

UNITE JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (JNC)

Notes of meeting held on 20 September 2021

Present: Damian McAlister (People & Culture); Paul Davidson (People & Culture); Mark Latuske (People & Culture); Tina Gallagher (People & Culture); Kathryn Wills (People & Culture); Richard Young (UNITE); Paul Agnew (UNITE); Rhonda Black (UNITE); Judith Hough (UNITE); Pearl Bartley (UNITE); Gareth Scott (UNITE); Christine Irwin (People & Culture).

Attending: Brian McAuley (Director of Faculty Operations Life & Health Sciences); Stephen Doherty (Deputy Director, Estates Services); Joanne Doherty (People & Culture).

Apologies: Billy Scampton (UNITE).

Format: Meeting held via Microsoft Teams.

21.16 Welcome & Housekeeping

Mr Davidson welcomed all to the meeting.

Mr Young introduced additional agenda items for discussion: Fixed Term Contracts; Health & Safety. Also reiterated the request that the Technician Commitment be added as a standing item on the agenda.

21.17 Accuracy of the minutes of 7 May 2021

Item 21.14, to read Technical Staff and Crafts staff.

No further amendments required.

21.18 Matters Arising

21.18.01 Health Sciences Relocation

Mr Davidson advised that good progress was being made. An Emergency JNC scheduled for 22 September relating to one item.

21.18.02 Technicians

Mr McAuley provided an update on the Technicians Commitment scheme, advising that a workshop is arranged for 27 September with Mr McAlister as co-chair. A Technical co-chair would be agreed, with further discussion on membership of the committee to include Research; P&C; Marketing and Comms and Technicians. A first formal meeting would be scheduled following the workshop.

Mr Young provided member feedback that greater understanding is required for both the member's role in the scheme and how the scheme will benefit them. Mr McAuley advised that there would be a dedicated Twitter feed on the scheme and opportunities were being created. Mr McAuley to provide feedback following the first formal meeting at the next JNC in December, Mr McAlister to update Unite colleagues ahead of the next JNC.

Rhonda Black was named as the representative for Unite on this item.

21.18.03 Update on Restructures: Estates and Academy Restaurant

Stephen Doherty updated the meeting on the **restructure of Estates**. Mr Doherty advised that the new structure had been in place since 1 August 2021 with the majority of posts now filled. Of the 104 posts in the new structure, 82 had been filled without competition through the matching of existing staff to roles. For staff who did not want to take part in competitive process, there were options for re-deployment and VR. Nine of the vacant posts were as a result of retirement and leavers. Three of the vacant posts were as a result of staff accepting other positions in the University. Other posts are at recruitment stage of the process.

Unite advised that they had consulted on this matter and had made representation for 'no end date', for the process. Unite expressed their concern for those who may not have posts in the new structure.

Mr Davidson advised that there were 3 staff who did not have a role. 1-1s would be entered into to have open conversations and to explore opportunities with those staff. Staff preference may be to leave the University. Mr Doherty to provide an update at the next JNC (December 21).

Joanne Doherty updated the meeting on the **restructure of the Academy Restaurant**.

Ms Doherty advised of the timeline of restructure events and process.

- 13 April 21 - restructure process started.
- 27 May 21 - restructure process closed.
- 28 May - Tom O'Neill circulated the new structure to staff.
- 28 May - staff advised that all were matched from their current position.

Ms Doherty advised the meeting that the roles of Head Chef and Business Development Manager had been advertised. The Head Chef has been appointed, the Business Development Manager is not yet appointed - this is a reflection of the challenging recruitment market for hospitality. Once these 2 posts are in place, the remaining posts in the structure will be filled.

21.19 Fixed Term Contracts

In response to People and Culture requesting feedback on fixed term contracts, Unite advised that they are against fixed term contracts and want permanent positions. Ms Bartley to meet Ms Gallagher to discuss fixed term contracts.

21.20 Health & Safety

Unite advised that they do not consider that they have had meaningful consultation on Health and Safety matters regarding a safe return to campus. This includes the Health and Safety Matrix; Interim Operating Procedures and the Generic Risk Assessment. Mr Young advised that this item is raised at JNC as Senior Reps do not have facilities time to represent their members in responding on these matters and are entitled to go to the Health & Safety Executive if they are not satisfied that consultation has been meaningful. Mr McAlister and Mr Young to meet to discuss facilitating Unite representation.

21.21 Facilities Time

Mr Young advised that he had concerns over continuing with the 50% facilities time. Mr Scott asked for confirmation that the 50% was not for a fixed period. Mr Davidson advised that time was allocated based on a formula which took into account campus numbers and numbers of members. Ms Gallagher to meet with Mr Young to consider how the 50% may best work.

Mr Davidson spoke on GBD facilities time which he advised was coming to a conclusion. Reps are to prepare to return to their substantive role. Mr Scott urged the University to consider an extension of current GBD facilities time until 31/12/2021 to facilitate handling the issues that arise on occupation of the building. Mr Davidson said ad-hoc release could be considered if needed, but it was highly unlikely that a general extension would be given.

21.22 Acting Up CEBE

Unite advised that their position is that acting up roles be treated as new posts and filled on a competitive basis, as acting up affords a head start to a permanent role.

Mr Davidson advised that where there was one clear Deputy to a role and if they were interested in acting up, they could be offered the opportunity. Where it is the case that there was more than one potential Deputy to the role, the role would be advertised seeking expressions of interest in the post, with an informal interview held for any applicants (if more than 1 applicant). Where it was predicted that the acting up role was required over 2 or 3 months, expressions of interest would be sought, and if for a longer term, then the position would be treated as a normal recruitment exercise.

Mr Davidson advised that an acting up position may also be offered to an individual who had been a runner up in a recruitment exercise for a similar role.

Unite asked for a policy which defined the timeframes and the understanding of who was considered as a 'clear deputy'. Where individuals were offered fixed term contracts from prior recruitment exercises, Unite advised that they expected any advertisement to advise that a reserve list may be compiled. Unite requested a greater oversight from P&C when recruiting acting up roles.

Mr Davidson advised that he would outline the current process in writing to Unite including a statement about the resourcing of the roles in question. Pension scheme implications when acting up are to be clarified.

21.23 Registry

Unite advised that they had been informed that 2 departments, Registry and Exams were merging, that any such merge was a restructure and that Unite were to be consulted.

Ms Wills advised that Registry and Exams were sharing the same physical area in Belfast but there was no change in reporting lines, a restructure was not in process. Ms Wills said that a number of staff were employed on fixed-term contracts and others were holding acting-up positions, a restructure was required, including making some roles permanent.

Mr Young said that a 5&50 exercise had long been expected to address operational issues. Unite welcomed the 6 new posts, overall, but the pandemic and a delayed move to Belfast had impacted on the 5&50 process being enacted and the process should have happened sooner. Mr Davidson advised that the 5&50 corporate plan had ended.

Mr Young advised of Unite's concern for lack of staff 1-1s; staff were returning to work, including working at a new campus, without the mandatory offer of a 1-1. Staff preference for campus was not being taken into account; staff were rostered to work 1 week on and 1 week off, in Belfast with no thought to the practice of staff working from home where work could be done from home. Covering core hours 10-12 and 2-4 on campus, with other hours being worked from home, was not being considered, and should be. K Wills advised she would explore further with Interim Director, Aileen Moore.

21.24 AOB

No further items raised.

Meeting Ended 17:45

Next meeting scheduled 6 Dec 21.