

UCU JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27 November 2018 in Room 8H08 on the Jordanstown Campus.

Present: Ms G Horgan, Dr L Moore, Mr M Latuske, Mr P Davidson, Mr M Garry

Apologies: Mr D McAlister, Mr L Dawe.

19.01 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2018.

Minor typographic amendments were noted and amended.

UCU requested that it should be noted at minute 18.22, that UCU have not agreed to the OSC Policy and are proceeding 'under protest'.

19.02 Matters Arising from the Minutes of 24 September 2018.

Dr Moore referred to minute 18.26 relating to facilities time for UCU representatives, outlining the pressures arising from the current arrangements. Mr Davidson advised that he has been conducting some research on the practice in other UK universities. Management intend to bring a proposal on facilities time to a future JUCNC.

UCU referred to minute 18.28 (on-line marking), raising concerns in relation to the reliability of Blackboard Learn, noting regular outage. Mr Davidson advised that he would take forward these concern to ISD.

19.03 Minutes of Faculty Accountability Meeting – Faculty of AHSS.

Dr Moore noted that UCU were extremely concerned to read the minutes from AHSS Faculty Accountability meeting and in particular the following extract:

'The Vice-Chancellor posed a question in relation to morale, in that the majority of striking staff were technicians. Prof Seawright advised that he felt that staff were becoming more politicised on certain campuses, and further advised that Unions had been attending to the most trivial of matters heightening tension.'

Mr Davidson advised that this issue had been raised with the Executive Dean. It was acknowledged that errors had occurred in the choice of word and that the Executive Dean had contacted UCU to apologise directly.

Dr Moore also highlighted to the section in the minutes where the Chief Operating Officer referred to the development of a new 'Employer Relations Policy'. Mr Davidson advised that Mr McAlister had spoken to the COO and it was acknowledged the wrong words had been used and the COO was in fact referring to the ongoing Industrial Tribunal review.

Dr Moore also raised concerns in relation to UKVI Tier 4 student attendance monitoring, the 'special measures' arrangements and the fitness to study policy. Mr Davidson advised that Professor Bartholomew will be joining future meetings of JUCNC so that issues of this kind can be addressed directly with him.

19.04 Stress Survey - Faculty of AHSS.

UCU requested that they are fully involved in the review of results of the survey before it is released.

19.05 Ceramics, Jewellery and Silversmithing.

Dr Moore indicated that there are still issues in relation to Ceramics, Jewellery and Silversmithing. She raised concerns in relation to the speed and effectiveness of communication and noted that, on one issue she had to wait four weeks to get a response from the Associate Head of School. Dr Moore suggested bringing in a senior academic to help with the transition process.

19.06 School of Architecture.

This item was proposed by UCU. Discussion took place on positive feedback from workshop held in relation to the Masters in Architecture intake for 2019.

Dr Moore noted that no marketing or relaunching of the course had taken place and asked to be present at future meetings on course relaunch.

19.07 Media Studies Relocation.

While noting that useful consultation meetings have taken place, UCU requested assurances that no jobs will be lost or downgraded.

Mr Davidson advised that he had spoken to Professor Seawright and at that time all staff seemed content and no major issues have emerged. Dr Moore noted that UCU had requested the Equality Screening report on the relocation.

19.08 People and Culture restructuring.

Mr Davidson provided an update on the new People & Culture Directorate structure noting that of the 40 permanent staff in People and Culture, 37 had been matched to roles in the new structure.

UCU indicated that they had some concerns in relation to resourcing of Health and Safety, given the volume of stress and illness identified through the staff survey. Mr Davidson advised that six additional posts had been created including; a new Nurse Manager role, 2 Employee Wellbeing Campus Co-ordinators and 3 Absence Coordinators. UCU indicated that the job title 'Absence Coordinator' should be reviewed. Mr Latuske noted that the new roles would be supportive and said creating a focused team was the right approach, it was agreed to share the Job Descriptions with UCU.

UCU noted that it had concerns in relation to whether the independence of the Health and Safety function could be compromised by being within the broader People and Culture Directorate.

Ms Horgan noted that, given the level of stress related illnesses, there was potential for the University to be open to personal injury claims.

