

**GOLDSMITHS
University of London**

COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2010

Present: Mr Kenneth May (Chair), Mr Chris Pearson, Dr Basem El-Haddadeh, Miss Rachel Soper, Professor Mark D'Inverno, Dr Andrea Gilroy, Mr Terry Rosenberg

Apologies: Mr Hugh Jones, Dr Helen Jones, Dr Frances Pine, Mr Michael Dick

In attendance: Miss Fatma Gormus (Secretary), Mr Steve Collins (Deputy Director of HR) Mrs Bunmi Odulaja (for item 9), Professor Frank Bond (for item 9), Mr Bruce Ormiston (for item 9), Ms Bernadette Barnes (for item 13)

OPEN BUSINESS

1 MINUTES

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2010 be approved.

2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3

- In respect of the **Voluntary Severance Scheme**, the Director of HR reported that this had been running since May 2010 and had closed on 20 September 2010. There had been a total of 89 formal applications, equivalent to 9% of full time staff within the College. Of those, 31 applications had been approved totalling one off costs of £779k. The anticipated savings were as follows: 2010/11 £400k, 2011/12 £520k, 2012/13 and onwards £470k. There had been 22 applications which had been deferred for further consideration. 14 applications had been declined due to eligibility reasons. There are a further 23 applications to consider and the panel would be meeting on 9 and 25 November 2010. The ratio between Academic staff and Support staff had been 80/20 which had already been expected as it had been anticipated that fewer academic staff would apply.

It was also reported that the expectation was to complete the project by the end of this year.

On the question of the speed of the process in general, the Director of HR reported that the focus had been based on ensuring that the process was thorough in order to avoid burdening those remaining members of staff with heavy workloads. It was also reported that those whose applications had been deferred were informed through written communication.

The Director of HR also reported that the VSS project had given departments the opportunity to review their departments taking into consideration organisational development and explained that the work of some of the posts that had been made redundant through VSS had been re-organised and replaced on a lower grade. The objective of this had been based on gaining a long term saving through ensuring that the College had the workforce to carry out the jobs necessary.

The Committee members reported that it was felt that the VSS process would encourage departments to improve their overall services.

He noted that VSS had also been a good start towards cost savings.

- In respect of **Team Briefings**, the Chair of the Committee stressed the importance of team briefings and highlighted the benefits of informing staff in times of great change and cost reduction. It was reported that the Chair, the Director of HR, the Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications and the Internal Communications Manager had met to discuss communications and engagement of staff and Heads of Department with the College priorities. It was noted that some progress had been made on both issues with the encouragement and active driving of the Warden and his engagement of the senior professors in the college. It was also reported that the Blue Skies working group had been set up to engage more people and there had been an open invitation to all staff to contribute.

The Chair reported that he had been pleased to note the regular feedback the Registrar and Secretary was undertaking with his Head of Departments after SMT meetings. The Registrar and Secretary had also been in direct communication with all staff on financial issues by email.

The Chair also reported that the note which SMT were now sending to all Heads of Department about the issues discussed at the weekly SMT meetings had been positive and of real necessity in these times of uncertainty.

There was discussion around the different approaches the committee members took around Team Briefing in their own departments and expressed their concerns over forwarding the email from SMT on to their staff due to confidentiality reasons.

The committee members discussed the challenge which the College faced in regards to communicating with staff on a face to face basis. They reported the difficulties with encouraging staff to attend meetings.

The Director of HR reported that the next challenge for the College would be to reassess the finances which they were running on in order to refigure themselves without damaging the organisation. He reported that workflows and organisation design would be areas which would be reviewed.

There was discussion about programme reviews and programme effectiveness whereby the Director of Quality, Planning and Academic Governance confirmed that there had been enormous work carried out on the management of information which would in due course provide Head of Departments the data which they required in order to make effective decisions about the future of their departments.

The committee members welcomed this idea.

Resolved:

that the Director of HR would encourage SMT members to support Head of Departments in having fortnightly meetings with their staff.

3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY

Received:

The Conflict of Interest policy (10-339)

4 AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

Received:

The Standing Orders in force for 2010-11 (10-338)

5 TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

Received:

The Terms of Reference, Composition and Membership in force for 2010-2011 (10-339)

The Chair welcomed Dr Andrea Gilroy on to the committee and reminded Committee members of the importance of their roles in contributing to and monitoring of strategic items.

6 HR STRATEGY AND PROGRESS

The Director of HR reported that there had been significant progress made in relation to Equality and Diversity. He also reported that there had been an improved progression round this time, and noted there had been three times as more people applying than previous years. The new round would be launched in January 2011 and therefore this would allow the promotions to be back on the previous schedule. The new promotions process also allowed a better linkage to PDR and pre-application preparation.

The Chair reported that the promotions process had now become more transparent making the Head of Department reports more comprehensive and useful, and stated that this had been one of the successes for HR.

The Director of HR also reported the increasing workload on reorganisations in academic and support departments, including PACE, Nursery, Estates Soft Services, Computing, and the continuing change in Marketing Recruitment and Communications, Student Services, and further changes had been expected in other areas too. It was reported that this had come from getting to grips with some fundamental refocusing of structures, services and objectives.

