

NOTES OF MEETING – JOINT UNION CONSULTATIVE & NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (JUCNC).

Date: 21 May 2021

Present: Paul Bartholomew (VC) ; Damian McAlister (People & Culture); Paul Davidson (People & Culture); Mark Latuske (People & Culture); Geoff Gillan (People & Culture); Joanne Doherty (People & Culture); Martin Garry (People & Culture) ; Fiona Wills (People & Culture); Tina Gallagher (People & Culture); Kathryn Wills (People & Culture); Richard Young (Unite); Paul Agnew (Unite); Judith Hough (Unite); Rhonda Black (Unite); Gareth Scott (Unite); Linda Moore (UCU); Aisling O’Beirn (UCU); Adrian Grant (UCU); Norman Hagan (UCU); Marianne Buick (Unison).

Attending: Carol Curran (Executive Dean); Christine Irwin (People & Culture).

Apologies: Paddy Mackel (UCU).

Format: Meeting held via Microsoft Teams.

21.09 Welcome and Housekeeping

Mr McAlister welcomed all to the meeting.

21.10 Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2021 and notes of Special JUCNC on 5 May 2021 .

The minutes were considered as accurate.

21.11 Matters arising from the Minutes of 29 April 2021 and 5 May 2021.

21.48 *Gym membership* is rolled forward or a refund can be requested .

21.49 *Academic Timetabling*. Discussion is ongoing and the item is to be brought to a future meeting . UCU to send member comments . UCU said that they had not yet seen a policy draft that they could agree on and proposed that policy be piloted. Mr McAlister said that the further policy iteration needed to be engaged on. Work on a drat framework, will continue.

21.52 *Academic Promotions scheme is open until the 21 June* . UCU have sent comments.

21.53 *Procedures on the ending of Fixed Term Contracts and Redeployments*: The voluntary aspect of payment has been re-instated . The item will be subject of future discussion to have something in place for 2022 .

21.54 *Management Reviews*: UCU to send a response .

21.55 CTC UCU have written to P&C asking for a date for negotiations ,confirmation that stage 2 is extended and a date that stage 2 is extended to. Mr Davidson to write to UCU with dates and clarification on these issues.

21.12 Update from the Vice-Chancellor

Professor Bartholomew spoke on the University Strategy . Outcomes to be achieved with limited levers. 1. Development of Policy, 2. People , 3. Infrastructure and 4. External engagement .

Professor Bartholomew advised that for the rest of the academic year , where work could be done on-line , it must be. There are some activities where on-campus will still take place, with priority given to using campus spaces for practice-based learning activities. Decisions will be made, keeping an eye on Public Health environment . The plan for the next academic year is that teaching will be as normal, fully on-site and if health deteriorates, pull back, to now. If necessary, alternate between the two positions . There is a spectrum in between 'teaching as normal' and where we are now , but if there is a public health concern, the greater level of security is to revert to now.

UCU objected to staff having been put through 'between position planning' and advised that the message of 2 positions to go between , will not be received well. Senior Managers have advised staff to be prepared for part on line and part on campus, teaching . UCU called for an investigation into why staff have been put through planning for a middle stage , and requested a written response . Mr McAlister to speak to Professor Bartholomew and respond .

Professor Bartholomew advised that consideration is being given to expanding category 1 for those who have large cohorts of international students, to achieve merits in socialisation .

UCU advised that it was more prudent to operate 'as now', through first semester until there was greater knowledge of the variants and of vaccine success . There could be a clearer decision given closer to semester 2. The employer is to conduct workplace assessments and is obligated to carry out the findings . An employer should demonstrate , when asking someone to return to work, why that work cant be done from home. .

Professor Bartholomew advised that academics were free to design their sessions as suits them and their students including the use of Tech to reduce numbers in lecture halls. The decision is to be advised by the end of May at the latest.

Unite advised of their concerns for on-campus members and staff that cannot be vaccinated. Unite said that Higher Education carries greater risks than many workplaces, Students don't always comply with Risk Assessments and do not necessarily adhere to social distancing or wear face coverings .

Unite want to seek reassurance for the safety of clinically extremely vulnerable staff and for staff not cared for under this category. Unite advised that they had asked for consultation on each risk assessment and had not been consulted. This would be raised in the HSW meeting, on Wednesday .

