UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present: Professor S D Logan (Convenor), Professor M Greaves, Professor M Ross, Professor M Helfrich, Mr B Paterson, Mrs P Burnett, Mrs E Argo, Mrs D Dyker, Ms F Stewart, Mrs P Williams, and Mrs F Smith (Clerk)

Apologies: Professor P McGeorge, Professor B MacGregor, Mrs C Inglis, Dr R Shanks

The Convener opened the meeting by thanking Mr Paterson for his convenership last session and acknowledged the significant amount of business which was completed through this forum last session.

The Convener reminded the Committee that this Committee should operate through fair and firm conversations, which should remain courteous at all times. The Committee was reminded that the PNCC Business Committee remained the forum to ensure that the appropriate agenda and discussion papers were brought to this Committee. The Committee was reminded that Any Other Business on the agenda should not be used to raise any items of substance and should any issues arise which needed further discussion they would be deferred to the next meeting for full and considered discussion.

1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 9 JUNE 2014

Item 13 was amended to read “The Committee welcomed the proposal to establish an additional category of Honorary Partner status within the University.”

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2014 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Review of IAMS Pilot Scheme

The Committee was advised that the IAMS scheme had had a varied uptake and success through the pilot period, however those individuals who had participated in the pilot had provided positive feedback. The Committee was asked to consider whether the pilot should be extended and if the opt out option should be retained.

The Committee was reminded that the purpose of the scheme was not to reduce short term absence but to provide initial support and advice to staff on their first day of absence.

Following discussion the Committee agreed that the pilot should be extended for three months and that additional areas should be included in the pilot. The option of opting out will be removed at this stage of the pilot so that full feedback can be gathered, although this was not with full agreement from the Unions. It was further agreed that Line Managers need to communicate clearly with their staff regarding the reason and purpose of the referral.

ACTION: Clerk

2.2 Industrial Action Grievances

The Committee was advised that the final hearing of the formal grievances was to take place that day. Discussions had also been had with the UCU Scotland President, David Anderson
regarding this issue. The outcomes of these grievances were expected to be issued to staff involved next week.

The following items were raised as Matters Arising:

2.3 Framework of Academic Expectations

The Committee was advised that the review of the FAE was still ongoing. The document should be consistent with the strategic plan and as such it would be revised in line with the timescale for the strategic plan. The Convener advised that he was refining the document to be more of a narrative document and to include more differentiation between disciplines.

2.4 Smoking Policy

The Committee was advised that a full update on this would be provided at the next meeting including the identification of smoking zones on campus. Concerns were raised by some members that smoking breaks were not being managed consistently in all areas and that this might be compounded by the further change to the policy.

3. USS CONSULTATION

The Committee noted the information which had been provided regarding the USS Consultation and the University’s position in respect of this. The Committee noted the timescale for the national and local consultation with staff on this matter. It was further noted that UCU had indicated that they would be in dispute with the University on this issue.

Concerns were raised about individuals who transferred into the USS scheme from the UASLAS scheme at the time of the Framework Agreement. It was acknowledged that there were lots of implications for staff which would need to be considered and answered through the consultation process.

4. EMPLOYEE ADVANTAGES BENEFIT SCHEME

The Committee noted the report on the Employee Advantages Benefit Scheme and agreed that further communication was needed to make people more aware of the scheme and to encourage uptake. The Committee were reassured to learn that the reason for low uptake was not related to the affordability of the scheme but acknowledged that some staff found it inconvenient.

5. REVIEW OF ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS

The Committee noted the recommendations put forward by the Zero Hours Working Group and agreed that clearer guidance needed to be provided to Line Managers regarding the use of this type of contract. It was confirmed that HR would brief managers and individuals on the use of these contracts perhaps through a series of workshops.

The Convener requested that the members of the working group be thanked formally through this minute for their diligent and efficient work on this issue.

ACTION: HR
6. PROMOTION EXERCISE 2013-14

The Committee noted the information provided on the outcomes of the Promotions exercise. Some concerns were raised regarding the inequality in gender and ethnicity of applicants. It was agreed that further work needed to be undertaken to encourage staff to apply. Further, it was agreed that joint sessions would be run by HR, with Trade Union, Head of School and Role Analyst input.

ACTION: Clerk/HR/UCU representatives

7. MANDATORY EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TRAINING

The Committee welcomed the move to mandatory equal opportunities training for all staff but raised some concerns regarding the accessibility of the training. It was agreed that this issue would be raised with Janine Chalmers with a suggestion of running some supported sessions for staff who do not have computer access in the workplace or the necessary IT skills to complete this training.

ACTION: Clerk

8. CONFIDENTIALITY FRAMEWORK

The Committee was content with the guidance document provided and acknowledged that it would be helpful to a broad range of staff including Trade Union representatives.

9. REVIEW OF PROBATION

The Committee noted the progress made by the Probation Working Group and acknowledged that the group hoped to report their findings later on this term. It was noted that UCU were carrying out a survey of their members on this matter. The Committee agreed that the supportive aspect of probation should be reinforced

ACTION: Probation Working Group

10. STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The Committee noted the revised Staff Development Policy which was updated following the Internal Audit of Learning and Development. The changes provide clearer links between the policy and the areas of activity of the Centre for Academic Development, the Training and Documentation Team and the Staff Development Team within Human Resources. Staff development priorities are identified.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Committee acknowledged that the re-establishment of the bus operating between campuses had been well received.

It was raised that members of UCU were unhappy with the way in which MyCurriculum had been implemented. The Convener asked that a paper be brought to the next Committee to allow a full discussion of this issue.

The Committee discussed the recent communication which had been issued regarding the Ebola virus. The exclusion of Nigeria in the list of high risk countries had been queried and it was clarified that the communication followed the advice received from the Foreign Office. It was acknowledged that some staff had raised concerns regarding handling attendance sheets particularly in classes with over 200 students.
12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Partnership Negotiating and Consultative Committee will be Wednesday 19 November 2014 at 10am.