

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

JOINT COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION, 18 October 2021

PRESENT

Sir Richard Atkins (Chair)

University Representatives

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lisa Roberts

Provost, Professor Janice Kay

Registrar & Secretary, Mike Shore-Nye

Director of Human Resources, Imelda Rogers

Trade Union Representatives

UCU Professor Brian Rappert (via Teams)

UCU Dr Alex Fairfax-Cholmeley (via Teams)

Unite Branch Secretary, Chris Forrest (via Teams)

Unison Branch, Tim Hortopp (via Teams)

Also in attendance

UCU Regional Officer, Alison Chapman

Assistant Director of Human Resources, Andrew Johnson

Executive Officer to Director of Human Resources, Rachael Cameron

Apologies

Chief Financial Officer, Andrew Connolly

21.23 Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2021 (JCCN/21/23). The meeting received the report from three of the four meetings held under Collective Dispute Procedure (JCCN/21/34). Clare Foullon (UCU) had provided suggestions to the draft minutes of the fourth meeting and these will be noted accordingly prior to circulation. The notes from the regular monthly meetings were also received.

21.24 Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee of the following:

- The launch of Strategy 2030 on 4th October, following consultation and engagement with staff, students and other stakeholders and approval at Senate and Council. She that we are now turning this into a strategic delivery plan with performance indicators. Council will receive a fully worked up and costed plan at the April 2022 meeting.
- The positive student admissions round, noting that numbers are higher than planned in some areas - caused for example by teacher grade inflation etc. Task and Finish groups are supporting those departments that have over recruited.
- The NSS performance was somewhat disappointing in the light of the amount of effort that went in to provide superb teaching throughout the challenging pandemic circumstances. The Provost and Registrar & Secretary are jointly chairing a group to improve the NSS outcomes and the institution has commissioned an external review by Dr Dilly Fung from LSE who will be meeting with Higher Education Academy and Principal Fellows in the institution, amongst others, to make recommendations.

- The excellent results in world rankings were highlighted and the Vice-Chancellor felt the investment in communication campaigns will help further raise the profile of the quality education and research offered. The NSS results had a negative impact on our position in the UK rankings - Times 21st and 15th in Guardian. Council is taking a close interest in the actions being taken to help address this situation.
- The 'Bonfire of Bureaucracy' highlighted several issues and a subsequent review of executive management structures has led to clearer and leaner decision-making routes. VCEG is now called University Executive Board (UEB) to highlight their collective responsibility. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed the composition is the same and some new appointments (DVC Digital Innovation and Chief Digital Officer) will also join the board in due course. Other changes include the new Strategic Investment and Planning Committee (SIPC) and Wellbeing, Inclusion and Culture board (WIC). Other developments include the Adaptive Estates project, Future of Work programme, Data Improvement project and the forthcoming review of Exeter Academic including promotions and progressions.
- The outcome of the valuation of the USS pension scheme, noting the consultation on the proposed changes, which starts in November. UUK have invited UCU to work on three workstreams including a lower cost scheme for members, conditional indexation and governance review of USS. If the proposed changes were not agreed the increase in contributions proposed by the USS Trustee would not be sustainable for employers or scheme members. A UCU representative advised that in a previous local consultation UCU had felt data and text to be misleading and not well constructed with leading questions. They asked that colleagues consult with UCU prior to launching consultation to get better quality results and was advised that the consultation is part of a national framework and undertaken via a portal developed by USS Trustee and free text responses would be an option.
- The UCU ballot is now open until 4th November. The Vice-Chancellor expressed her hope that is not inflicted on students who have been already severely impacted by the pandemic and for finalists by previous industrial action do not experience industrial action this year as well.
- The change of government minister has caused some delays to the report into Future of Higher Education funding and likely this will be published at similar time to the Comprehensive Spending Review. Some significant options around funding models and the student finance system are anticipated. In response to a question from the UCU Regional Officer about the action taken by the University to encourage medical students to defer to next year due to student number cap, the Provost explained this was a challenging but correct decision because if student numbers are over the cap no funding is available for five years for them and the University is unable to seek placements for them either.
- Sir Paul Nurse from CRIC in London has been asked to undertake a review of the Research Innovation landscape in UK due to report in April with a view to identify improvements to help the government develop the UK as a research superpower.
- The government is keen that students are vaccinated and uptake by students is much higher than others in same age groups.

