

DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT SUMMER TERM MEETING
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER
JOINT COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION
Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25 January 2021

PRESENT

Ms Sarah Buck (Chair)

University Representatives

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lisa Roberts
Provost, Professor Janice Kay
Registrar, Mr Mike Shore-Nye
Director of HR, Mrs Imelda Rogers
Chief Financial Officer, Mr Andrew Connolly

Trade Union Representatives

UCU Branch President, Dr Sharon Strawbridge,
UCU Branch Secretary, Dr Claire Foullon,
UCU Branch Vice-President, Dr Christopher Boyle
Unite Branch Secretary, Mr Chris Forrest
Unison Branch, Mr Jim Milnes

Also in attendance

UCU Regional Officer, Ms Philippa Davey
Assistant Director of People Services, Mr Andrew Johnson

21.01 Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 (JCCN/21/01).

21.02 Review of Terms of Reference

The Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee for Consultation and Negotiation (JCCN/21/02). The Committee noted that the last review had taken place in May 2019 and that no changes were necessary. The next review would take place in the Autumn Term 2021.

21.03 Fair Employment For All

The Committee considered the report of the Director of HR (JCCN/21/02).

The Director of HR advised the Committee that she was continuing to meet UCU representatives on a monthly basis to provide updates on the University's response to its claim and figures on fixed term contracts and PTA numbers. While progress of the Fair Employment For All initiative had been delayed as a consequence of the pandemic, the University would continue to progress this during the current year, alongside other priorities which Colleges were supporting.

21.04 Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee of the following:

- (a) Covid-19 Pandemic: following the Government's announcement that students should, with a small number of exceptions, stay at home after Christmas and not return to campus, because of concerns about the mass movement of students across the country, the University had met with student representatives to address their concerns. A rent waiver for students who had not returned to their University accommodation had been announced. This had a significant financial impact on the University and if the lockdown continues, there is likely to be a call for further rent waivers. A "no disadvantage"

guarantee for students had also been announced. There was also a national campaign for a tuition fee refund. The Minister for Universities has stated that it is the responsibility of each institution to consider a refund if it has not met students' expectations.

Arrangements were being made for critical research activities to continue, following risk assessments.

The University would continue to support staff who are working at home, with particular emphasis on colleagues who also have caring and home education responsibilities. The Vice-Chancellor has asked managers to be realistic about what we can ask staff to do in the current circumstances.

Testing capability had expanded and it was now possible to offer staff and students two tests each week.

- (b) It has been confirmed that the National Student Survey and Research Excellence Framework will continue on the timetables previously announced.
- (c) Last week the Government published its "Interim conclusion of the review of post-18 education and funding" and its response to the Auger report. Tuition fees would be frozen until any changes were announced and a reduction in fees had not been ruled out. A minimum entry requirement for higher education was being considered – this could have significant implications for other parts of the HE sector and for widening participation in HE. Teaching grant funding would be prioritised for "high cost, high value" programmes which supported the NHS, STEMM and specific labour market needs, and funding for other high cost subjects would be reduced. Funding would not be available for Foundation programmes. Further consultation would take place on these issues.
- (d) The Government had also published its response to the independent review of the Teaching Excellence Framework. It was proposed that subject-level TEF would not go forward.
- (e) Consultation had commenced on post qualification admissions. The government was consulting on two options: (1) 'Post-qualification applications and offers', based on a longer application window created by moving results dates forward to the end of July and delaying the start of the Autumn Term to the first week of October; or (2) 'pre-qualification applications with post-qualification offers and decisions', where applications would continue to be made in advance but offers would not be made until after Results Day.
- (f) Last week the Government published a White Paper on "Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth", setting out proposals for alternatives to University education and lifelong learning.
- (g) The Chief Financial Officer had given a summary of the University's current financial position in his presentation to staff last week. This covered the significant impact which the pandemic was continuing to have on the finances of the University and the ongoing uncertainty, particularly income from future international student recruitment.
- (h) Last week the University had written to academic staff outlining its policy to support the career development of academic staff who had been impacted by the pandemic ("Adjusting for the differential impacts of Covid-19"). Similar support for Professional Services colleagues was in development.

