

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 June 2019 in room 8H08 on the Jordanstown Campus.

Present: Lindsay Dawe, Linda Moore, Aisling O'Beirn, Damian McAlister, Paul Davidson.

In attendance: Christine Irwin, Rhona Reid.

Apologies: Kelly McBride.

19.28 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2019.

The minutes were approved.

19.29 Matters arising from the Minutes of 12 March 2019.

Mr McAlister congratulated Mr Dawe and Dr Moore/Dr O'Beirn on their election to the positions of President and Co-Deputy President respectively.

It was noted that all matters arising are either complete or form substantive agenda items for the meeting today.

19.30 Discussion on how best to structure future JNCs

As this is the final meeting of JNC during academic year 2018/19, discussion took place to reflect on how JNC had operated during the last year with a view to agreeing any areas of improvement that might be required.

It was generally agreed that the approach of having fewer papers and more open discussions at JNC should be continued. It was also noted that the tone of JNC meetings tends to be less formal than JUCNCs which is appropriate and helpful.

JNC agreed that its meetings should generally be face to face meetings rather than by videoconference (except where a guest speaker is attending for one agenda item only and is unable to attend face to face).

19.31 Discussion on co-creating policies

Mr Davidson opened the discussion by noting that the University has significantly changed its approach to policy development in recent years, with a much greater focus on engagement with staff and trade unions. He advised that People and Culture have been in discussions with the Office of the University Secretary to ensure that this approach is embedded in the University's Policy Development Framework.

Mr Davidson advised that in relation to engagement with staff, the framework now makes clear that policy development should be a collaborative exercise involving a broad range of stakeholders, rather than an exercise conducted by the 'policy lead' in isolation. Mr Davidson further advised that early engagement should take place to help ensure that the 'policy lead' fully understands the needs and expectations of the users of the policy. The policy framework now includes guidance on techniques that policy leads may use to help ensure effective staff engagement.

A discussion took place on the format of consultation with the trade unions on draft policies and in particular the appropriate forum for discussing different types of policies. Mr Davidson suggested the following approach for discussion:

- **Policies that impact on main terms and conditions of employment:** Such policies should come to JNC/JUCNC.
- **Policies that impact on the working practices of employees:** Such policies should come to JNC/JUCNC.
- **Strategies and Policies relating to core business of the University:** Strategies and policies of this kind can be discussed with the trade unions at either a JNC meeting or a 'stand alone' meeting between the 'policy lead' and the trade unions.
- **Policies relating to regulatory or legislative compliance:** Such policies can be discussed with the trade unions at a 'stand alone' meeting between the 'policy lead' and the trade unions.
- **Policies relating to Health, Safety and Wellbeing:** Such policies should be considered at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

It was agreed that this approach formed useful guidance, but its operation should be kept under review. Dr Moore noted that for the fifth category (policies relating to Health, Safety and Wellbeing) there is likely to be an overlap with the first and second categories (terms and conditions and working practices). Dr Moore also requested that the unions are given early notification of when policies are under consideration/review i.e. before the policy development/review commences.

Discussion also took place in relation to equality screening and it was agreed that screening is at the core of policy development and should be embedded throughout the policy development process.

19.32 Industrial Tribunal Review

Mr McAlister noted the recent press release from UCU on the Industrial Tribunal review. He advised that University Council had made a decision that the report should be published in full.

Dr Moore noted that their members still feel deeply hurt by the BRG process and the approach taken by the University.

19.33 Sustainability Review 2034

Mr McAlister provided an update on the Sustainability Review 2034 (SR2034). Mr McAlister advised that:

- Mr Pat Loughrey has been appointed to Chair the review.
- The work on the review has not yet commenced. Launch events will take place in the new academic year.
- There has been rumours and speculation that SR2034 is about campus closures. SR2034 is not about campus closures, rather it is about how we ensure that each campus is used effectively.

Dr Moore advised that UCU will not participate in the review. UCU has concerns in relation to the independence of the review, particularly given the findings of the Industrial Tribunal and the hurt caused. Dr O'Beirn advised that members feel fatigued by the constant change.

19.34 Workload

Mr McAlister advised that People and Culture are continuing the early stage 'fact finding' with Heads of School in relation to their experiences and practices in regard to academic workload allocation, with a view to opening consultation with UCU in the new academic year.

UCU indicated that their members are deeply concerned about the metrics-based approaches taken by some schools. UCU feel that the metric-based approaches are not consistent with the University's principle-based workload allocation framework.

19.35 PS 5&50 Update

Mr Davidson provided the following update of ongoing PS 5&50 restructuring exercises:

- **Campus Life Directorate:** The matching process has been completed and recruitment is well underway.
- **ISD:** The recruitment to the Grade 9 posts has been completed. The new Grade 9s are working on the job descriptions and job evaluation documentation.
- **Student Administration:** SLT are considering proposals from the Directorate,

19.36 Casualisation /fixed term contracts

Mr Davidson advised that the University is keen to open discussion with the unions in relation to redundancy compensation, compromise agreements and how best to deal with long-term fixed-term contracts. An initial discussion took place at JUCNC on 28 May 2019.

Mr Davidson advised that the University wishes to discuss four interrelated issues:

- Action to minimise the use of long-term fixed-term contracts.
- Linking the level of Voluntary Redundancy compensation to duration of service.
- Exclusion clauses in Compromise Agreements.
- Redundancy compensation when a fixed-term contract ends as scheduled.

Initial discussion on options followed.

19.37 Pensions Dispute

UCU noted their intention to ballot for industrial action in the new academic year.

19.38 Magee Library

UCU noted the recent incident in the Magee Library in relation to the disposal of hard copy publications. UCU are concerned about rumours that disciplinary action may be imminent. Mr Davidson advised that he was not aware of any imminent plans for initiate disciplinary action. He further advised that the University will review the incident and while there are no imminent plans for disciplinary action, if the review identifies potential breaches of discipline the disciplinary procedures may be invoked.

19.39 CAIN

Mr Davidson update JNC on recent discussion that he and Professor Lasslett had with UCU and the staff in CAIN. It was noted that Professor Seawright had written directly to the staff in CAIN on 18 June 2019.

Dr Moore noted the importance of the staff in CAIN receiving support in their fund-raising activities.

19.40 GBD update

Mr Davidson noted that Mr Shane Fitzpatrick has been appointed as Director of Strategic Projects and will be working closely People and Culture to put in place meaningful engagement with the trade unions on GBD.

UCU indicated that there is a sense among their members that information is being 'drip fed' to staff and more meaningful engagement is required. It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged between UCU and Mr Fitzpatrick.

19.41 Equality including Gender pay

UCU noted the importance of action plans to address the gender pay gap. Mr Davidson advised that arising from the new EDI strategy, work is underway.

19.42 Online Assessment

UCU referred to the presentation Professor Brian Murphy, Director of Distributed Learning, gave to the last meeting of JNC. UCU advised that staff feel that they are receiving mixed messages from their Heads of School in relation to online assessment. It was agreed that this should be discussed at the meeting between UCU and Professor Bartholomew which is currently being arranged.

Due to time constraints the meeting ended.