

GOLDSMITHS
University of London

COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2011

Present: Mr Hugh Jones (Chair), Mr Chris Pearson, Dr Basem El-Haddadeh, Mr Michael Dick, Miss Rachel Soper, Dr Frances Pine, Dr Andrea Gilroy

Apologies: Mr Kenneth May, Dr Helen Jones, Professor Mark D'Inverno, Mr Terry Rosenberg

In attendance: Miss Fatma Gormus (Secretary), Mr Steve Collins (Deputy Director of HR for items 5 and 7)

OPEN BUSINESS

1 MINUTES

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2010 be approved.

2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

In respect of **Team Briefings**, the committee members asked whether it would be compulsory for Head of Departments to have fortnightly meetings with their staff.

The Director of HR reported that Team Briefings would be useful but we would need to radically look at how we are going to encourage, support and promote them as effectively as possible as previous meetings with staff had proven to be challenging. He reported that as communication had proven to be difficult we would therefore need a communications plan which would take into consideration a broad range of effective communication tools.

The Chair reported that the emphasis on changing a situation would rely on communicating effectively with people in person rather than via an email. He also reported that the more we aim to focus on communicating better the more sophisticated and radical it would be for the College.

The committee members discussed the challenges which they faced within their own departments in regards to communicating with their own staff on a face to face basis. Those from larger departments reported the difficulties with getting all staff to attend meetings at the same time.

The Chair reported that this created opportunities for accidental communication as bigger departments would be more likely to experience particular challenges.

3 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

No additional items were identified.

4 HR STRATEGY AND PROGRESS

The Director of HR reported that HR had currently been in the process of responding to the changing needs and focus of all departments. He reported that HR's strategy which had been built around the College's strategy had been moving significantly fast and it had been anticipated that this would be shaping our futures. HR's vision would be to have a good focus and resource in order to be able to contribute and respond effectively towards the College's strategy.

The Director of HR also stressed the importance of the potential changes in legislation such as pensions and in particular the default retirement age which the government planned to scrap in October 2011. This would have an impact on the College as we would no longer be able to retire staff at the age of 65. He reported that due to this we would be required to look at alternative options such as flexible working in order to keep up to date with the changing needs in the working environment.

He also reported that a broad range of options had emerged through VSS as it had created interesting positions whilst allowing us to reconsider positions and modify jobs in a subtle manner to suit the needs of the business.

The Director of HR reported that it was expected that there would be a lot of change within the next 4-5 years which would compel us to work in many different ways without losing the College's culture. Being an efficient organisation would enable us to survive these challenging times.

The committee members discussed the status of the proposed PODS as they had felt that there had been a level of anxiety amongst the College. The Director of HR confirmed that matters concerning academic departments would be discussed at the Academic Board with the intention of sharing expertise in order to cut down on repetitive departmental transactions. He reported that it had been proposed that Pro-Wardens would lead the PODS and consideration would be given to where individual strengths could be utilised.

The Chair reassured the committee members that the introduction of PODS would not have an impact on the autonomy of academic departments as this had been central to the College's strength. He reported that the Academic Board would have the discussions and feedback would be given to support departments.

5 POLICIES ON MANAGING CHANGE AND CONSERVING EMPLOYMENT

Received:

A report from the Director of Human Resources (11-120)

The Director of HR introduced the report and explained that the College does not currently have a policy on outplacement services, redundancy, redeployment and consultation. He reported that the aim of the policy had been to capture the best practice processes which we had currently followed and does not have an impact on any processes which we are currently implementing. He explained that the aim of the policy should therefore deliver clarity for everyone and minimise the impact of redundancy as it would be compliant with the statutory regulations. He reported that it would articulate and give a framework for managers and should be completed by the end of next term.

- College Change Management Policy

The Director of HR reported that some policies such as grievance, disciplinary and pay were contractual and requirements by law and that the policies in discussion were a legal obligation by statutory as we would be required to consult with our recognised trade unions and provide them with the information.

The Chair reported that the policy would set up a framework so that it concentrates the minds and keeps processes in proportion.

The committee members discussed the process of consultation and whether a business case should be discussed with trade unions first or whether it would need to be discussed and agreed at departmental board before it is introduced to the trade unions.

The Director of HR explained that the business case should emphasise on the departments' aims and objectives and should initially be presented at the departmental board before it is consulted at union level. He reported that once the decision of change had been decided upon and agreed then this process would need to be followed.

The committee members also discussed the ambiguity around one-to-ones as the policy did not reflect whether or not the head of department should be leading on these meetings.

The Director of HR explained that specifying who the lead person on one-to-ones should be during the consultation stage would prohibit flexibility within the procedure.

Resolved:

(i) that the section referring to the Equality Impact Assessment should be referred to as the Equality Act Analysis.

(ii) that once the policy had been agreed, guidance notes should be provided for managers.

