

## HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

### Staffing Committee

#### Minutes of a Meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020 via MS Teams

**Present:** Mr M Thomas - Chair  
Mr P Nixon  
Mr D Wong  
Mrs A Haycox  
Mr M Simcock  
Dr D Llewellyn  
Mrs C Snell

**In attendance:** Dr C Baxter  
Mrs E Kelsall (Secretary)  
Mr A Allen (for items 8, 11 and AOB only as noted in the minutes)

**Observer:** Ms Adeola Olufayo (Board Apprentice)

Members were reminded to update their entry in the Register of Interests if required.

**Welcome:** The Chair welcomed Mrs Kelsall and Ms Olufayo to the meeting and introductions were made.

#### 19/32 **Terms of Reference**

Noted: the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Agreed: that the Terms of reference remained appropriate and no changes were required.

#### 19/33 **Minutes**

Approved: the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 February 2020 (19/18– 19/31)

#### 19/34 **Matters Arising**

Received: a report from the Head of HR on matters arising from the meeting held in February 2020.

Noted:

- i) that Dr Simone Clarke had been appointed to the role of Director of Academic Services and Academic Registrar commencing on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Prof Dawn Arnold had been appointed to the role of Director of Research with a commencement date yet to be confirmed. The role of Professor of Public Engagement remained vacant at this point. Next steps were to be discussed with the Garfield-Weston Foundation as co-funder of this new post. Mrs Emma Kelsall had been appointed as Interim Head of HR and Mrs Kate Baker had been appointed to the new role of Deputy Secretary;
- ii) that a review of casual workers had taken place and agreements had been issued to all those who continue to undertake casual roles at the University and to staff who have a regular pattern of engagement and so work to a minimum hours contract. The adjustments to the spine point scale previously agreed by the Committee has also been completed;
- iii) that a meeting with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to discuss the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan had taken place and a refreshed plan for 2020/21 will be provided at the November 2020 meeting;

**EK**

- iv) that a review of the snap shot statistics for March 2020 showed a positive improvement with respect to the gap. This would be reported publicly by March 2021;
- v) that line managers and staff had been briefed on PDR requirements for 2019/20 and reminded of the deadline.

#### 19/35 Risk Management

Received: a report from the University Secretary on risk areas monitored by the Committee.

- Noted:
- i) that following the large-scale annual review of risk at the Board Meeting held in November 2019, there had been only minor amendments made to the risks monitored by the Committee;
  - ii) that follow up reports from RSM on the Staff Development Audit were in hand and would be reported to the ARMC June 2020 meeting;
  - iii) that recruitment was in hand for a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor to take over, in due course from Prof Peter Mills who has announced he will retire in December 2020;
  - iv) that the University continued to respond to the risks for its staffing arrangements and for individual staff associated with COVID-19. Steps included ensuring staff still had access to the EAP 24/7 and ensuring they were receiving support from their line managers and for academic staff, support from the Educational Development team with respect to on-line delivery of teaching and learning. Key workers were also being supported by their line managers and by HR as required;

#### 19/36 COVID-19 – The University’s Response and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

Received: a report on the University’s activities to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak, including details on how the CJRS has been utilised following Board approval of the University’s approach. The University continued to ensure it was meeting DfE guidance specific to HEIs in receipt of public funding for some of their staff costs, as well as the general for the scheme;

- Noted:
- i) that staff had been invited to submit their comments and ideas in relation to a return to campus operations in due course. Their feedback had been considered and discussions with individuals or with departments who had raised specific ideas or queries had been progressed;
  - ii) that in addition to the email and portal communications and weekly Newsletter updates for all staff that had been in place since the outbreak started, the Vice-Chancellor had invited all staff to attend a series of MS Teams meetings held with groups of departments where he would provide an update on the current situation and the University’s plans to enable staff to safely return to campus operations in a phased and managed manner. The meetings would provide a further opportunity for staff to raise queries or concerns. The meetings had been well attended with 276 colleagues to date. Further meetings were due to take place later in the week for remaining departments;
  - ii) that task groups involving a range of staff had been set up to help plan for the gradual return of activity on campus and to begin planning for teaching delivery in the 2020/21 academic year. The Government’s COVID safe workplace guidance for areas such as offices, laboratories and outdoor working had been analysed and risk assessments drawn up by the groups with the support of the health and safety team. Managers of facilities now open for researchers to use as the first group returning to work on campus had been briefed and worked with estates to develop one- way systems, signage and other preparations to meet the guidance. Induction

for staff and research students setting out the revised arrangements as well as individual research project related risk assessments had also been completed, checked and verified;

- iii) that where some housekeeping staff had been initially on furlough due to their roles being non-publicly funded during the vacation, but now returned to campus working, induction had also been undertaken along with updated task related training. Other staff who remained in furlough were being kept in touch via the Newsletter and engagement with their line manager;
- iv) that the University continued to engage with a wide range of HE sector specific and UK government guidance on how it should respond to COVID-19.

