**Notes of informal meeting with UCU reps and Vice-Chancellor**

**9th December 2019**

Present: Adam Tickell (VC), Sheila Gupta (Director of HR), Stephen Shute (PVC Strategy and Resources), Andrew Chitty (UCU), Charlotte Skeet (UCU), Joanna Pawlik (UCU)

**Good local industrial relations:**

* In the meeting, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining good local industrial relations.

**Deductions from pay for full strike action:**

* In response to the request from UCU to contribute monies deducted from salaries as a result of the industrial action to the student hardship fund, it was explained that the University will continue to work closely with the Students' Union to ensure we respond appropriately to student hardship. As with the previous industrial action, it will be looking to see if we can further fund this through monies that may become available from salaries that are withheld from colleagues choosing to take industrial action.
* However, the industrial action has required additional expenditure which will need to be accounted for first. At this stage it is too early to ascertain what the full cost of the industrial action will be for the University and it may be that any expenditure saved from the non-payment of salaries will be subsumed by the costs accrued elsewhere due to the industrial action, including potential extra-gratia payments that may be paid to students.
* The UCU requested that salary deductions be staggered across January, February and March. It is now confirmed that the salary deductions will be staggered across two months: January and February.
* Also, separately, it was noted that applications to study at Sussex are significantly down this year and a protracted dispute would be very dangerous for the institution.
* The University would maintain pension contributions, so as to ensure that death in service benefits were preserved. This commitment will form part of the FAQs that are due to be published imminently.
* The Payroll Manager would be asked to explain briefly how the process of deductions works in practice.

**Casualisation:**

* Hourly paid staff: UCU asked that the University consider only deducting pay for actual teaching that had not been delivered and not for the preparation time.
* The University agreed to consider this request.

**Zero Hours and Fixed Term Contracts:**

* The University has since 2016 committed not to use ZHCs when employing academic staff.
* The Branch will bring concerns via casework or to the JNC in the normal way.
* The previous process for sharing data with the Unions about the annual review of FTCs would be reintroduced.
* Consideration would be given to preparing a joint statement on ZHCs and FTCs to give assurance that the University is taking action to ensure that University policies on these issues are being applied properly. If this is not the case, then the University will ensure the proper application of its policies
* With regard to fixed term contracts, the current Government advice is, those who have been employed on fixed term contracts for four years would automatically be offered open-ended contracts, unless the employer can show there is a good business reason not to do so.
* The VC also stated an intention to put an end to hiring academic staff on 9- and 10-month fixed term contracts.

**Timetabling and teaching between 6.00pm to 8.00pm:**

* UCU raised concerns about the possibility that some staff may be required to teach between 6pm and 8pm and requested that for the spring 2020 timetable no one be asked to teach after 6pm on a given day and also before 11am on the same or the following day. The University accepts that the implementation of the extended timetable for some classes was handled less effectively than it could have been. The complexity of the timetable is substantially driven by the high degree of optionality at Sussex: fully 39% of students take a degree where the option combination is unique to themselves. The University is looking at fundamental changes to this which will benefit both students and staff but, in the meantime, the timetabling team are looking to minimise the impact on staff. The VC agreed to share the Branch's concerns with the relevant team.

**ASOS:**

* The Branch explained that they are advising members not to set examinations or coursework on areas where teaching was lost and not to use ASOS as a reason not to do this. This was welcomed by the University as an important contribution.
* The University is not seeking staff to reschedule missed classes, albeit there is a need for learning outcomes to be achieved.
* The University believes that, at present, no-one is in breach of contract through conducting ASOS and, consequently, it is not necessary to make deductions from pay. If this situation changes, for example in the event of a marking boycott or in the event of protracted industrial action, the University reserves its right to deduct pay.
* The University will consider whether to make a statement to the effect that it is not currently deducting pay for ASOS.
* The FAQs will include wording on this issue.

**Contractual changes:**

UCU has raised concerns about the potential for members to be "coerced" into moving from teaching and research to teaching only contracts as a means of improving REF Unit of Assessment scores.The University has made a commitment to work within the REF2021 Code of Practice, as agreed by the Senate, which states:

2.1.7 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.

The University reaffirms its commitment to following the Code of Practice.

[End]