

SOAS, University of London

**Human Resources Committee**

10.00am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014 in Room 116, Russell Square

**Agenda**

Items marked with an asterisk are formal business, not intended for discussion. If members wish to discuss any issues arising from these items they should inform the Chair by 9.00am on the day prior to the meeting.

- I Membership, Terms of Reference and Procedures for the Conduct of Meetings**
  - i) To note: membership and terms of reference of HR Committee; [Appendix A]
  - ii) To note: the Procedures for the conduct of meetings; [Appendix B]
  
- II Minutes** [Attached]  
To approve: minutes of the meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014
  
- III Action Taken**  
To receive: updates on action taken
  
- IV Matters Arising**
  
- V Transforming HR – EB paper** [Appendix C]  
To consider: the EB proposals for the transformation of the HR function at SOAS
  
- VI Review of HR Strategy – key themes for 2015/16 and beyond** [Appendix D]  
To consider and approve: key themes for the HR Strategy for 2015/16 and beyond
  
- VII Revised HR Strategy Action Plan 2014 - 2015** [Appendix E]  
To consider and approve : the revised HR Strategy Action Plan 2014 -2015
  
- VIII Business Agenda for HR Committee 2014/15** [Appendix F]  
To approve: items for business for the HR Committee 2014/15 and themes for each meeting
  
- IX Pulse Survey Report and Action Plan 2014** [Appendix G]  
To Note: the report and action plan

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|-------------|---|--------------|
| <b>X</b>    | <b>HR policies and procedures</b><br>To note: various HR policies and procedures agreed at EB and JIG (Appendix H Annex 1 and 2)<br>To discuss and agree: HR policy review with a view to reducing the complexity of key HR policies to make them more useable and Principles for Policy Development (Appendix H Annex 3) | [Appendix H] |
| <b>XI</b>   | <b>School Promotions Panel Report</b><br>To note: a report from HR  | [Appendix I] |
| <b>XII</b>  | <b>Equality &amp; Diversity Initiatives Report</b><br>To consider and approve: the paper relating to the GEM and work being undertaken on other Equality & Diversity initiatives  | [Appendix J] |
| <b>XIII</b> | <b>Annual Report to Resources &amp; Planning Committee 2013/14</b><br>To approve: The annual report to RPC  | [Appendix K] |

These minutes are for information only. Any corrections to the minutes will be recorded in the minutes of the subsequent meeting of the Committee.

SOAS, University of London

## **Human Resources Committee – Minutes**

10am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014 in Room 116

Ms Laura Gibbs, Registrar (Chair)

Mr Peter Mitchell, HR Director (Secretary)

Professor Matthew Craven, Dean of Faculty of Law & Social Sciences

Ms Marva De La Coudray, Head of Widening Participation

Professor Rachel Dwyer, Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema

Ms Regina Everitt, LIS Assistant Director (Customer Services & Operations)

Professor Benjamin Fortna, Professor in the History of the Middle East \*

Ms Jacqui Smith, Interim Diversity Adviser

Professor Julia Strauss, Professor of Chinese Politics

Ms Zoe Weaver, External Adviser

Mr Chris Byrne, HR Manager – In attendance

Ms Brenda Lett, HR Manager – In attendance

Ms Seema Sanyal, HR Manager – Minute Secretary

Ms Serena Yeo, Staff Development Manager – In attendance

\*Those whose names are marked with an asterisk were unable to attend the meeting

**1. Membership, Terms of Reference and Procedures for the Conduct of Meetings**

The Acting Chair introduced Appendices A and B. The Committee NOTED the papers.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting (22nd May 2014)**

The HR Committee minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 were APPROVED without amendment.

**3. Action Taken**

The Committee received verbal updates on action taken and NOTED the following:-

**Minute 6** – the HR Director, Peter Mitchell (PM) reported that Communications had been added to the 2014 Pulse Survey Action plan.

**Minute 13** – the Committee NOTED that induction had been provided for all new HR Committee members, except for the Chair.

**Minute 17** - the HR Director, Peter Mitchell (PM) reported that Pulse Survey Trend Analysis had been included in the report to HR Committee at Appendix G, section B.

**Minute 27** – the HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett reported that reviewing and merging the various equality plans and objectives had been completed.

**Minute 27** - the HR Director, Peter Mitchell (PM) reported that the Pulse Survey figure for SDRs undertaken had been used in HR's PIs in the report to Resources & Planning Committee.

**Minute 28** - the HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett reported that footnotes to explain post class categories had been added to the Equal Pay Audit.

**Minute 29** - the HR Manager (Change), Chris Byrne (CB) reported that policies agreed to be reviewed by Trade Union request had been indicated as such on the list of Employment Policies and Procedures.

