UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2013

Present: Mr B Paterson (Convener), Professor S D Logan, Professor P McGeorge, Professor M Ross, Professor M Greaves, Mrs C Inglis, Dr A Sim, Dr D MacAusland, Mrs C McLeod, Mrs P Burnett, Mrs D Dyker, Mrs E Argo, Mrs A Innes, Mrs P Williams and Mrs H Crabb (Clerk)

Apologies: Mrs D Massie, Professor B MacGregor, Mr A Godfrey-Brown

1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2013

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2013 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Intelligence Attendance Management (IAMs) Pilot

The Committee noted the response which had been received from NHS Grampian and agreed that a 3 month pilot scheme within the School of Biological Sciences, Estates and the Library should commence on 1 October 2013. The Committee was advised that assurances had been received from NHS Grampian Occupational Health Service that the appropriate staffing levels would shortly be in place to enable the commitments made in the recently revised Service Level Agreement to be met. It was agreed that information sessions would be made available to members of staff and line managers within the pilot areas, to which Trade Union representatives would be invited. The Committee anticipated receiving a report on the outcomes of the pilot scheme.

ACTION: Clerk

2.2 Library Opening Hours

The Committee noted the paper which had been presented at the University Management Group and was advised that the Library would be closed over the Christmas 2013/New Year 2014 holiday period. Some concerns were raised regarding the standard of security provision which may be put in place by the private contractor, particularly over weekends and in the evenings. It was agreed that these concerns would be reported to those responsible for managing the security contract. In addition, it was agreed that a request would be made to the Estates Section that the staffing portfolio of existing Security staff be reviewed to identify any revisions which may be required in the light of the Library proposals.

ACTION: Estates Section

2.3 ASV TUPE Transfer

The Committee noted that the proposal to transfer staff within the Sports & Exercise Team to the Aberdeen Sports Village had been withdrawn.

2.4 Duct Emergency Response Team

The proposal submitted by the Deputy Director of Estates in relation to the Duct Emergency Response Team was approved.

ACTION: Clerk
3. ASSISTED REPRODUCTION UNIT ALLOWANCES

The Committee agreed to recommend that the proposed allowance be paid to the affected staff within the Assisted Reproduction Unit on a transitional basis. It was agreed that proposals would be brought forward for consideration at the next meeting in relation to an institutional approach to on-call allowances across all areas of the University.

ACTION: Clerk

4. NATIONAL PAY NEGOTIATIONS

The Committee noted the current national position and anticipated receiving a further update at the next meeting.

ACTION: Clerk

5. PROMOTION PROCEDURES

5.1 Support Staff Update

The Committee noted the launch of the revised Support Staff Promotion Procedures. The important role played by Line Managers in considering staff for promotion was noted and it was agreed that this should be given more prominence. In particular, the provision of information sessions for Line Managers by HR Advisers was welcomed.

The Group anticipated receiving further updates following the formal review scheduled to take place in December 2013.

5.2 Monitoring Statistics

The Committee noted the outcomes of the annual Promotion Exercise for Academic and Academic Related Staff in relation to the equality strands of gender, ethnicity and disability.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

6.1 Progress Update

The Committee welcomed the ongoing activities in relation to the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy. The Committee noted the suggestions which had been brought forward as part of the CLSM Athena Swan application process and noted that they would require further consideration at an institutional level to identify whether they should be incorporated into staffing policies and procedures in future.

6.2 Project SEARCH

The Committee welcomed the launch of the Project SEARCH initiative and agreed that it was important for the University to provide appropriate support to the Interns in undertaking the programme.