#### 19/37 Pay and Negotiation – 2019/20 Pay Round

Received: an update on the situation in respect of the 2019/20 JNCHES Negotiating Round

- Noted:
- i) that although the national pay award had been implemented as agreed by the Committee and Board with effect from August 2019, the settlement remained in dispute at national level. UCEA had made a final offer on pay and non-pay items to the trade unions on 30 April 2019 with the uplift to base pay of 1.8% from 1 August 2019 with higher uplifts for the lower spine points;
  - ii) that in August 2019, while, as noted above, UCEA had advised HEIs to implement the pay award, unfortunately the five trade unions had decided to reject the offer and balloted members for industrial action. The ballot had not led to a mandate for action at Harper Adams. A series of meetings were held with UCU regarding three non-pay items recognising that these were key features of UCU's dispute: gender and ethnicity pay, casual employment arrangements and workload;
  - iii) that the meetings had resulted in a set of amplified proposals for a settlement on the non-pay items which were published on 27 January 2020. UCEA was very clear that the pay element of the final offer would remain unchanged. Unfortunately, UCU did not agree to the amplified offer on non-pay items and proceeded to call for further industrial action in February and March 2020;
  - iv) that UCU confirmed to UCEA that negotiations for 2019/20 were now effectively over, UCEA remained hopeful that this consultation process might result in UCU being able to end its dispute. The final outcome is awaited.

#### 19/38 Pay and Negotiation – 2020/21 Pay Round

Received: an update on the situation in respect of the 2020/21 JNCHES Negotiating Round.

- Noted:
- i) that UCEA had contacted Heads of Institutions at the end of January 2020 In respect of the forthcoming 2020/21 new JNCHES pay negotiating round. Initial feedback was invited via a survey in which HAU indicated that as an institution we could not support as much as a 2% increase but would support a much lower uplift. It was also indicated that HAU wished to see UCEA structure an offer around the lower points over two years;
  - ii) that the 2020/21 New JNCHES negotiating round had been due to start on 31<sup>st</sup> March, however, due to the unprecedented situation due to Covid-19, it had been agreed to pause the review;
  - iii) that particularly in light of COVID\_19 challenges to financial planning for all HEIs, UCEA continued to seek indicative views from HEIs on their preferred approach for negotiations for the 2020/21 round.

## 19/39 Annual Report on Organisational Development Activity

*Mr Allen, Organisational Development Manager joined the meeting for this item*

- Received: a report from the Organisational Development Manager on Organisational Development activity over the last 12-month period
- Noted:
- i) that it was pleasing to note that development and training had doubled from the same point in 2019 with in excess of 100 estates, housekeeping and facilities staff also attending classroom-based training and development sessions;
  - ii) that in the past 12 months £31,339 had been invested from the University's levy in apprenticeship training for 14 current employees. While the University was not currently spending all of its levy, its performance in relation to encouraging staff engagement with the apprenticeship scheme remained strong when compared to the engagement of many other HEIs/employers. It remained challenging for line managers to be able to offer 20% off the job protected time for study and this was sometimes a reason for a possible apprenticeship not to proceed. Similarly, there were not always suitable apprenticeship programmes available in an accessible location or in the format needed;
  - iii) that training linked to Prevent duty and compliance with the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 continued to be implemented with 3 employees trained and approved by the Home Office to deliver prevent workshops. Particular thanks were expressed to Mr Allen for this work in this area which remained an important part of the Board's responsibility and an annual report to the OfS on staff development delivered in year relating to the Prevent Duty would be required as usual;
  - iv) that the Vice-Chancellor and the Organisational Development Manager planned to meet to discuss training provision for technicians and how this might be developed further. **DGL/AA**
  - v) that the Health & Safety team continued to provide or source required training to support compliance with UK health & safety legislation;
  - vi) that three Learning & Teaching Forum days and a conference had taken place in the last academic year;
  - vii) that since the launch of the Employee Assistance Programme, the University's utilisation rate had been exactly in line with the sector benchmark and uninterrupted service had continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. No major issues had been highlighted arising from the pandemic to date which indicated a step change in staff well-being or that of their families which had led to further engagement with the EAP service, but this important area would continue to be a focus for the planned and regular engagement with the EAP provider;
  - viii) that to date, 8% of PDRs had been completed which was expected as the deadline was 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020. A reminder of deadlines and arrangements was communicated to Managers in May to help completion rates. One or two managers had asked for a longer deadline. In discussion, the Committee determined that as the deadline had been set nine months earlier, it was not unreasonable for managers and staff to meet the deadline. Mr Allen would feed back to the line managers concerned; **EK/AA**
  - ix) that feedback was awaited from the internal audit of PDR and mandatory training;
  - x) that the expedited launch of Skillgate in March had proven to be very successful providing a broad library of over 800 online courses. To date 122 employees had completed 1,157 courses. Mr Allen would seek feedback from staff on their experience of the programmes in due course; **EK/AA**