21.25 Fair Employment for All (FEFA) – Update from Assistant Director of HR (Policy and Reward)

The Committee received an oral update on the extensive work undertaken since December 2019 which in summary is:

- Significantly increasing the use of open-ended contracts of employment, recognising that fixed term contracts will be appropriate in a limited range of circumstances. 373 contracts were converted from fixed term to open-ended in the period to June 2021. New procedures have been introduced to review fixed term contracts at their fourth anniversary. Improved guidance is being prepared for managers on the use of fixed term contracts. The redeployment support to colleagues who are at risk of redundancy because their fixed term contract is nearing its end is being reviewed.

- The University has agreed a policy statement on the future employment of teaching staff - the normal expectation for individuals who are engaged for regularly timetabled teaching is that they should be employed on a fixed-term or open-ended contract of employment. There will be a range of exceptions to this – for example where short-term cover is required for less than 12 weeks; where the length and volume of work cannot be predicted and expressed as a fractional contract; or for short-term/ad hoc teaching. In these circumstances, the University will consider engaging teachers through a guaranteed minimum hour contract, where they are likely to be engaged throughout the year; or – subject to business rules – through eClaims; or where there is a business justification, and IR35 requirements are satisfied, through a third party. The University will develop a “safety net” which provides for teachers (other than PTAs) who have been employed on a variable hours contract or eClaims basis, with volume of work of at least 0.2fte, for a minimum of 2 years to have the opportunity to ask for a review of their contractual arrangements if they are engaged for a 3rd year.
- Postgraduate Teaching Assistants have been re-titled to Postgraduate Teaching Associates and Occasional Teachers will be re-titled Teaching Associates. 592 PTA contracts were issued in 202/21 and 503 in 2019/20 and around 700 contracts had been issued for 2021/22.
- The Vice-Chancellor commended the significant work being done to address the issues and felt this was sector leading. The UCU representative agreed but was concerned that the new framework for paid preparation time would mean some PTAs are being paid less this year for the same work they undertook last year. He said that one hour preparation time was not sufficient in his experience. He requested data split between independent and supported teaching for PTAs. The Director of HR advised that there is no central record as to how work is allocated to independent or supported teaching, but each college may be able identify this. It was suggested that each college agree the definition of independent and supported teaching as this will vary between science/non-science. The University’s intention is to standardise and not reduce staff pay and so there is a need for colleges to identify if anyone has been detrimentally affected by the new policy. This will remain an item for discussion at the monthly meetings.

21.26 Trade Union Engagement Report (JCCN/21/35)

The meeting noted the varied scope of engagement and the progress made on various issues.

21.27 Any other business

The Chair advised that meeting that, in the discussion following his presentation to the recent meeting of Council on the work of the Remuneration Committee, Professor Barrie Cooper had requested that the Chair update trade union representatives on the forthcoming Office for Students publication of a league table of Vice-Chancellors’ pay. The figures that will be published will put Exeter at top of the league table due to reward arrangements of the previous Vice Chancellor. The Chair explained that the salary for the incoming Vice Chancellor was lower than that of the outgoing Vice-Chancellor who had a long term performance related scheme including a retention element and restrictions on working for another institution after he had left Exeter. That package had been reported publicly previously.

The Chair explained that Remuneration Committee meets without any executive attendance and their work had been externally reviewed and benchmarked by PWC. A UCU representative queried the communications available to respond to this and the Director of HR will work with communications colleagues to prepare a proactive statement signed off by Chair of Council and Chair of Remuneration Committee.

Next meeting Friday 11 February 2022