6.3 Work Experience Placement Scheme

The Committee noted the outcomes of the formal review of the Work Experience Placement Scheme pilot. It was agreed that the Scheme had resulted in positive outcomes and, therefore, it was agreed that it should continue. In addition, it was agreed that it was appropriate for the University to agree to the request which had been received from Job Centre Plus that it be extended to include secretarial/clerical and administrative roles.
7. POLICY REVIEW GROUP

7.1 Updates on Meetings
The Committee received the notes from the most recent meetings of the Policy Review Group.

7.2 Smoking Policy
The Committee agreed to recommend that the Policy be approved.

7.3 Capability Procedure
The Committee welcomed the development of the Capability Procedure and agreed to recommend that it be approved subject to the following amendment:

- Stage 2 – Hearing – You will normally be provided with at least 3 working days notice of the date of the Hearing

7.4 Sickness Absence Procedure
The Committee agreed to recommend that the Policy be approved subject to the following amendment:

- Section 9.2 – insertion of “you” at Line 1

7.5 Flexible Working Procedure
The Committee agreed to recommend that the Policy be approved.

7.6 Parental Leave Procedure
The Committee agreed to recommend that the Policy be approved.

8. APPRENTICESHIPS
The Committee was advised that the introduction of the proposed Apprenticeship Scheme provided school leavers and other individuals with an excellent opportunity to undertake personal and career development. The Committee received clarification that the Scheme would be implemented within IT and administrative areas within the University, and not specifically the Business School within CASS. The Committee was also advised that it was anticipated that the Scheme could be rolled out in future to science areas, thereby providing opportunities for technical roles to be developed. The Committee was also reassured that the Apprentices would not be expected to fund any of the QA training as individuals. The Committee agreed to recommend that the Apprenticeship Scheme be implemented.

9. PENSION ISSUES

9.1 Implications of Scottish Independence on USS
The Committee noted the summary of recent press articles in relation to the implications of Scottish independence on the USS pension scheme. It was highlighted that the University did not have a political view on the forthcoming referendum and noted that some of the assertions within the articles had not been fully tested in either UK or European Courts of Law. The Committee was also advised that the University was now obliged to report on the USS scheme deficit as part of the annual financial reporting procedure. In view of this matter being
pursued at national rather than local levels, the Committee was reassured that the University would provide members of staff with additional information when direct information was received.

9.2 USS Agreement on Framework Transfers

The Committee was advised that the arrangement which had been put in place upon the implementation of the Framework Agreement regarding the transfer values of accrued benefits between the UASLAS and USS Ltd pension schemes was due to expire in October 2013. The Committee noted that the University had been in correspondence with USS Ltd on this matter, but that a response was still awaited. It was agreed that the University would continue to make representations to USS Ltd and that the Committee would receive further updates as new information became available.

10. FACILITIES

10.1 Facilities Money

The Committee was advised that the UCU representative at the PNCC Business Committee had requested that Facilities Money be placed on the agenda for discussion. However, the UCU representative at PNCC advised that he had not been requested to raise it. The Committee was advised that, following the discussion which had taken place at the Business Committee, some early discussions had taken place on this matter. The Committee was advised that the University had given consideration to whether, given the financial constraints which the University was facing, it would be possible for Schools and Colleges to cover the load of TU representatives within normal working practices. The Committee was advised that there was evidence that in some areas, the money which had been provided to Schools to offset any staff cover requirements had actually been used to fund the purchase of other items. It was highlighted that the University would continue to provide reasonable time to TU Officers to undertake their role and that line managers would be informed of this. However, the proposal to stop the transfer of money to individual Schools was put forward. It was agreed that the TU representatives on the Committee would discuss the proposal in more detail and provide feedback (on an individual Union basis if appropriate) to Professor Logan.

ACTION : TU Representatives

10.2 TU Office at Foresterhill

The TU representatives requested that the University give consideration to providing dedicated office space to the Campus Trade Unions on the Foresterhill campus. The Committee was advised that space on the Foresterhill campus was at a premium, and that it would not be possible to incorporate a TU office within the plans which had been drawn up for the new RINH building. It was suggested that the TU representatives may wish to consider approaching their colleagues within NHS Grampian to explore the possibility of establishing shared TU accommodation on the Foresterhill site.

