

**GOLDSMITHS  
University of London**

**COUNCIL**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2010**

**Present:** Mr Kenneth May (Chair), Dr Helen Jones, Dr Frances Pine, Mr Terry Rosenberg, Mr Chris Pearson, Dr Basem El-Haddadeh, Ms Rachel Soper, Mr Michael Dick, Mr Hugh Jones

**Apologies:** Professor Mark D'Inverno

**In attendance:** Teresa Martinez-Arteaga (Secretary), Mr Steve Collins (Deputy Director of HR)

**OPEN BUSINESS**

**16 MINUTES**

**Resolved:**

that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2010 be approved.

**17 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Chair asked for an update on the cost reduction strategy for the College, as agreed at the last meeting of SMT. The Registrar and Secretary confirmed that a 2.5% reduction for 2010-11 had been set for all departments and that this had been paired with a growth strategy focusing on increasing income from students and research grants.

The Registrar and Secretary expressed certainty that Goldsmiths would have to face further budget cuts, but stated that it was difficult to draw accurate plans at this stage as the Government plans for higher education funding are yet to be revealed in detail.

The Chair asked that the next meeting of HRC includes a discussion about how departments can organise themselves more creatively to cut costs.

The Director of HR agreed that discussion would be required around how best to manage the budget cuts and asked that timing is also included in the discussions.

The Registrar and Secretary explained that there was a scheduled meeting with all Head of Departments to discuss and share thoughts on how to deal with budget cuts and suggested that this could help the discussions of the next HRC meeting.

## 18 HR POLICIES

Received:

a report from the Deputy Director of HR (10-31).

The Chair expressed concern about overburdening Council and asked whether there would be a different way to address the process of approving policies. The Registrar and Secretary explained that Council expects HR to do all the detailed work and then Council to make the decision; however, he was drafting a note aiming to strike a balance between appropriate governance and the expeditious approval of policies at an effective level.

The Deputy Director of HR introduced the latest drafts of the Disciplinary and Grievance policies and reported that they had been produced after extensive discussion with the unions. He explained that UCU and UNISON regional representatives had been invited to attend consultation meetings. This had transformed the way in which discussion were being held, making them immensely helpful and fruitful.

The Registrar and Secretary expressed concern about the possibility of being challenged in the transition period where the new policies supersede the old ones whilst current College Statutes and Ordinances concerning Discipline and Grievance remained in force. The Deputy Director of HR explained that some parts of Ordinances 13 and 14 were not compliant with current employment law and that he would be working with the Head of Corporate Governance and Information Management to produce recommendations to amend or delete these ordinances with effect from September 2010. The Director of HR stressed the importance of Statute 16 in previous case law and stated that it would be necessary to seek legal advice to reach agreement before taking next steps.

The Chair initiated a discussion around the expectation that HR would be carrying out the investigations in all disciplinary cases. He expressed the view that HR would need to be perceived as an independent resource.

There was discussion around the oral warning, its validity and whether it should remain in the personal file. The Deputy Director HR explained that while the concept of an oral warning was outdated, the College had retained it for the consistency with Statute 16. It was reported that it remained one of the anomalies of practice that an "oral warning" was in fact a "first warning", which still was written up as a file note and was also usually confirmed in writing. Modern best practice confirmed that all disciplinary warnings should be kept on individuals' files, even if the warning itself was considered to be 'spent'.

The Deputy Director of HR asked members to comment one of the policy's definitions of gross misconduct: "behaviour bringing the College into serious disrepute", as this was an item that had not been agreed during meetings with the unions. He explained the unions' view was that this definition was unnecessary. A number of Heads of Department expressed concerns about how serious disrepute

would be defined in practice. The Director of HR stressed the importance of making staff aware of parameters of behaviour.

The Deputy Director of HR introduced the draft grievance policy and explained that it had been brought into line with the draft disciplinary policy and to take the ordinances into account.

