contracts to permanent. PH said that HR do ask Schools to review FTC every autumn.

SG said there are two issues: there is an annual exercise to review all FTCs every year and move anyone eligible; three people have written to SG to formally request an open ended contract, and these cases will be dealt with in accordance with the University’s Policy on Fixed Term Working. JH said that people should be raising this with their Head of School who is the person who decides whether the post warrants becoming permanent. It is not the role HR to take that decision. CC said that Heads of Schools lack consistency. SG said that this should be dealt with through the HRBPs which will lend that consistency. There will be dialogue between the HRPBs and Head of School to look at the history of each person and their pattern of employment and make a decision based on the demand for the discipline. PH said that Heads of Schools will know which grants are going ahead and which will stop. CC said that things are now clearer and he now knows how to respond.

**ACTION: UCU to put institutional concerns, and the concerns of the three individuals, in writing for University consideration. UCU**

**8. Work load model progress**

SS would like to set up a special UCU JNC meeting in February to take the Union through the electronic interface. The pilot has progressed; issues with the electronic interface have been resolved and it is now ready to be shown to UCU. CC said it shows that everyone is overloaded and people do not like the answers it gives. CC wants to get it in place and working. SS said the software is almost at the stage where it can work for all 11 Schools. SS said it is going slowly as we need to make sure it does everything as required. He felt confident that it can be demonstrated. CK asked if it can be made transparent. SS said a Senate paper in 2015 gives a commitment to openness and transparency. It is still in a pilot phase. Next year it will run across whole University for allocation of work the following year. We have 12 months to get it right. It would help UCU to sit with Jim Mayor and a Head of School to take them through it. JH asked CC to let Jody know who will be at the meeting.

**ACTION: CC to let Jody know who from UCU will attend the special meeting**

**9. Pharmacy update**

SS said that the University had consulted with Council and asked them to endorse a recommendation made by the Executive that the MPharm should close to new entrants, be taken off UCAS and applicants informed. The University has an unequivocal commitment to teach out all students through the 4-year degree (up to 2022), and a commitment to work with the General Pharmaceutical Council to make the degree accredited. Because this is not a situation that has occurred before, a bespoke accreditation process is to be developed. The General Pharmaceutical Council are visiting in April and the University, working with the School and pharmacists, is putting together a full teach out plan for the students.

CS was concerned about the process and felt the decision should have gone to Senate as an academic matter. SW said it was a degree closure rather than a departmental closure. CS said the problem was how the decision was taken. Senate have a special meeting on 13th February. SS said that the Executive have the right to close courses. CS felt some Councillors did not have an opportunity to consult with other Councillors. SS was unaware of Council being unhappy with the process. He said that if any Councillors are uneasy they should raise it with the Chair of Council. HN asked if the accreditation was guaranteed. SS replied that it is never guaranteed. It has changed the process from standard to bespoke. The General Pharmaceutical Council have the same interests as the University to produce the right outcome for the students. If the course does not meet the standards issues will arise. HN asked whether there would be a problem with staff retention. SS said that staff make their own decisions. However the staff are very committed, care about the students and know them well. There is a very low staff to student ratio. CS asked whether there have there been any other instances of universities using a bespoke method successfully. SS said this has never been done before. The Chief Executive of the General Pharmaceutical Council has been here to reassure students. The University is doing everything it can to get an accredited degree but there are no guarantees. HN asked whether if accreditation is not forthcoming there will be any come back from students. SS replied that they enrolled with no accreditation and that there is no guarantee of accreditation but we are working very closely with the GPhC to get the course accredited.

**10. Academic Career Pathways**

CC said that he had worked with Felicity Ellerton and circulated her original and revised versions of the document to the Executive and reps for their feedback. He was concerned that there will be problems due to inconsistency in implementation. However Felicity had said that Heads of Schools will get training for consistency at application. CC said that when it is implemented he will circulate Felicity’s documents to the Executive so they know what to expect. SG noted that Felicity had said that CC was clear to say that UCU had been consulted but would not go further. This will be noted. The current set of documents is with Saul and have been formatted to make them more accessible. Once they are ready they will be sent to CC. The HRBPs will work directly with the Heads of Schools regarding training. SG has done a briefing session for all HRBPs. In the past Teaching Fellows were not allowed to go up the teaching trajectory but now they can. This is the first year and if any concerns arise UCU should let the University know straight away.

**11. Expenditure on legal advice**

CS said a UCU member at a tribunal had been faced with 4 lawyers on behalf of the University and had felt this was excessive expenditure by the University. SG said that without knowing more details it is not possible to comment. JH said he was only aware of one case that had been to ET recently and only one lawyer had been present. GI said that if the case has got as far as a tribunal then all other courses of action would have been exhausted.

**ACTION: UCU to email details to SG. CC**

**12. Attendance monitoring for people on Visas – future plans**

CS said that last year there was much concern for people on visas. People were waiting for written clarification of the future plans. SG said that the University has adopted the Oxford model and introduced two processes for recording attendance which will be applied locally. PH said that Schools implement the process using one of these models. It is self-managed and people note their movements which are made available. SS said the University has worked hard to establish a flexible, responsive and proportional system.

CS asked whether the University has plans to pay costs of Settled Status for EU workers. PH said that messages have gone to all individuals concerned to confirm that the University will pay these costs.

**13. Any other business**

There was no other business.

**14. Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 8 May 2019, 14.00 – 16.00, Sussex House Committee Room