ACTION : TU Representatives

11. INTERNAL RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

The TU representatives noted that some vacancies had recently been advertised internally for a period of one week and requested that the University give consideration to establishing a 2 week minimum period of advertisement. It was agreed that internal advertisements of 2 weeks was the recognised good practice standard, however, it was recognised that it was essential to retain an element of flexibility to address some circumstances.
12. CAMPUS TRAVEL OPTIONS

The TU representatives noted some concerns regarding the termination of the inter-campus bus service and requested clarification on the rationale behind the decision. In particular, it was highlighted that the paper accompanying the agenda item had indicated that the bus link had initially been intended to mitigate the impact of parking controls. However, previous communications had indicated that it had been introduced as a consequence of planning controls around the building of the Sir Duncan Rice Library and as part of the Green Travel Policy. In addition, concerns were expressed that the decision to remove the service due to financial considerations appeared to run contrary to the aims of the green Travel Policy. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the use of a fleet of shared cars or bicycles would not meet the needs of disabled staff.

It was accepted that there had been an element of inconsistency in the communications which had been issued, but the Committee was advised that the building of the Library had resulted in the mandatory introduction of the Controlled Parking Zone, as a means by which car journeys could be reduced. In addition, the Committee was advised that a number of options had been investigated to identify an appropriate link between the campuses which was also economically viable.

It was suggested that the University could give consideration to the introduction of a “Post Bus” service, whereby non-passenger vehicles travelling between the campuses e.g. catering, mail delivery vans etc could be adapted to carry passengers.

It was agreed that the representations would be communicated to the Transport Group to assist in the further development of an effective, green Travel Policy which could be delivered at a reasonable cost.

ACTION: Clerk/Transport Group

13. RATE YOUR LECTURER WEBSITE

Concerns were expressed by the TU representatives that the Rate Your Lecturer website had resulted in instances of cyber-bullying against members of staff. The Committee noted that whilst the University did not condone the posting of offensive remarks on the internet, it could not exercise any authority or control over an external website. It was also noted that UCU was gathering information the responses made by Universities to the website, but that no national UCU representation had been made to date.

UCU requested that the University give consideration to communicating directly with the site regarding the concerns which had been raised. It was agreed that Professor Logan would make the Principal aware of the issue to enable him to take a view on whether it would be appropriate to raise it through Universities Scotland.

ACTION: Professor Logan

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14.1 Breathing Apparatus

It was noted that an administrative error had occurred in the processing of Breathing Apparatus payments and that this would be rectified through the next payroll run.

14.2 Promotion Exercise

The UCU representative noted that he had received a report that a 10% uplift had been applied to Role Analyst scores in the grading of applications received for promotion at Grades 1-4 level. The Committee was advised that applications for promotions from staff in Grades 1-4 were now being considered through the revised Promotion Procedures, which allowed for a matching process rather than a scoring process using the HERA system. It was agreed that
the validity of the reports received would be checked and that any further questions on this matter would be considered at the next meeting.

14.3 Zero Hours Contracts

The UCU representative requested an update on the University’s position in relation to Zero Hours Contracts following the plans announced by Edinburgh University to remove them. The Committee was advised that Edinburgh University had committed to undertaking a review, in partnership with the Campus Trades Unions, of the use of Zero Hours Contracts. The Committee was advised that the University would be happy to engage with TU colleagues at Aberdeen in a similar manner. The Committee also noted that the majority of individuals engaged on a Zero Hours Contract at Aberdeen were involved in catering and student recruitment/support activities.

14.4 Indefinite Leave to Remain Applications

The UCU requested that the University re-consider the response which had been provided in relation to supporting members of staff seeking to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. The Committee was advised that the University provided support to such individuals via the provision of salary advances, loans etc. The Committee was advised that the situation for individuals wishing to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (as a personal decision) was very different to that of those sponsored under a Tier 2 visa (which was closely linked to an employer). Therefore, the Committee was advised that the University’s position remained unchanged.

14.5 JNCC

The UCU representative requested that a meeting of JNCC be convened to consider 2 agenda items:

- The Personal Tutor System
- Results of the Teaching Fellow Survey

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Partnership Negotiating and Consultative Committee is 20 November 2013 at 10.30am.