

**GOLDSMITHS  
University of London**

**COUNCIL**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2011**

**Present:** Mr Kenneth May (Chair), Mr Hugh Jones Mr Chris Pearson, Dr Basem El-Haddadeh, Mr Michael Dick, Dr Andrea Gilroy

**Apologies:** Dr Helen Jones, Dr Frances Pine, Mr Terry Rosenberg, Miss Rachel Soper

**In attendance:** Miss Fatma Gormus (Secretary), Mr Steve Collins (Deputy Director of HR for items 4 and 7) Ms Bernie Barnes (HR Manager – Systems and Support for item 5), Ms Marcia Williams (Interim Equality and Diversity Advisor for Item 8)

**OPEN BUSINESS**

**1 MINUTES**

**Resolved:**

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

**2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Chair asked whether any progress had been made regarding the previously discussed communications plan.

The Director of HR reported that the Goldsmiths 2015 programme had been planned as the strategy to move forward. The programme consisted of 4 workstreams; simplification, academic review, sustainability, and engagement and communication. He reported that the aim would be to involve as many people in Goldsmiths as possible in firstly explaining and communicating the vision and progress of the College. Secondly we needed to engage people in contributing to and owning the College's future and strategy. Thirdly, for the many who felt unwilling or unable to engage in delivering change, we needed to find better ways of gauging their views and informing them of progress. He further reported that we would need to look at different methods of communication methods and engagement strategies and that the work on this would commence in the summer.

The Registrar and Secretary reported that SMT were appointing the leaders for the work streams. He also explained that it had been envisaged as a two year project and therefore an immediate start had been essential.

It was hoped that the project outcomes would continue as a feature of communications strategy in Goldsmiths.

Members discussed how the engagement workstream project would be built and whether interactive social media methods would be considered as a form of up to date communication. It was agreed that this would be a positive route towards changing our culture.

### **3 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

No additional items were identified.

### **4 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING POLICY**

#### **Received:**

A policy from the Deputy Director of Human Resources (11-261)

The Deputy Director of HR introduced the new draft policy.

Committee members welcomed the policy and felt that it would be a positive move forward in managing sickness absence.

They debated the difficulties with ensuring accurate reporting of sickness absence for academics.

It was recognised there would always be some difficulties with the recording of absence for academic staff. Some student feedback indicated that unreported absences were taking place, which affected their studies. It was important therefore to ensure evaluation of students' feedback to identify whether or not they were suffering as a result of staff absences, and crosscheck with records. This would allow us to update records, identify directly consequences and to take appropriate remedial action.

The Director of HR reported that not having the correct data on sickness absence could lead to potential problems. He added that, in order to manage well-being, it was essential to persuade everyone to record their sickness absence. The earlier patterns were identified, the earlier intervention could take place to help all concerned.

In response to questions, he responded that occasionally members of staff chose not to disclose the reasons for absence but could speak to the Occupational Health Advisor in confidence. Neither staff nor managers were generally medically qualified and they should therefore seek medical advice in dealing with illness and the consequences.

Members also discussed the College's requirements of receiving a fit note after seven days of absence as this could prove difficult with some GPs. It was stated that GPs would only issue a fit note to begin on the day of the appointment and would not backdate it to the first day of absence which could mean that a member of staff may not be covered from their first day of absence.

The committee members also discussed the different classifications of disability and suggested that perhaps the forms should allow staff to self declare their disability. By

having different methods for alerting the College of disability, the College would be in a better position to understand and identify absences relating to disability.

Members also discussed the challenges and uncertainties around return to work interviews. It was felt that a huge amount of discretion had been placed on line managers to support, talk and be flexible with their members of staff without any specific guidelines.

The Director of HR reassured the committee members that Occupational Health would be able to make suggestions regarding a return to work which would assist the line manager in managing the transition back into work.

The committee members asked whether they could have some guidelines on the format a return to work interview should follow, including the issues which needed to be discussed and the outcomes that should be achieved.

**Resolved:**

that guidelines for return to work interviews be prepared to assist line managers with dealing with sickness absence.

**5 STAFF DATA REPORT**

**Received:**

A report from the Human Resources Manager- Systems and Support (11-262)

The HR Manager (Systems and Support) explained that there had been a significant gap in previous years in recording and updating information and data, due to inadequate systems. She stated that her priority had been to produce reports on basic head count information. The reports would be developed now to give deeper analyses so that the head of departments would know the breakdown in gender, age, ethnicity and so forth within their own departments.

The Director of HR reported that although there would still be a lot of work to be done to reach this anticipated stage, the current report been a positive start. The next stages would be firstly to increase the number and variety of reports. Secondly, HR would add graphics and simplify access to reports; finally we would seek to refine and add commentary to highlight the major patterns and messages arising from the data.

It was noted that the data might suggest that the College needed to change its workforce mix to address future challenges. Members discussed how the College might address these issues in straitened financial circumstances.