The UCU President asked University representatives to share the equality impact assessments for the "Adjusting for the differential impacts of Covid-19" policy so that the branch could be assured that the University was addressing EDI concerns. In response, the Provost advised the Committee that the policy was specifically designed to address these concerns. The Director of HR added that the University would be regularly reviewing data on promotions to ensure the policy was working effectively. Training materials were being developed to support the implementation of the policy and the next HoD Engage would focus on how academic leaders should support staff as set out in the policy.

21.05 UCU Claim on Lecture Capture/Performance Rights

The Committee considered the report of the Director of HR (JCCN/21/04), which set out the draft terms of reference of a Task and Finish Group for the Creation and Use of Digital Resources in Support of Learning and Teaching, which had been commissioned by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, Professor Tim Quine. The Task and Finish Group would review the current Lecture Capture Policy with a view to developing a new policy ready for the 2021/22 academic year, taking account of the experience of Project Enhance and the future needs of the University and our students.

The UCU Branch Secretary asked for clarification on whether the balanced academic representation would include the two UCU representatives and how early career academic was defined (ie what grade). The Director of HR advised the Committee that a response would be provided to UCU after the meeting.

21.06 ERSS Governance Group

The Committee noted the report of the meeting of the ERSS Governance Group which had taken place on 2 December 2020 (JCCN/21/06).

21:07 Trade Union Engagement Report

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of HR (JCCN/21/05), summarising issues discussed in the weekly meetings between the Director of HR and trade union representatives.

The Committee noted that since the report had been written two formal meetings had taken place with trade union representatives to discuss the January 2021 review of suspended reward procedures, which had been agreed in the July 2020 collective agreement. The President of the UCU advised that Committee that UCU would support the January review being deferred until the end of February 2021 provided all terms of the collective agreement, including the commitment not to make any compulsory redundancies, was extended.

21.08 Penryn Campus

Under the provisions for either side of the Committee to raise for any other business of an urgent nature, which could not have been notified in advance for inclusion on the agenda, the Committee considered the following issue at the request of the UCU Branch Secretary.

The UCU Branch President advised the Committee that UCU branch understood that, following market research, recruitment to the undergraduate programme in Mining Engineering had been suspended. She said that UCU members were concerned about the future of the Penryn Campus following changes in programmes in English, Mathematics and Mining. She asked representatives of the University for their plans for the Penryn Campus and whether any other subjects would be suspended or closed.

The Provost advised the Committee that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the College had commissioned the market research in response to falling applications and admissions. (There were 50 applications for 2020, which converted to an intake of 15.) While the market research indicated there was not a strong market for an undergraduate programme in Mining Engineering, it did indicate a market for degree apprenticeships. The College was now exploring further degree apprenticeships in Mining Engineering, alongside the existing successful PGT programme. The Vice-Chancellor added that the University's ambition for Cornwall is for further growth in student numbers and research activity, based on our strengths and demand.

In response to a further question from UCU, the Registrar advised the Committee that when market research was undertaken, data was provided by external experts. In the case of Mining Engineering, there were a limited number of comparisons in the UK. Even with the offer of a £5000 bursary from the CSM Trust, it had been challenging to recruit to the undergraduate programme.

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee that meetings had been held with colleagues in CSM to keep them up to date on developments. Similar briefings had taken place with Humanities staff in Penryn. Consideration would be given to what further measures may be necessary to ensure communications were reaching staff effectively.

21.09 Capital Programme

Under the provisions for either side of the Committee to raise for any other business of an urgent nature, which could not have been notified in advance for inclusion on the agenda, the Committee considered the following issue at the request of the Unite Branch Secretary.

The Unite Branch Secretary, noting the comments made earlier in the meeting about the financial impact of the pandemic on the University, asked what steps the University was taking to reduce capital spending. In response, the Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee that large parts of the capital plan had been paused to protect the University's finances and job security. Going forward, it would be necessary to review the capital plan to ensure it met the future needs of the University and its new strategy. Further capital investment in facilities for students would always be necessary to ensure that the University remained competitive. The Registrar added that the capital programme had been reduced to essential spending and there were no plans to restart large scale building programmes. He advised the Committee that the Council of the University carefully scrutinised all capital investments. The Committee was also advised that new student accommodation was being built through private investment and other projects (including the South West Institute of Technology, CREWW and the MRI/PET scanners) were funded by external grants or philanthropy.