**Minute 32** - the HR Director, Peter Mitchell (PM) reported a full review of the HR Strategy had been conducted.

**4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

**5. Transforming HR – EB paper**

The HR Director, Peter Mitchell (PM) presented the discussion paper and additional slides on the potential transformation of the HR Function within the School, which had been considered by Executive Board on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

The Committee NOTED Professor Ulrich's classic HR model and the current structure of the HR Directorate. The Committee further NOTED that the structure that not been reviewed since 2009, despite escalating work pressures arising from a 20% rise in School

headcount, increasingly complicated immigration regulations, Payroll Real-time Information and Pensions Auto-enrolment requirements and a large increase in the number of FOI requests received, as well as 3 industrial disputes in 2013/14.

PM presented the proposals for the restructure of the HR Directorate. The Committee NOTED that the proposals did not contain any specific structures, but that the Business Partner model was being advocated in order to improve the quality of support from HR to managers. The Committee discussed the lack of a strong management culture at SOAS, exacerbated by the rotation of Deans and Heads of Departments, and the adversarial employment relations culture, with the trade unions assuming the employee advocate role. The Committee NOTED that faculty-facing HR teams had been created to improve working relationships, with variable success, and that managers needed to develop management skills with HR guidance. The Committee further NOTED a cultural problem in relation to upward delegation, with small decisions being referred to the most senior staff.

The Committee discussed the need for greater support for managers who try to make changes or take the initiative and the training available for Heads of Departments. The Committee NOTED that Post-92 and private universities have permanent, professional academic managers. The Committee AGREED that better support and succession planning were necessary.

## **6. Review of HR Strategy – key themes for 2015/16 and beyond**

The HR Director, Peter Mitchell (PM) presented the discussion paper on a full review of the HR Strategy. The Committee considered the four broad themes proposed to be used to develop both the HR Strategy Action plan for 2015/16 to feed into the overarching School Strategic Plan.

The Committee NOTED concern about the proposed themes and that the word 'people' had not been used. Concern was also expressed that the strategy focuses on tasks and processes rather than delivery and impact. It was AGREED that further comments should be sent to the HR Director.

The Committee discussed the various HR action plans including the Pulse Survey Action Plan and NOTED that local Pulse Survey action plans and implementation impacted upon School-wide results.

## **7. Revised HR Strategy Action Plan 2014 - 2015**

PM presented the Action Plan for the 2014/15 session and reported that although it may not be possible to achieve all actions, some had been committed to, such as the Enhancing Resourcelink Project, which has received additional resourcing.

The Committee NOTED that the Plan did not include actions relating to Senior Staff Remuneration Committee, pensions or related potential industrial action. The Committee further NOTED an example of an externally driven new task for the HR Directorate – data cleansing 900 job evaluation records in advance of the transfer to new HERA software in April 2015.

It was AGREED that the Action Plan would be revised to capture impacts and outcomes.

**8. Business Agenda for HR Committee 2014/15**

The Committee discussed the Annual Plan of Work and NOTED that more items would be asterisked as formal business, not intended for discussion, in future. This, along with themed meetings, is intended to allow more substantial discussions to support the HR Directorate to deliver the HR Strategy.

The Committee suggested discussions on Management Development and management competencies and on communications cascade, including the role of managers at the Term 2 meeting.

**9. Pulse Survey Report and Action Plan 2014**

The HR Director, Peter Mitchell (PM) presented the report and action plan, which were NOTED by the Committee.

The Committee NOTED that, although 44% of respondents indicated that they often think of leaving the School, most respondents agree that SOAS is a good place to work

**10. HR policies and procedures**

The Committee NOTED the list of agreed Policies and Procedures presented by the HR Manager (Change), Chris Byrne (CB) and AGREED that the policies and procedures be prioritised for review over a period of 4 years to make them more concise and clear and to conform with a standard template for ease of use and reference.

**11. School Promotions Panel Report**

The meeting NOTED the promotions to Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor and further NOTED the report to Governing Body from the Promotions Panel External Observer.

**12. Equality & Diversity Initiatives Progress Report**

The Committee NOTED the report presented by the HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett and congratulated the Gender Equality Chartermark Working Party for their work on the School's achievement of the Bronze Award, the highest award possible at present.

**13. Annual Report to Resources & Planning Committee 2013/14**

The Committee APPROVED the report to Resources and Planning Committee presented by the HR Director, Peter Mitchell.

**SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Thursday 23 October 2014

**ACTION POINTS**

<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>By</b>	<b>Status</b>
22 13/14	Seek recruitment benchmark equalities data from other London HEIs	May 2015	BL	
1	Send comments on Review of HR Strategy – key themes for 2015/16 and beyond to the HR Director	Feb 2015	HR Cttee	
2	Revise the HR Strategy Action Plan 2014 – 2015 to reflect outcomes and impact	Feb 2015	HRD	
3	Add Management Development, Management competencies and Communications cascade to Term 2 Agenda	Feb 2015	HRD	