

**GOLDSMITHS
University of London**

COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2010

Present: Mr Kenneth May (Chair), Dr Helen Jones, Dr Frances Pine , Mr Chris Pearson, Dr Basem El-Haddadeh, Ms Rachel Soper, Mr Michael Dick, Professor Mark D’Inverno

Apologies: Mr Hugh Jones, Dr Basem El-Haddadeh

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

OPEN BUSINESS

Matters for Discussion

23 MINUTES

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2010 be approved.

24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

In respect of Ordinances 13 and 14, the Director of HR stated whilst they are not a great disruption to the work of Human Resources, discussions were to due to take place between the Director of HR, The Registrar and Secretary and the Head of Corporate Governance and Information Management to find a way to make them more compliant with current employment legislation.

In respect of the 09-10 Promotion and Progression round, the Director of HR reported that this year’s cycle had improved significantly by becoming a clearer and fairer process with improved quality of Head of Department reports, general panel discussions and administration.

25 HR STRATEGY

Received:

a report from the Director of HR

The Director of HR circulated and introduced a report about the College's Cost Reduction Programme, devised to help achieve the £2.5million cutback necessary in the College's pay budget. He explained that the programme would be launched as a response to the funding requirements for the 2010-2011 financial year and that the document presented would be available on the College's intranet from the following day.

Members of the committee questioned the Director of HR about the process and timescales for the Voluntary Severance Scheme. The Director of HR addressed the questions and explained that although the Voluntary Severance Scheme would be the main vehicle to achieve the College's savings, other methods would be available to help departments such as unpaid leave, the option to purchase annual leave, job sharing and flexible working. He stressed that agreements would have to be put in place with flexible work requests to ensure fairness to staff and consistency across the College. He added that there would be training provided for Head of Departments on each option.

The Director of HR reported that it had been agreed with Trades Unions that career lines would be explored as a way to improve efficiency across departments.

26 HR POLICIES

Received:

the draft Redundancy Policy from the Deputy Director of HR (10/223)

The Deputy Director of HR updated the Committee on the status of a number of policies previously discussed at HR Committee. He reported on the Grievance policy that it was ready to go to Council for final approval; on the Disciplinary policy that there was a paragraph pending further discussions with the Unions; and on the Health, Wellbeing and Attendance policy that a first draft had been written but that further work was required.

The Deputy Director of HR introduced the draft Redundancy policy. Members of the Committee expressed the need for further clarification on redeployment, particularly around points 39 and 43 and the refusal of (suitable) alternative employment. The Director of HR explained the difference between refusal of suitable alternative employment (which would result in the loss of redundancy payment) and refusal of alternative employment (which would not).

The Chair of Panel expanded on the issue of suitable alternative employment and expressed the need for further information around redeployment as a process and the criteria for application.

Resolved:

- (i) that the wording of the first bullet point in paragraph 29 would be amended to read "completed years of service"

- (ii) that points 39 and 43 in the policy would be redrafted to clarify the outcome of refusal of alternative employment and suitable alternative employment.
- (iii) that additional wording would be drafted and the circulated to the panel by correspondence on the process of redeployment and its criteria.

27 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Received:

a joint report from Occupational Health and Staff Development 10/224)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced the reports and explained the progress being made by the Health and Wellbeing Working Party. It was highlighted that there were many grey areas in sickness absence reporting and that there was a need to make the recording electronic.

The Deputy Director of HR reported the success of the Body and Brain Holistic Fitness Training: all classes had been fully booked and the make up of the classes had been a wide range of both senior and junior staff. Given the success the classes had had, the possibility of another session being set up for lunch time was being explored. Members of the Committee felt that the sessions could be better publicised and that engaging SMT would be a good way to do so.

Resolved:

- (iv) that an article in Hallmark be prepared in conjunction with Internal Communications to increase awareness of the Body and Brain Holistic Fitness Training amongst all staff.

28 HR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Deputy Director of HR reported that progress continued to be made with the Pyramid Users Group and that it was his understanding that a review of the Payroll database had been scheduled for next academic year.

29 TEAM BRIEFINGS

Received:

a report from the Deputy Director of HR (10/224)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced his paper on Team Briefing and its origins. The Chair of the Committee continued by stressing the importance of team briefing and highlighting the benefits of informed staff in times of great change and cost reduction.

There was discussion around the different approaches the committee members took around Team Briefing in their own departments. The Director of HR questioned whether departments were aware the breadth of media that could be available for staff briefings and suggested that a discussion with the Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications could be appropriate at this stage. He also indicated that team briefings may be present in departments in one way or another and that a valid starting point would be to approach departments and find out their current practices.

The Chair stressed that Team Briefing would force senior managers to be clear about their decisions and that the expectation should be that every member of staff was briefed on a regular basis.

Resolved:

- (v) that the Deputy Director of HR would meet with Internal Communications to discuss Team Briefing and a joint proposal for team briefing across the College be put together to SMT.

30 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Interim Equalities and Diversity Advisor was welcomed by the Committee and invited to introduce herself. She explained that upon her arrival to Goldsmiths, her first task had been to revise the College's Gender Equality Scheme, which she had completed and had made available as a draft on the College's website. She explained that the Gender Equality Scheme would be an interim measure for Goldsmiths and that the next step would be to move to a Single Scheme encompassing Gender, Race and Disability.

The Interim Equalities and Diversity Advisor stated the importance of aligning the priority of her work with the College's and HR's business priorities, specifically in the context of the Cost Reduction and Equal Pay. Operationally, she stated that her next priority would be working on robust Impact Assessments, particularly around areas such as VSS and flexible work.

It was reported that changes in the Equality Act were likely to extend to flexible work and a scope for Associative Discrimination, which would impact the College's policies. The Equalities and Diversity Advisor stressed the importance of communication and engagement in the approach to Equality and Diversity.

There was discussion about the College's priorities for Equalities and Diversities as outlined by the Interim E&D Advisor and one of the members reported that whilst all the ideas were good, Heads of Department needed help to become engaged and implement them.

The Chair highlighted the importance of being realistic about expectations and clear about priorities, making sure that they are deliverable. In the case of Equalities, he suggested breaking down objectives into pieces that each department could contribute to.

There was further discussion around the role of Heads of Department engaging in the College's priorities. One of the members expressed concern over managing their department through times of financial difficulties and being able to impact positively on staff.

Resolved:

- (vi) that a constant item be added to the HR Committee agenda to discuss ways in which Heads of Department could actively engage their departments with College priorities
- (vii) that the Chair and the Director of HR meet with the Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications to explore ways in which staff can be engaged more positively in the College's priorities and in the current financial context.

Matters for report

31 CURRENT CASEWORK

Received:

a report from the HR Business Partner (10/225)

32 CURRENT HR ISSUES

The Director of HR reported that Nicola Gray, HR Business Partner, would be leaving the College in July 2010; and that Ellen Tsang, HR Business Partner currently on maternity leave, would be returning to work as part-time Equalities and Diversity Advisor, therefore two vacancies were to be advertised of HR Business Partners.

The Director of HR introduced Human Resources main projects: VSS, Management Information and the mapping of HR internal processes. On Management Information, the Director of HR reported that it was expected that data would be available by the beginning of November, thus enabling HR to produce high-quality reports.

33 NEXT MEETING

Noted:

that the next meeting of HR Committee would take place on 3 November 2010.

Teresa Martinez-Arteaga
HR Business Partner
May 2010

