**JNC(UCU)/16/3/M**

**UCU Joint Negotiating Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 1.00pm on 31 May 2017**

**in the Sussex House Committee room**

**Present:**

**University Management:** Stephen Shute (SS), Pro-Vice-Chancellor; Philip Harris (PH), Head of School; Sheila Gupta (SG), Director of HR.

**UCU representatives:** Chris Chatwin (CC), President; Roger Philips (RP), Henry Neale (HN); Charlotte Skeet (CS).

**In attendance:** Sarah Cox (SC) - Management Joint Secretary; Allan Spencer (RAS), Director of Finance (agenda item 4 only). Mike Moran (MM) UCU National Officer.

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

Professor Philip Harris, Head of School for Maths and Physical Sciences, was welcomed to his first JNC as the new University Head of School committee member.

**2. Minutes of the meetings held on 15 February 2017 (JNC(UCU)16/2/M)**

The draft minutes (incorporating amendments from Rumy Hasan of UCU sent via email in advance of the meeting) were approved.

**3. Matters arising**

**3.1 TU notice boards**

This action had been completed – SC had sent CC and Sharon Lambley the details of how UCU could set up their own campus discussion group.

**3.2 UK Scholarly Communications Licence**

CC said that some UCU members did not agree with the adoption of the UK Scholarly Communications Licence (UK-SCL) and they were addressing their concerns direct with Ian Carter, Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange. CC said that matters concerning adoption of the UK-SCL should go through the University’s standard procedures rather than be brought back to the UCU JNC.

**3.3 Procedure Agreement**

CC said that UCU were happy with the current procedure agreement and did not want to make any changes to it.

**3.4 Workload model**

The action was to hold an update meeting with UCU on the Workload Allocation Model, and this took place on 30 March 2017. SS said that a software provider had now been identified: Simitive. There would be an initial meeting between Simitive and the four pilot Schools the following Tuesday. SS suggested holding a further Workload Allocation Model meeting with UCU in around 6 weeks to provide a progress update.

**ACTION – arrange a further update meeting between SS and UCU on the Workload Allocation Model.**

**3.5 Reasonable adjustments panel and legal liability**

This action was to be carried over to the next meeting.

**ACTION – HR to send UCU a written response to their concerns about legal liability for members of the Reasonable Adjustments Panel.**

**3.6 Independent Exit Interviews**

This action was to be carried over to the next meeting.

**ACTION – HR to review Researcher Exit Interviews.**

**3.7 Request for an increase in UCU remission time**

SC had sent an email to CC since the last JNC requesting some background information to support UCU’s request for increase facility time, in order that this request could be properly considered. CC had not yet had a chance to do so.

**ACTION – UCU to send SC some background information and a case for increasing their facility time.**

**3.8 USS pension deficit**

This action had been completed – RAS was attending the current meeting to provide an update on the USS pension deficit.

1. **Update on USS deficit**

RAS said that the USS scheme valuation date was 31 March 2017. The valuation involved a complex set of processes and was the responsibility of USS and the Trustees. It was an assessment of the scheme’s assets and liabilities and its purpose was to establish, at a particular point in time (i.e. in this case 31 March 2017) whether the trustee can reasonably expect to have enough money to pay the benefits built up in the scheme. It was a process by which the Trustees could take a detailed look at the many complex factors that influence the Scheme’s funding position, and consider whether any adjustments should be made.

Work towards producing a set of assumptions on which to base the valuation was currently underway. These assumptions were complex and would involve considerations such as the level of return USS could expect from their investments; price inflation and, in turn, how much pensions might increase; how much scheme members might earn in the future and therefore pay into their pensions over their working life; how long retired members might live and claim their pension; and whether members had any beneficiaries who might also receive a pension after their death.

One of the biggest impacts on costs was future investment returns. Globally, a prolonged period of low investment returns was expected. This meant that the amount of investment return USS expected to achieve on the scheme’s assets was lower than it had been historically and this created a deficit in the scheme. USS were expecting that the current valuation would show that existing benefits were likely to cost more to provide in the future than at the last valuation in 2014, and that it would be necessary to take action to address this deficit.

RAS said that the draft assumptions on which the valuation would be based would be ready by the end of June. In September, USS would hold a formal four-week consultation with UUK to establish their official position on the valuations’ findings. The USS Joint Negotiation Committee (comprising 5 UUK and 5 UCU members) would then look to reach agreement on any changes required to contribution rates, or future benefits, or both. If any changes were proposed by the JNC, employers would then consult with affected employees in early 2018 before the USS board make any formal decisions.

MM noted that there was an initial assumption of ‘bad news’ and asked whether in RAS’s view the valuation would lead to USS seeking structural changes in the scheme and/or an increase in contribution rates.

RAS said that this was difficult to predict. Employers had already increased their contributions from 16% to 18% a few years ago and were unlikely to be able to accommodate a further increase. That being the case there were two options: (i) to run higher risk in the scheme, which was unlikely to be accepted; or (ii) to increase employee contributions and/or restructure the benefits. It would be possible to hold a consultation to find out whether employees were willing to contribute more, but a 1% or 2% increase would not be likely to make a significant difference and it was therefore likely that changes to benefit levels would also need to be considered.

1. **SAAT Programme**

SJ was unable to attend the meeting and so this item was postponed to a later date.

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1. **Staff Disciplinary Procedure (JNC(UCU)/16/3/1)**

SC said that some proposed amendments had been made to the University’s Staff Disciplinary Procedure (Regulation 31) as a result of recommendations from Professor Nicole Westmarland’s Report, following her independent review of the University of Sussex’s response to a case involving domestic violence.