19.09 School of Health Sciences (Annual Leave issues).

This item was proposed by UCU. UCU had raised concerns in relation to the approach being taken to annual leave for academic staff in the School of Health Sciences, indicating a move towards a more 'managerial' approach.

Mr Davidson noted that academic staff contracts do not stipulate the amount of annual leave for academic staff but, as a rough 'rule of thumb' Schools allow 6 weeks leave per year. Mr Davidson also noted that in his experience, Heads of School and academic staff show significant flexibility on when leave can be taken.

Mr Davidson further note that he had spoken to the Head of School and had been shown the slides she used at a recent School meeting when annual leave was discussed. Mr Davidson advised that the Head of School was simply asking staff to let her know when they intend to take leave for planning purposes and there is no intention to move to a system of signing 'leave sheets'.

UCU indicated that they would continue to monitor the situation but, if it was simply a process of asking staff to let their Head of School know when they planned to take leave, they had no objection to that.

19.10 Casualised /Temporary contracts and fractional posts.

Dr Moore indicated that UCU remained concerned about casualisation of the academic workforce. Dr Moore requested information on the number of workers on casual and fixed-term contracts

Mr Davidson noted that previous Freedom of Information requests had been responded to and he was happy to establish a process of updating and sharing this information regularly without the need for FOIs.

Mr Davidson indicated that over recent years he has been working closely with Heads of School to move 'casual hourly paid lecturing staff (often referred to as 'Part-time Lecturers') on to either fixed-term or permanent annualised hours contracts.

19.11 Academic-related Staff Issues.

This item was proposed by UCU. The following issues were discusses

19.11.01 UCU requested clarification on the new U-Connect section. Mr Davidson advised that this will be part of the new Campus Life structure. It will be formed from the amalgamation of a number of existing student support services to create a single point of contact for initial queries from students, a 'one stop shop'.

19.11.02 UCU requested clarification on the new contracts that have been issued to staff in CHERP. Mr Davidson advised that a number of staff in CHERP had requested to move from academic-related contracts to academic contracts as the nature of activities in CHERP were more suited to academic contracts. Professor Bartholomew agreed to this request and the contracts have been issued. The new contracts do not alter the employee's grade or salary.

19.11.03 UCU indicated that they had received reports of particularly high workloads from staff in Registry. Mr Davidson advised that he had become aware of this issue over the summer months. As most of the affected staff are in UNITE categories, People and Culture had worked directly with UNITE on a range of interventions and the situation has now stabilised.

19.11.04 Dr Moore indicated that UCU has significant concerns in relation to the Sustainability Review announced by the Vice-Chancellor.

19.12 Equal Pay Review

This item had been proposed by UCU. An update was requested on progress with the actions arising from the Equal Pay Review. It was agreed to defer this item pending an update from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion section.

19.13 PS 5&50 Update

Mr Davidson advised that the restructuring elements of the PS 5&50 project are nearing completion. There are only three Department yet to be restructured; Campus Life, ISD and Finance. The consultation on ISD and Campus Life are scheduled to commence before Christmas and Finance will be early in the New Year.

UCU indicated that, although technicians are not a UCU category of staff, academic staff had raised concerns with them in relation to the potential downgrading of technicians and the potential that this may impact on the work of the academic staff. Mr Davidson advise the restructuring of technical staff is almost complete and there to date no one has been downgraded.

UCU ask that it is noted that they have not agreed to the OSC Policy and are proceeding 'under protest'.

19.14 Review of the Academic Promotion Scheme

Mr Davidson provided an update on the review of the Academic Promotion Scheme. He advised that the process started in the early part of the academic year, with eight open campus consultation events and meetings with key stakeholders. The University is currently in the process of developing an initial draft of the new scheme. Following the development of the initial draft there will be a period of deep consultation with UCU (likely to be early in 2019).

19.15 AOB

Mr Latuske explained the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy had been paused due to the absence of Angela Getty. UCU apologised for not returning comments and Mr Latuske said if they did respond he would be happy to accept.

Mr Latuske also advised that People and Culture intend to conduct a review of the DAR process.

The meeting ended