Mr McAlister advised that the ways of working for the past 15 months wont be lost . A flexible framework will give empowerment to non-academic staff . Some staff will be required to be on campus and for others , a more blended approach can be applied.

UCU asked for clarity for students returning to residencies, accommodation refunds and guidance for students with private landlords. Professor Bartholomew said that students who choose private landlords do so with risk . The VC communication in May would allow students to make assessments for themselves, advice would be given .

Mr McAlister advised that the University's position is still, if you can work from home, work from home . Public Health agency and Department of Health advice, is followed. Risk Assessment guidance will be revised on return to campus . the HSW committee meets next week and provides opportunity to revisit these issues. UCU said that they were keen to start conversation on a flexible working policy that was not just a hybrid working policy and wanted to talk about compensation for working from home.

UCU asked how those in the South of Ireland with a difference in vaccine rollout , would be factored in to plans. Professor Bartholomew said that he had raised this to Government level and it plays into the assumptions made in September about the position on campus return.

21.13 CDP Policy

Item to be moved to a future JUCNC.

21.14 Semester 1 Arrangements

Item covered under 21.12

21.15 GBD – TU Facilities

UCU asked whether suitable TU facilities had been provided . Unite said that the University was not providing basic facilities, yet talked about having better working relationships. Mr McAlister advised that Mr Fitzpatrick had committed to providing a better space . Item to be discussed at the GBD meeting on 18 June.

21.16 Sickness Absence Policy

Mr Gillen thanked the Unions for their help in policy development and for the considerable time spent in discussion of this item. UCU advised that As the Sickness Absence Policy could lead to dismissal, UCU are not agreeing it as a point of principal. UCU have sent wording in relation to their noting of the policy and accept that the policy has been negotiated well on all sides . UCU are not signing the policy off UCU advised that they *"note the agreement reached in respect of the Emergency Special Leave Policy and also the progress made and conclusion of the discussions in respect of both the Sickness Absence Policy and Ill Health Capability Procedure to facilitate implementation across the university."*

Unite advised that they have always negotiated for a Sickness Absence policy that was without trigger points. Unite agree that, at this point, the Sickness Absence Policy and the Special Leave Policy are beneficial and supportive policies. Unite want Line Management awareness and training on the policies. Unite have a question mark over the ill Health Capability Policy but feel that they have negotiated for the

best. Unite want policy for menopause and domestic abuse, in place as soon as possible.

Unison advised that workload had not enabled them to be involved in the sickness and ill health policy discussions but they work alongside the other Unions and take their advice on this matter.

Mr Gillen advised that the Menopause Policy was being discussed on Tuesday and the Domestic Abuse policy was in draft and consultation .

21.17 III-Health Capability Procedure

Discussed at item 21.16

21.18 Holiday Pay Calculations

Unison advised that members received backdated pay , in May . Mr Davidson advised on the Universities approach to payment. UCU advised that the only time that could be substituted for money, was where time was not taken at the end of the holiday year . Mr Davidson advised that the University was legally compliant and wants to engage on the practicalities with consideration to be given to the options of taking leave through a period of engagement with the University or taking leave at the end of a period of engagement or adding the hours into the contract and paying them.

Mr McAlister advised that annual leave was about Health & Safety and rest . P&C to consider the matter further and come back to continue discussion .

21.19 Flexible Working Policy – Programme of Work

Mr Davidson advised that he was keen to have a flexible working policy in place by September . UCU advised that discussions on the matter , scheduled in July may not be acceptable . UCU to attend the first meeting in June but cannot commit to weekly meetings. UCU advised that a working group should have been in place from the start to which UCU could have sent a representative,

21.20 AOB:

21.20.1. Unite advised that the internet A-Z for finding departments, is not working. Ms Gallagher advised that this matter had been raised, the link was now working .

21.20.02. Unison advised that catering services are out for tender. Unison push the University to consider bringing services back in house. UCU are in support of bringing services back in house.

21.20.03 Mr McAlister advised that Professors Meenan and Lyons were taking up positions as Interim Executive Deans and would hold these positions for a minimum of 6 months.

Meeting ended 12:35