SC noted that Jackie Rymell, Assistant Director of HR, had already shared the changes with UCU, to which they had agreed, and SC would like to confirm UCU’s agreement for the purposes of the minutes.

CS said that she had some proposed changes to the revised policy on behalf of UCU, and went through these changes.

UCU confirmed that, subject to the acceptance of their proposed additional changes, and their receipt of a copy of the definition of violence, the revisions to the Disciplinary Policy were agreed. UCU said that they would like to review the Staff Disciplinary Policy as a whole at some point in the future.

**ACTION – SC to send UCU the University’s definition of violence.**

1. **Relationships policy (JNC(UCU)/16/3/2)**

SC said that another recommendation from the Westmarland Report was that the University should develop a clear policy on staff-student and staff-staff relationships. A small working group was set up for this purpose, and they developed a draft relationship policy. This draft had been shared with all three unions.

SG said that the University had been consulting widely on this policy, both internally and with external agencies who had expertise in the area of domestic violence. The policy was being further updated as a result of this consultation. SG said that she would welcome UCU’s comments on the policy and would send them a later version of the policy when ready, for their comment.

SG said that the unions had been involved in developing a Code of Conduct, but since then the Westmarland report had been published and the working group set up. The working group had produced the Statement on Violence and the Relationships Policy. SG said that the intention was to build on the good work already done on the Code of Conduct in order to define a set of ‘Sussex Values’, which would exemplify the behaviours expected of staff at the University. The Sussex Values would form an overarching framework under which the other policies and procedures (Relationships Policy, Disciplinary Procedure etc) would sit. SG asked whether UCU agreed that this was the right way forward.

CC said that it was and UCU were pleased with the work going on in this area.

**ACTION – HR to send UCU an updated draft of the Relationships Policy when available.**

1. **Reporting of facility time (JNC(UCU)/16/3/3)**

SC said that as part of the Trade Union Act 2016 the University would be required to publish information on trade union facility time. Data would be collected from April 2017 and published annually from April 2018. The University were required to publish data on the number of union officials, the percentage of working time that trade union officials spent on facility time, the percentage of the University pay bill that was spent on facility time, and the total time spent on trade union activities as a representative of the union (i.e. on national union activities).

In order for the University to meet its statutory obligations each year UCU would need to provide SC with details of their nominated reps and the facility time allocated to each one, and to update SC as and when this allocation changed throughout the year.

UCU noted the statutory requirement and agreed to provide the necessary data.

1. **UCEA pay negotiations**

CC said that the cost of living increase had now been agreed, but other actions had also come out of the pay negotiations for the current year, namely the employment of casuals and closing the Gender Pay Gap.

MM said that lots of good work had been carried out at the University around causal employment, but MM would like to explore how the University intended to address the Gender Pay Gap. UCU would like to be involved in any Equal Pay Audit that took place at the University.

SG said that she had recently appointed a Reward Manager, Joanna Bruce, and it would be within her remit to consider how the University could inject transparency, equity and fairness into all the reward procedures. The Gender Pay Gap was a pivotal part of that work. It had not yet been defined as a workstream but the University would be keen to involve UCU in work in that area and would be interested in any models of good practice that UCU could provide.

MM said that UCU would want to see an action plan to address/reduce the gender pay gap.

1. **Workload management and stress auditing**

CC said that stress in the workplace could be as dangerous as working with dangerous chemicals and asked what the University was doing to audit stress levels around the campus. CC said that the Occupational Health figures produced annually showed that the levels of stress amongst support staff had been significant in the past year. CC asked what could be done about this.

SG said that a variety of things were being considered. MIND delivered mental health training for managers and the plan was for this training to be offered to managers at the University. SG said that the University was about to tender for an Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) which would provide staff with 24-7 access to specialist advice. This would cover work-related stress, personal issues and financial issues for example. More widely, the University was looking at broadening their approach to health and wellbeing, at making it more multi-faceted and introducing a variety of activities. SG said that she would welcome UCU’s input into this.

HN asked what was the timescale for introducing the EAP. SG said that the aim was to have the service in place before the end of the autumn term.

1. **Student Support Unit**

CC said that the staff who were employed to support students at the University with mental health issues were themselves absent from work with stress, because they saw students in a bad state and the way the service was set up meant that staff could not provide them with adequate support.

SG said that Sam Cartwright-Hatton had been asked to carry out a review of the Student Support Unit (SSU) as she was an expert in this area, and she would report back to the Vice Chancellor. She was reviewing the mental health of students in the University and what could be done to support those who needed help.

CC said that there was an increased number of students coming into Universities with mental health problems and if the SSU and Student Life Centre were not coping with them, it put extra pressure on to members of faculty.

SS said that there was a UUK group looking at mental health in Universities and they were due to report in the Summer. The mental health of staff and students was an important issue.

1. **Any other business**

SC said that the University were seeking to change the process for appointing management members to the JNC committee. Currently, when an individual member was replaced, their personal nomination went through Council. SG and SC were seeking approval from Council for that authorisation to come from the Vice Chancellor, subject to the replacement member being in one of the following four roles; Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Director of Human Resources, Head of School, Director of Professional Services. This was in line with the process for appointing management members to the CJNC (the new combined JNC for Unison and Unite).

1. **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 11 October, 2.00 pm.

Sarah Cox

14 July 2017