#### 19/40 **Joint Consultative Negotiating Committee**

Received: notes from the informal extraordinary meetings of the Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

- Noted:
- i) that the Vice-Chancellor had expressed his thanks to all staff for the way they had adapted and coped with the current pandemic situation;
  - ii) that the University was drawing on as much information and support as possible from sector-level agencies since the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020;
  - iii) that it was reiterated that it was important that the University focussed on getting to the start of the next academic year and HoDs were to discuss their approach to determining a common way to monitor work taking place from home;
  - iv) that a freeze on recruitment with the exception of essential roles was to be put in place;
  - v) that discussions regarding alternative assessments would take place over the following weeks;
  - vi) that following recent Government announcements, the University had shared its plans for a safe and steady return to campus with the Union, including its Health and Safety Representative. This engagement and dialogue would continue. This approach was in line with Government guidance.
  - vii) that budget profiling was in hand and a deficit was expected this year with further losses expected in 202/21;
  - viii) that JCNC had been advised that it was likely that Graduation would be moved to 2021 and discussions were in hand with the Students' Union;
  - ix) that JCNC had been updated on the University's plans for teaching in 2021, being a blend of on-line and face to face delivery as necessary until restrictions were lifted or changed.

#### 19/41 **Staff Consultative Group**

Received: notes from the informal SCG meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Noted: that this group had also been briefed on the University's plans for managing COVID-19 and the return to campus working, and plans for 2020/21 academic year. This engagement and dialogue would also continue.

#### 19/42 **UUK Step Change Framework- Mentally Healthy Universities**

*Mr Allen, Organisational Development Manager joined the meeting for this item*

Received: a briefing note on the Framework which identified work completed to date and areas for further work that may be helpful to further enhance arrangements which aimed to support staff and student well-being;

Approved: the recommendation that HR and Student Services should work together to complete the Self-Assessment tool and use the findings to inform the next HR strategy and an updated Health and Wellbeing Policy for Students. **EK/AA**

#### 19/43 **TPS and LGPS Revised Salary Bands for Employee Contribution Rates**

Received: a report on the revised TPS and LGPS salary bandings that determine pension

contribution rates.

Agreed: that it would be useful to advise staff of the changes through a note in the weekly Newsletter **EK**

#### 19/44 **Promotion Round 2020**

Received: a report detailing the outcomes of the Promotion Round 2020

Noted:

- i) that all 8 shortlisted applicants had been successful at interview, leading to the Appointment of 3 Professors, 1 Reader and 4 Principal Lecturers;
- ii) that staff who had not been shortlisted had been invited to meet individually with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to receive feedback on their application;
- iii) that the University had, as usual, provided external support for staff who wished to engage in the process, including coaching for preparing for the interview by a panel which included a member of the Board of Governors and an external member from another University.

#### 19/45 **Any Other Business**

##### **Bereavement Guidance**

*Mr Allen, Organisational Development Manager joined the meeting for this item*

Noted: that guidance for staff and line managers had been shared by another HEI. After consultation with the COVID group, this had been updated and drawn together in one guidance document to avoid repetition. The guidance was specific to COVID-19 and supplemented other existing arrangements. It had also been shared with JCNC and SCG for their comments, which were due to be received the following week. Thanks were due to Mr Allen for his hard work on drawing this document together;

Approved: the Bereavement Guidance subject to consideration of any feedback from JCNC and SCG should this be required **EK/AA**

19/46 **Date of Next Meeting** – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020.