(iii) that it would be helpful to have indicative timescales within the policy.

(iv) that further clarity should be provided on who should hold the one-to-one meetings.

- Conserving Employment

The Director of HR reported that flexible working options were currently available to some groups of staffing but were not available on a larger scale. He explained that this policy would be suggesting that all members of staff would be given a wider range of

opportunities and would be able to request flexible working. He explained that a trial period could be agreed, flexible working arrangements could then be reviewed and then re-negotiated if necessary.

- Redeployment Policy

The Director of HR reported that a redeployment register would be set up on Igrasp which would assist with alternative employment opportunities for those who are at risk of redundancy. This would be for all staff including VT's and AT's.

- Pay Protection

On the question of whether the College had any plans in the future to consider external contracts as part of the pay protection, the Director of HR reported that the London Living Wage would be the only consideration for contractors.

- Redundancy Policy

On the question of consulting, the Director of HR confirmed that they should consult regardless of the number of people at risk and whether or not they are union members. He reported that our obligation is to consult with our trade unions as this would be perceived as good practice.

On the question of pay in lieu of notice, the Director of HR confirmed that we would be expected by all concerned to pay in lieu of notice.

On the question of reasonable amount of training, the Director of HR explained that the aim of this would be to assist them with developing their skills and how reasonable a training course would be would need to be dependant on the managers' judgement.

The Director of HR thanked the committee members for their input and their comments and reported that once re-drafted, the policies would go to SMT followed by further discussions with the trade unions.

Resolved:

that the policy should clarify who the consultation should be between.

6 HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Received:

A report from the Deputy Director of HR (11-117)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced the report and clarified that the number one referrals to occupational health had been due to stress and not as stated in the report.

It was also reported that the process review of absence reporting had been completed.

The Director of HR reported that HR had been working hard to get processes right in order to capture accurate sickness absence records, however, further data would be

required. He also reported that Bruce Ormiston (Occupational Health Adviser) had made a tremendous improvement to the College.

The Deputy Director of HR reported that the Counselling Service had been working immensely hard but as the service had been placed within the Student Services, it had been difficult to promote the service to staff members.

On the question of sickness absence reporting procedures, the Director of HR reported that the currently drafted Wellbeing policy would include the sickness absence procedures.

7 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

Received:

a report from the Interim Equalities and Diversity Advisor (11-29)

The Director of Human Resources introduced the report and on the question of reasonable adjustments he reported that an assessment would need to be carried out to determine how valid a reasonable adjustment would be for the member of staff as well as for the College.

8 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Received:

a report from the Deputy Director of HR (11-118)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced his paper and explained that the report captured events going back to 2007 and illustrated the scale of activities which have taken place. He reported that a more systematic approach would be required in order to get senior managers to participate.

One of the committee members reported that the coaching course which he had been attending had proven to be beneficial but he had not previously known about it.

The Deputy Director of HR reported that it had proven to be difficult to get people to commit to attending.

The Chair reported that an assessment of the coaching course would give it more of a compelling argument and encourage people to participate.

The Chair also reported that action learning sets could be useful and explained that people could become encouraged by grouping people with external parties.

The committee members discussed the importance of externality and the ability it had given them to talk in confidence. They reported that this had been helpful.

The committee members also discussed the preparation required for when becoming a new head of department. They expressed concerns over the increased workload and

explained that support would be required to prepare them for taking on their new responsibilities.

The committee members also suggested that it would be useful to put people into small groups in order to shadow and mentor each other whilst the departmental administrator could also have a role to play in this by supporting the new head of department.

In contrast, the committee members also discussed the difficulties with head of departments who had come to the end of their tenure. They reported that currently there had not been any support being given to those stepping down.

The Chair reported that an exit process would be required which should take into account career planning, capturing skills and abilities and managing expectations.

The Chair reported that the next process would be to go to SMT to discuss the expected achievements and outcomes of HRC. He reported that under this item the following had been discussed;

- Evaluating success of courses
- Learning skills set
- Mentoring and HoD support

9 HR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Director of HR reported that the HR Manager (Systems and Support) had taken full control of aspects of Pyramid with the aim of being able to produce effective data. Process maps would be developed for quick and easy access allowing the Head of Departments to have a better analysis of their departments.

10 ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

The Chair reported that this would be reliant on the Colleges proposals with PODS.

11 CURRENT CASEWORK

Received:

a report from HR Business Partner (11-120)

The Director of HR reported that there had been an increase in case work, recruitment and job evaluation. He noted in particular that there were now 4 ill health retirement cases.

It was noted that student complaints had also been increasing and would increase further due to the increase in fees.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None were noted.

13 NEXT MEETING

Noted:

that the next meeting of HR Committee would take place on 7 June 2011.

Fatma Gormus
HR Business Partner
March 2011