

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER  
JOINT COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4 May 2020**

PRESENT

Ms Sarah Buck (Chair)

University Representatives

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Steve Smith  
Provost, Professor Janice Kay  
Registrar and Secretary, Mr Mike Shore-Nye  
Director of HR, Mrs Imelda Rogers  
Chief Financial Officer, Mr Andrew Connolly

Trade Union Representatives

Dr Sharon Strawbridge (UCU)  
Mr Chris Forrest (Unite)  
Mr Tim Hortopp (Unison)  
Mr Jim Milnes (Unison)

Also in attendance

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

Apologies

Dr Rhian Keyse (UCU)  
HR Policy Adviser, Mrs Emma Hilton

20.09 Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2020 (JCCN/20/04), subject to amending the final sentence of minute 20.04 to read "The UCU Branch President advised the Committee that the Registrar's invitation would be discussed by the branch committee."

Matters Arising

- (a) Minute 20.01(a): The Director of HR advised the Committee that she had spoken to the Director of Campus Infrastructure and Operational Support Services, who represents the University on the FXPlus Board and a meeting with trade union representatives would be arranged in due course.
- (b) Minute 20.01(b): The UCU Regional Office confirmed that she would contact the Director of HR about other universities arrangements for sharing new starter information with Trade Unions.
- (c) Minute 20.04: the Committee noted that the Registrar had met with UCU representatives regarding student occupations.
- (d) Minute 20.06: the Committee noted that the Director of HR had met trade union representatives on 18 February to discuss the Joint Trade Union Claim for Additional Facility Time and a revised offer had been sent to them on 9 March.

20.10 Vice Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee that the University would have to make difficult decisions in response to the financial challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and that the Executive Group wanted to work with trade unions.

Nationally, UUK had submitted proposals to the Government to stabilise the sector and protect institutions which would have been at risk. While this would cushion the impact of the potential reduction in international student numbers, it left research intensive institutions with a shortfall in research funding. The announcement made by the Government earlier in the day did not provide for any new money – rather, it brought forward the payment of funds which institutions were already due to receive. There was significant uncertainty about how many international students would come to the UK to study in 2020/21 and how many Home/EU students may choose to defer. In view of this, each institution in the sector had to consider making savings.

Exeter is facing a deficit of between £50 million and £100 million in 2020/21. The Council had established a sub-committee to review the University's funding and make decisions on how to reduce expenditure. The management of the University wanted to have an open dialogue with trade unions about the financial pressures and how savings should be made, recognising that 54% of costs relate to staff pay. As a first step, the Executive Team had asked Remuneration Committee to reduce its reward by the equivalent of a 20% reduction in total pay for 4 months.

#### 20:11 Covid 19 Financial Challenges

The Chief Financial Officer advised the Committee that the University had access to a £50 million bank loan facility and would also be applying for the Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF). The University had to reduce its expenditure to only what was necessary to support essential activities, particularly, education and the student experience. The scale of the savings which will be necessary will become clearer after confirmation/clearing in August and the arrival of international students in the autumn.

The Registrar advised the Committee of the steps which were being considered to reduce expenditure, recognising that each £1 million of spend was equivalent to 24 jobs. Of the £30 million spent by the University each month, approximately £22 million was on pay. The University was aiming to start the next academic year as normal in the autumn with the ability to quickly switch to digital delivery if necessary. It was important that students considering coming to Exeter next year were confident that the institution is financially robust and resilient.

The Director of HR outlined to the Committee of principles which had been proposed to evaluate a range of potential reductions to staff costs, which had previously been discussed with the Senior Management Group. The Registrar advised the Committee that this was the beginning of a dialogue and the management of the University wished to move forward in a cooperative spirit. The aim was to protect the institution for the long-term.

Trade union representatives welcomed the University's willingness to have an open conversation with trade unions and encourage staff input. Trade unions recognised that savings would be necessary to protect jobs, particularly in the short-term. However, there should be a clear end to any pauses of pay increments and savings should be focussed on higher levels to protect staff on lower grades. The UCU Regional Officer advised the Committee that some issues may require formal consultation and be subject to approval by the union at national level.

In response to a question from trade union representatives about reserves, the Chief Financial Officer advised the Committee that the University had a cash balance of £137 million at the commencement of the year. The University expected to save around £0.5 million on utility costs as a consequence of the campus shutdown, but there had been a loss of income from catering, sports activities and events. The Government's furlough scheme would bring a credit, but at present this only runs until the end of June.

In response to a question from trade union representatives about fixed term contracts, the Director of HR advised the Committee that if a fixed term contract would expire without renewal irrespective of the pandemic, then the employment will end as planned. In circumstances where a fixed term contract would have been renewed but for the pandemic, the University was exploring extension and furlough. Consideration was being given to

furlough of research staff, taking account of latest Government guidance. The University was expecting PTAs engaged on contracts to be able to contribute to “Project Enhance”.

20:12 Fair Employment for All Working Group

The Director of HR advised the Committee that she had briefed trade union and student representatives to assure them that, while progress of the Fair Employment for All initiative had been paused in March and April, the University remained committed to this project. The intention was to deliver its aims by incorporating it into the Education, Research and People sub-groups of the new governance arrangements which had been approved by Council. She would ensure that regular reports on progress were presented to trade union and student representatives.

20:13 Trade Union Engagement Report

The Committee noted the report of the Assistant Director, HR (JCCN/20/05), summarising engagement since the last meeting of the Committee in February 2020.

20:14 Any Other Business

In response to a question from trade union representatives, the Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee that he, other members of the senior team and the Chair of Council were in regular contact with the incoming Vice-Chancellor and she was supportive of the actions being taken by the University in response to the pandemic.