

UNITE JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (JNC)

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 18 January 2021 Meeting held via Skype under Covid-19 restrictions.

PRESENT

Damian McAlister (People & Culture); Paul Davidson (People & Culture); Mark Latuske (People & Culture); Tina Gallagher (People & Culture); Richard Young (UNITE); Paul Agnew (UNITE); Judith Hough (UNITE); Stuart Christy (UNITE) .

APOLOGIES

Rhonda Black (UNITE);

IN ATTENDANCE

Christine Irwin (People & Culture)

21.01 WELCOME & ADMIN

Mr McAlister welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Stuart Christy. Technical Services Engineer (Electronics & Computing).

21.02 ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF 9 November 2020.

Point 20:20 – Mr McAlister meet Mr Agnew –Change to Mr Davidson meeting Mr Agnew.

Point 20.1.09 - Change ‘developing a programme’ to having conversations.

21.03 MATTERS ARISING

20.19:01 Pre-retirement and Mid-Career Planning. The action is still live. Karan Green to liaise with colleagues to progress.

20.20 Facilities Time - Outstanding action for Mr Davidson and Mr Agnew to meet to discuss Unite facilities time, GBD and backfill. Ms Gallagher advised the meeting that she had met with the Neil Hewitt, Head of School to discuss options for backfill for Mr Young, it had been arranged for time to be charged 50% to facilities and 50% to the School. A number of backfill options are being considered.

20.24: Well Connected. Mr Latuske provided an update. A series of recommendations came out of Valuing Voices. The focus is on how we work and manage and how to make sure we are well connected, particularly in lockdown. The focus across the University is on how we can ensure colleagues are both Well and Connected. People & Culture, for example have 3 simple areas of focus for the New Year: Brew Monday - a Samaritans initiative; Catch up and Coffee and the Step Challenge.

Mr Young advised that he had received feedback that initiatives such as these worked for those who had contacts and were in social groups but seemed to reinforce isolation for some people. Mr Latuske advised that he was looking for how to best approach this.

Mr McAlister advised that this was a programme that P&C would continue to be innovative on. Mr McAlister said that the University was appreciative of the support received from Unions in encouraging people to participate.

20.25 P&C Web pages. Action to keep the P&C Portal up to date. Mr Young advised that the UU web pages providing Covid advice for Staff and Students required greater clarity regarding close contact. Greater awareness is needed around Employee responsibilities for close contact in the workplace. Mr Young asked Mr McAlister to re-iterate close contact responsibilities, in his Friday communication. Mr McAlister advised that clarity had been sought and received from the PHA and new guidance was being applied appropriately. The web pages would be updated accordingly. The new rule of "close contact for an aggregate of 15 minutes", has led to an increase in numbers to contact and in turn, numbers to self-isolate.

20.21 Signing In to Campus. Mr Young expressed thanks that the University were keeping the Jordanstown Road entrance open and secure and hoped that this would continue to be the case. Mr Young advised that he had received feedback from staff that there were different signing in arrangements in place and problems of duplication. Email sign in had been put in place without consultation. Mr Young spoke of the importance to sign in physically regarding lone working and where security may need to locate individuals in a hurry.

Mr McAlister advised that the University could not commit to keeping the Jordanstown entrance open. Mr Young said that you can't have every second parking place adhered to, if you don't have both entrances. Should there be only one entrance, staff would be walking through parts of the building that they didn't need to be in, widening contact areas and areas requiring deep clean. Mr Young asked that the University consider that there are staff who walk or use public transport and it would add an extra 15 minutes to their journey if they had to enter via the main entrance.

21.04 Update on Restructuring

This item was proposed by Unite, specifically relating to the libraries and Estate Services. An update on the Library re-structure had been provided at JUCNC.

Mr Davidson advised that the November JNC had raised the issue of ISD Restructure. Mr Davidson had co-ordinated a meeting with Mr Taglietti, there was no further update since the November JNC.

Unite advised that the meeting with Mr Taglietti had been useful. There had been an offer to DWU for iPads and training which Unite were grateful for but it was not the right time to pursue. Ms Green from People and Culture was in discussions regarding Staff Development, for those categories, these discussions would continue in due course.

21.05 Facilities Time

Agenda Item covered in Matters Arising.

Mr Agnew updated on GBD and advised that good progress was being made on the majority of issues involved, with further work required for some items including major issues such as car parking. Mr McAlister expressed his confidence that matters would be progressed.

21.06 Use of Degree as a selection area

Mr Young referred to his email of 16 December and Unites paper of 14 January.

Mr Christy advised that the current system did not define how a degree would add value. A dynamic was being excluded from being able to apply there is a diversity of background and experience that is being excluded. Where a degree is listed as essential, the reason for it being essential, should be stated.

Mr Davidson advised that staff were not excluded from progression by this criteria, a degree could be obtained, in house, in 2 years

Mr Davidson advised that UCU have negotiating rights for Administrative Grade 7 and above and needed to be included in this discussion. Mr Young disagreed that the negotiating rights as understood by Mr Davidson, had ever been agreed to.

Mr Young said that it wasn't a matter of who Unite had negotiating rights for, rather, it was a point of principle for any University post that people not be excluded from applying for jobs, because they did not hold a degree . Mr Young referred to a School Officer Post as sent by Unite, in relation to this item. The post on offer does not state Degree '*or equivalent*' which Unite believed they had agreement on.

Mr Davidson advised that Grade 7 posts have always been seen as 'graduate entry'. Given that one of the primary functions of the University is to award degrees, their importance in employability is promoted.

Discussion followed re: the merits of Degree versus experience.

Mr McAlister said that the University has often used Grade 7 as the demarcation line for where you needed a degree. There was a need for a point at which the University said a qualification was required. It could be that an equivalent qualification was sought.

Further conversation to take place with all Unions to discuss positioning Ulster to have the best candidates. There was no feedback received to say that UU are NOT getting the best candidates.

Unite said that they would like to see Degree 'or equivalent'. Experience is still valid in the process, but doesn't determine whether someone can apply.

Mr Davidson to provide equivalencies to Degree and to review Personnel specifications to provide clarity.

21.07 AOB:

No Other Business raised.

Meeting Ended 15:45