

**Notes of meeting no 3 of the special, combined JNC held on Tuesday 24 March 2020**

**Present (virtually)**: Stephen Shute, Pro Vice Chancellor, (Planning and Resources) (SS) (Chair); Tim Westlake, Chief Operating Officer (TW); Bridget Edminson, General Counsel and Director of Governance and Compliance (BE); Peter Brook, Interim Director of HR (PB); John Hallam, Interim Assistant Director of HR (ER) (JH); Chris Chatwin, UCU, (CC); Andrew Chitty (UCU) (AC); Paula Burr (UNITE) (PB); Claire Colburn (UNISON) (ClCo); Michael Moran, Regional Officer, UCU (MM); Caroline Fife, UNISON (CF); Holly Foster, UNISON (HF).

**Apologies**: Adam Tickell, Vice Chancellor (AT); Robert Hutton, Director of Estates (RH); Marcus Williams, Director of Student Recruitment, Admissions and International Development (MW); Elaine Stephen (UNISON) (ES)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Actions |
| 1/3 | S**ummary of latest position**  CC asked about the potential funding gap faced by the University. TW noted that draft figures had been discussed in confidence at Council. It had been agreed no public comment would be issued on this at this point. CC said that UCU stood ready to work in partnership with the University to address any urgent financial issues. This was welcomed.  SS said international students amounted to about £60m of University income. £30m of this came from China. Little surplus was made from home students or research so international income was key to the long-term financial strength of the University. It was clearly possible that international / Chinese student numbers might fall in the autumn leading to cash-flow issues. The student recruitment market could become very aggressive. MM noted that this was a common concern across the sector. CC urged the University to be transparent about the financial situation. SS said that the situation remained very unclear at present but there was a need to prepare for the possibility of a down-turn in international recruitment. The University was liaising with UUK and other channels into the DfE over the challenges the sector now faces. In response to a question from HF it was noted PGR and PGT numbers might reduce.  CC said that the financial briefings received in December showed Sussex was in a reasonably strong financial position and we needed to promote that via positive messaging to recruitment of students.  The University would be working hard to recruit students via ‘clearing.’  January entrants were also being considered.  Recruitment in India seemed positive.  Language testing was being conducted on line.  All international travel had been curtailed.  The University had taken out some licences for use of Zoom (a communication app).  The OfS had directed HEIs not to make any unconditional offers for a period of at least the next two weeks in order to stabilise the recruitment market.  It was agreed a number of other issues would be considered in the meeting:   1. Protections for those in precarious positions in the workforce 2. UCU strike deductions 3. Protections for those with caring responsibilities or in self isolation 4. Protections for migrant students and workers 5. Teaching assessments   In terms of future meetings it was agreed that:   1. Meetings would not be recorded (audio or video) without the agreement of the chair or the meeting; 2. The Trade Unions were asked to submit any specific questions which needed answering via John Hallam |  |
| 2/3 | **Protections for those in precarious positions in the workforce**  MM raised the issue of staff on Fixed Term Contracts (FTCs), particularly those on the Language Centre and what the position would be on the renewal of their contracts or being made permanent. MM said he believed some staff had sought permanency but had been refused. He noted discussions on a workforce security of employment agreement were on-going with SCLS. AC said it would be good if the University could make a positive statement of principle in respect of precarious workers. Sick pay for arrangements for staff employed by private contractors could also be harmonised. SS said that the law allowed anyone with more than four years continuous service to request that they be made permanent. That would not alter the fact that no one could be absolutely guaranteed on-going employment, especially in the current circumstances. |  |
| 3/3 | **Strike Deductions**  AC said that if Sussex management wished to agree a ‘quid pro quo’ arrangement with UCU over strike deductions / re-scheduling of teaching any such arrangement would require the approval and sign off of UCU nationally. UCU’s position was that at this time of hardship, any pay deductions should be cancelled. SS that the VC had already indicated there was only a ‘slim chance’ of this occurring. It had, however, been agreed by UEG to spread deductions over June and July to assist with planning and to help ease pressures on finances. |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 4/3 | **Protections for those with caring responsibilities or in self isolation**  CF raised a number of issues, including the pay of staff in self-isolation. JH said these issues were covered in the current staff FAQs – which would be kept under continual review for any further comments submitted. AC referred to the wording used by Kings College London in their FAQs around carers working from home and balancing work / life commitments. JH said that HR were aware of the KCL FAQs and there was an on-going process underway to review the FAQs. They would probably be updated in the next few days. AC shared a URL with the group. SS noted that it would be difficult to cover every scenario in this fast moving situation. |  |
| 5/3 | **Migrant Students and Staff**  AC said that the University should suspend all monitoring of migrant staff and students. This request would be reviewed. |  |
| 6/3 | **Student Assessments**  AC said he wished to raise the possibility of the cancellation of student assessments for this year in the light of covid-19. He said many students were very concerned about having to continue with assessments at this time. SS said that KC was chair of the Education and Students Continuity Group. The approach to assessments in the light of the Covid-19 challenge was being considered. AC said this request was not just about the abilities of people to switch to on-line learning but also about the issues of access – i.e. students who did not have ready access to the internet outside of the University. |  |
| 7/3 | **Thanks**  SS, on behalf of UEG, noted the extraordinary efforts that had been made by a range of staff to support the move to on-line teaching and working from home. He thought people’s response to the impact of covid-19 and the need to change ways of working so rapidly had been exemplary. This appreciation was acknowledged. |  |
| 8/3 | **Future Meetings**  In terms of future meetings it was agreed that:   1. Meetings would not be recorded (audio or video) without the agreement of the chair or the meeting; 2. The Trade Unions were asked to submit any specific questions which needed answering via John Hallam 3. Meetings would now take place on Tuesdays and Fridays at 2.00 p.m. |  |

These notes were agreed at the meeting held on 31/03/20

25 March 2020