The Director of HR explained that the way the data would be used would be important as they would inform the College with an evidence base, encourage change and shape our workforce. He added that the data would assist with matching our needs to provisions as and when they change. They would permit management at all levels to have a better picture of their own workforce and their staff deployment.

The Chair asked what the anticipated next stages would be and for the committee to agree on their expectations.

The Registrar and Secretary explained that having accurate data would be significant. It was to be investigated whether the information could be delivered so that managers could themselves interrogate data. He also added that it would be important to connect the costs in order to establish whether the College had been working efficiently. In order to move forward with data cleansing, he asked for the reports to be sent to departments for validation.

The Chair agreed with these action points and added that the data would need to be refined so that the reports are presented using applicable commentary.

The Director of HR confirmed that HR would work very closely with departments, especially the Payroll team, to ensure consistency and accuracy of the data. He added that these reports would be produced every quarter and that HR would also determine access to the reports.

**Resolved:**

- (i) that a standard set of reports should be produced to use frequently
- (ii) that costs are connected in order to establish whether or not the College is working efficiently
- (iii) that reports are sent to departments for validation

## **6 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REPORT**

**Received:**

A report from the Occupational Health Advisor (11-263)

The Director of HR reported that a medical clinic drop in facility had been introduced on site. This had proven to be successful and the level of confidence in IOM had increased. It was also reported that the service costs a total of £47,000 per year which had proven to be a value for money.

## **7 STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Received:**

A report from the Deputy Director of HR (11-264)

The Deputy Director of HR explained that his report reviewed the projects undertaken over the last year. He added that significant resources had been spent on the LeAP programme and that the feedback had been supportive. He further added that the Coaching course had been successful due to the uptake which meant that the College could potentially save money by using in house coaches.

The Staff Development Team were thanked for their work and for the report and asked

- whether any work had been undertaken to evaluate the success of the individual courses in terms of value for money;

- what initiatives were being considered to reduce the apparent centralisation of decision making and whether current structures appropriate in light of the College's financial position .

In discussion about Staff Development activities, and Management and Leadership there was a wide range of views expressed by members.

The Registrar and Secretary gave the context that the Staff Development Activity in the College needed to support the change in strategy and reflect the coming needs of the College. Discussions on structures and clarity of roles for management at all levels was underway.

Currently Staff Development provision was organised so that programmes enabled staff to develop themselves and enrich themselves as individuals. This in the long term would add value to the College. But the College had not sufficiently ensured that its approach to Staff Development meant that firstly programmes were focussed on meeting the organisation's needs primarily, and secondly that there was sufficient levels of expectation that development activities would be undertaken or seen as necessary. It was noted that challenges would differ between the academic and support departments. There was a growing consciousness of the significant challenge for academics when they became Head of Departments without sufficient or structured leadership and management training.

The academic committee members reinforced the point about stepping up to the role of Head of Department, as their knowledge of the requirement of the role had been limited. Many/most had been unaware of the level of management required for the role and felt that the current expectation seemed to underestimate the volume of work involved in the element of academic duties.

It was noted that the programme under development for delivery later this term would be a major step forward and was Staff Development's single highest priority.

It was suggested that the induction programmes for new Head of Departments would need to be revisited which could involve activities such as shadowing and a thorough handover.

In light of these comments, Members agreed the urgency of the need to develop a comprehensive programme for new Head of Departments and prepare them for the job before they start.

It was also recommended that that it could be useful to invite the Warden to the next meeting to discuss the future role and support for Heads of Department.

The Registrar and Secretary also commented that it would be critical for the College to ensure value for money by directing limited resources effectively and in a targeted manner.

Members further discussed the challenges with PDRs. PDRs were seen as an essential element of talent management, performance enhancement and personal development, as well as a tool for training needs analysis. The College would need to review PDRs, ensure that there was a substantial element of expectation of participation, and better monitoring and use of PDRs.

The Chair asked whether there had been any significant patterns which had emerged through PDR's and asked for an update report to be prepared for the next meeting which would identify, department by department, how PDR's were being completed and how they informed the College's training programmes.

**Resolved:**

- (i) that an update report be prepared for the next meeting, to include;
  - (a) an analysis of the use of PDR's department by department
  - (b) significant patterns which have emerged through PDR's and how PDR's form part of the member of staff's training needs analysis and
  - (c) the level of investment in individual members of staff
- (ii) that the induction programmes for new Head of Departments would need to be revisited which could involve activities such as shadowing and a thorough handover
- (iii) that the Warden attend the next meeting to discuss the leadership programme and to consider how the Heads of Departments could be better supported before taking up that role

**8 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY**

**Received:**

a report from the Interim Equalities and Diversity Advisor (11-265)

The Interim Equalities and Diversity Advisor reported that HESA would soon be making changes to their classifications. She also reported that, going forward, the aim of the Equalities and Diversity Committee would be to drill down on statistics in order to identify trends and patterns.

**NEXT MEETING**

**Noted:**

that the next meeting of HR Committee would take place on 1 November 2011 at 2.00pm.

Fatma Gormus  
HR Business Partner  
June 2011