The Director of HR also reported that the consultation on USS Pension Scheme changes had begun with all appropriate staff having the opportunity to comment confidentially via the USS website. All comments were to be assessed in January 2011. If the Trustees accepted the changes proposed, these would take effect in April 2011.

It was also reported that there had been substantial staff changes in HR due to career break, maternity leave, and some resignations. It had been a tough transitional time for HR but a full team was now in place with Ellen Tsang returning to carry out case work for six months whilst Marcia Williams would be extended as an Interim Equality and Diversity Advisor for a further six months.

It was noted, however, that there had been slow progress on hourly paid staff transfer to Framework Agreement, policy changes, equal pay audit and job families due to high volumes of work .

The Director of HR continued by reporting that the College should expect uncertainties to be a disruptive influence, and therefore financial imperatives may call for very flexible reaction to changes.

The issue of promotion for support staff was raised and the Director of HR reported that job families were currently being assessed so that career opportunities for support staff would become more visible.

Resolved:

that a process map for promotions be published on the HR website.

7 HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Received:

A report from the Deputy Director of Human Resources and the Senior HR Business Partner(10-439)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced the report and explained the progress being made by the college in provision of Health and Wellbeing services.

The Occupational Health nurse reported that musculoskeletal concerns used to be a major problem but this had been surpassed by mental health issues which had not only been a Goldsmiths' problem but had been a problem on a much wider scale affecting the UK workforce.

It was also reported that as mental health had now been discussed in the broader society it had encouraged an increase in the number of mental health cases reported as people were more able to express these problems.

The Head of the Department of Psychology (Professor Bond) reported that research had shown that there had been no significant differences between academic staff and support staff in relation to stress and mental health. He reported that it was difficult to find statistics which would confirm that workload was a stress indicator. He did however report that the biggest problem with physical and mental stress were due to work design and in order to manage stress, the college should consider in some places the need to review and change work characteristics. He also reported that the well being survey conducted within the College found that 'task identity' was a significant issue. He felt that effort should be put into developing leadership as a major contribution to managing mental health issues in the college.

The Director of Human Resources reported that the focus should be directed towards leadership as the fundamental issue had been to manage the work design rather than the workload of staff.

Resolved:

(i) that Staff Development develop training programmes for managers in order to better equip them with an understanding of and an ability to develop leadership styles;

(ii) that the College should review the processes and procedures to seek streamlining and to minimise burdens.

8 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

Received:

a report from the Interim Equalities and Diversity Advisor (10-402)

The Director of Human Resources reported that there had been a considerable change in the direction of and engagement with equality and diversity within the College. It was noted that Marcia Williams would continue with driving the changes forward.

9 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Received:

a report from the Deputy Director of HR (10-444)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced his paper and reported that the programme of courses had been good and well attended although they had primarily been attended by support staff.

It was also reported that the focus of the Staff Development team would be directed towards the launch of the leadership programme.

In discussing the roles of staff development activities, leadership and management, committee members explained that as there had not been an official protocol for handing over work or any form of Head of Department training, it had been difficult for them to grasp understanding of what the requirements of their role had been. It was also reported that they had been unaware of what a handover should entail and suggested that a transition should be applied between the time of the appointment and their start date.

10 HR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Received:

reports from the HR Manager (Systems and Support) (10-441, 10-442)

a report from the Head of Corporate Projects (10-445)

The HR Manager (Systems and Support) introduced her papers and reported that currently work had been underway to move the ECF process on to the I-grasp system. This would allow the authorised users to log on to the system to view the progress of Establishment Control Form applications.

It was also reported that there would be a piloting system to ensure that the system was user friendly. Using this information, training documentation with flowcharts would be provided to all departments and would be made available on the HR webpage.

It was noted that the HR Manager (Systems and Support) would use the following departments as volunteers for the piloting process; IT, Computing, PACE, and Design.

The Director of HR presented the workforce profile report and explained that the templates had now been developed. He explained that a full data cleanse was currently underway and that departments would be contacted to finalise the data. This would improve the quality of the reports. First reports would be published to this committee by the end of November.

He reported that the reports would be developed for quick and easy access allowing the Head of Departments to have a better analysis of their departments.

The Director of HR reported that the input from the committee members was vital in ensuring the success of this project.

11 CURRENT CASEWORK

Received:

a report from HR Business Partner (10-443)

The Director of HR reported that there had been an increase in case work focus being on long standing issues which had now surfaced. He noted in particular that there were now a number of Statute 16 cases.

It was also reported that long term sickness cases had improved since the last meeting in May 2010.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Director of HR reported that the Council had asked that the operation and content of the Dignity at Work Policy and Dignity in the Learning Environment Policy be reviewed after a year and that two members of the HR Committee would be required to work with the Equalities and Diversity Advisor to undertake this review.

It was noted that Miss Rachel Soper and Dr Andrea Gilroy would form part of the working party to review the policies.

13 NEXT MEETING

Noted:

that the next meeting of HR Committee would take place on 17 March 2011.

Fatma Gormus
HR Business Partner
November 2010