**Resolved:**

- (i) that that wording in para 16 should be amended slightly to present HoDs and Senior Administrators first and HR BP's second;
- (ii) that the Deputy Director HR would develop a suggestion for an alternative definition of 'serious disrepute';
- (iii) that "abuse of the power relationship which exists between a senior and a junior member of staff" should be added to final bullet point in the list of definitions of gross misconduct;
- (iv) to amend the wording of paragraph 17 to bring it in line with the changes suggested for the disciplinary policy around the issue of investigations;
- (v) that these policies could go to Council for ratification, subject to the amendments made at this meeting, and any minor changes that occur following presentation of the final draft at JNCC.

## **19 HR RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Received:

a report from the Deputy Director of HR (10-31 and 10-33).

The Deputy Director of HR introduced his report which had been the result of discussions with the Head of Corporate Governance and Information Management.

The Director of IT initiated a discussion around point 2 of the report and expressed his concern over the difficulties of reconciling the data from a mother database with that of its children elsewhere in departments. The benefits of an electronic database were reiterated by the Deputy Director of HR and it was explained that the proposal was for the project to be carried out by HR in the summer, with the help of departments. It was explained that, ultimately, the goal would be the reconciliation of this data with that of Pyramid, the HR information database; in the meantime, departments could help update staff records by having access to the new proposed database.

The Director of IT stated that there might be a limit on the number of people being able to access the electronic files proposed. The Deputy Director of HR explained that access would be restricted to HR Business Partners and the relevant Head of Department, Departmental Administrator and Departmental Secretary.

There was a discussion around Pyramid and it was reiterated that at present the system was not adequate for HR's needs, that there is no HR contract or Service Level Agreement and that access for HR staff was restricted.

It was recognised that HR and Payroll's needs were different but complementary and that progress was being made through the Pyramid Users' Group set up and chaired by the Director of Finance.

The Director of HR expressed the need to address both capability and capacity issues in order to move Pyramid forward.

## **20 PROMOTION AND PROGRESSION**

Received:

a report from the Director of HR (10-32)

The Director of HR introduced his report and explained that it was an analysis following feedback of what had and had not worked in the previous exercise. It included proposals for further change in this year's round. He stated that last year the College spent £300,000 on promotions and progression.

One of the members reported that last year's feedback mechanisms on promotions had left some of their colleagues feeling disgruntled about the process as it was felt it took a long time between the committee taking place and staff being informed about the outcome. It was agreed that realistic timescales should be communicated to staff, that Head of Department should be informed of the outcome of the promotions round first, and that they then would have to inform the members of staff in their respective departments.

The Director of HR expressed concern over a commonly reported view that when Senior Lecturers, professors and readers were progressed to their grade or title they delegated much of the management and leadership work to more junior members or the team, thus making them ready for promotion by taking on the additional responsibilities. He expressed the need to use PDR's to continually assess competencies and therefore make sure that all staff were fulfilling the duties for which they were being remunerated. Members did caution however, that it was important to avoid overburdening a limited number of senior academics with demanding management and leadership tasks and not allowing them as much time to research as junior members of staff had by virtue of not having to do such demanding administrative work.

On the issue of numbers promoted or who had progressed, the Director of HR reported current statistics to committee members, but noted that there were further data to come when final decisions had been made. He would circulate a full note to all members with the final breakdown in due course.

## **21 HR ACTIVITIES**

Received:

a report from the Deputy Director of HR (10-34)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced his report and noted the excellent feedback so far received on the quality of the current Occupational Health provisions and the progress made by the Health and Wellbeing Working Party.

The Deputy Director of HR explained that a new Health and Wellbeing policy was being developed to embrace the transformation in absence management led by Government's introduction of the doctor's "well-note".

The Deputy Director of HR apologised for the fact that the case work report was not available for this meeting and promised to circulate it to members.

## **22 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Noted:

that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 20 May at 10:30 am in Room DTHB 110.

Teresa Martinez-Arteaga  
HR Business Partner  
March 2010