

SOAS, University of London

Human Resources Committee

10.00 a.m. on Thursday 19th February 2015 in Room 116, Russell Square

Theme: “From Staff Development to Organisational Development”

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 9.00 a.m. on the day prior to the meeting.

- I Minutes**
To approve: minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2014 [Attached]
- II Action Taken**
To receive: updates on action taken
- III Matters Arising**
- IV HR Strategy Action Plan 2014-15 Progress Report** [Appendix A]
To consider: progress against objectives contained within the revised action plan
- V Review of HR Strategy 2015-16** [Oral report]
To consider: next steps in revising the strategy
- VI From Staff Development to Organisational Development** [Appendix B]
To consider and comment on: the discussion paper
- VII Transforming HR – Progress Report** [Oral report]
To note: the work undertaken to date
- VIII Equality & Diversity Staff Annual Report** [Appendix C]
To receive and consider: the 2013-14 annual report and Executive Summary
- IX Employment policies and procedures** [Appendix D]
To note: various HR policies and procedures agreed at EB & JIG and progress on reviewing policies and procedures
- X Progress report on Pulse Survey Actions taken and on preparations for the 2015 Pulse Survey** [Appendix E]
To note: progress against the Pulse Survey (2014) Action Plan
To consider: any changes to the Pulse Survey (2015) questionnaire.

- XI Progress report on Equality & Diversity Initiatives** [Appendix F]
To consider and approve: work being undertaken on Equality & Diversity initiatives
- XII Fractional Teachers' Recruitment Pilot** [Appendix G]
To consider: the report on the pilot scheme and approve the extension of the use of i-GRasp talent pool functionality for advertising fractional teacher vacancies.
- XII Global Corporate Challenge** [Appendix H]
To consider and approve: the proposal to introduce an Employee Health and Performance Programme
- XIII Model Equality & Diversity Working Party Action Plan 2014/15** [Appendix I]
To approve: the action plan on the various Equality & Diversity initiatives being undertaken across the School.

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

10.00 a.m. on Thursday 19th February 2015 in Room 116

Ms Laura Gibbs, Registrar (Chair)

Ms Dalia Dasgupta, Interim 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.

14. Minutes of the last meeting (23rd October 2014)

The HR Committee minutes of 23rd October 2014 were APPROVED without amendment.

15. Action Taken

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

Minute 1 – the Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta reported that no comments had been received on the 'Review of HR Strategy – key themes for 2015/16 and beyond' paper.

Minute 2 – the Committee NOTED that the HR Strategy Action Plan 2014-15 was on the main agenda.

Minute 3 - the Registrar, Laura Gibbs reported that Management Development and Management capabilities and communications were covered in part in the Agenda Item VI (a discussion paper) and that further consideration was required on how best to address them in future meetings.

16. Matters Arising

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs reported that the Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta, would be remaining in post until the appointment of a new HR Director. The meeting NOTED that interviews in January 2015 had not resulted in an appointment, and that further interviews would be held in April 2015.

17. HR Strategy Action Plan 2014 – 2015 Progress Report

The Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta (DD) presented the report on the Action Plan for the 2014/15 session and the Committee NOTED progress against the plan. DD also highlighted the additional work undertaken with the Pro-Director (Research & Enterprise) on academic job descriptions in order to strengthen the research component.

The Committee discussed the work of the Academic Performance Framework Working group and sub-groups and NOTED their role in identifying expected standards of performance from minimum to excellent in relation to probation, capability, rewards and promotion.

18. Review of HR Strategy – key themes for 2015/16 and beyond

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs (LG) reported on the development of a new SOAS strategic plan, with overarching themes of Research, Teaching and Learning, Outreach and Internationalism, to be underpinned by sub-themes of People, Estates, Environment, Resources and Finances. LG confirmed that, as the Committee had expressed concern about the 4 proposed themes for the HR strategy at the previous meeting (Promoting Equality & Diversity, Providing a Positive Working Environment, Achieving Excellence, Developing the Organisation), revised proposals would be presented at the next meeting.

The Committee NOTED that the 4 proposed themes are generic and would normally be included within HR Strategies; it was AGREED that the Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta would review and revise the themes with a view to clarifying and making them more specific to SOAS.

19. From Staff Development to Organisational Development

The Staff Development Manager, Serena Yeo (SY) presented a report on the current function of the staff development unit and the direction of strategic focus for staff and organisational development provision in the future. SY invited comments on content and direction and on the possibility of rebranding Staff Development to 'Organisational Development' or to 'Talent Management'. The Committee NOTED the report and the three priorities for staff development:-

- i. Leadership and management development training, in particular for academic managers;
- ii. Staff Development Reviews, with a target of increasing the completion rate to 100%;
- iii. Courses for staff at various stages of their career, including up to date knowledge of equality and diversity for all staff, as agreed by the Equality and Diversity Committee.

The Committee discussed the item in detail and the following views were expressed by members:

- The name of the unit is less important than what it does or achieves;
- There is a perception that the unit is good at providing short, technical courses, such as IT skills, but not at longer term development, such as equipping academic staff with the skills and knowledge to become Heads of Department;
- A working group could be set up to help move the focus of Staff Development from short-term to longer-term, more important development;
- Strategic thinking should focussed on the real problem of governance and senior management;
- HR had failed to keep new Heads of Department informed about people issues; HR can be overwhelmed or not fully aware of procedures, so a fundamental change in the culture of HR needs to happen at the same time;
- Heads of Department go on sabbatical immediately after their term of office, so no handover with their successor is possible;
- Professors have a term of office of 4 years as Head of Department, while Senior Lecturers have a term of office of 3 years, which is not long enough to grasp the role;
- SOAS has a culture of un-governability; it can be difficult for a Senior Lecturer to manage Professors;
- Professional managers should be considered for academic departments;
- Certain academic departments find it difficult to appoint a new Head of Department; succession planning should be implemented in order to identify a pool of candidates and provide timely leadership and management training.

The Committee NOTED that the University of Greenwich has a successful programme for Heads of Department which includes coaching and mentoring, and that the Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta is looking at different operating models for HR, such as business partnering which involves HR working collaboratively with managers to coach and guide them, leading to more effective and efficient people management.

The Committee NOTED that HR business partners have the job title 'HR Partner' in the School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and AGREED that 'Business' and 'Organisation' should not be used in any rebranding and that 'Staff' and 'People' were preferable.

20. Transforming HR – Progress Report

The Committee NOTED that the Registrar, Laura Gibbs (LG) had asked the Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta (DD) to take forward the transformation plans conceived by the former HR Director, Peter Mitchell.

DD tabled a paper on HR Transformation: Draft transition, implementation and embedding plan, with a target date of 1 July 2015 for the new structure of the HR Directorate to be in place, subject to consultation.

The Committee NOTED that, as well as conducting stakeholder consultation, DD has been exploring with the HR management team how to raise the HR profile as part of the transformation project.

The Committee discussed the item in detail and the following views were expressed by members:

- Experience of working with the business partner model in another institution was positive – it was helpful to have someone from HR sitting at the same table as faculty/departmental management teams;
- All HR departments have the same tension – a dual role of administration / record keeping and supporting / backing up management. HR is viewed with suspicion when supporting managers as the management culture and communications within the School are so abysmal;
- Managers improve over time as they gain experience; the weak management culture at SOAS is exacerbated by academic managers stepping down after gaining this experience;
- The regular turnover of academic managers results in a lack of continuity;
- The School has deeply problematic governance and communication issues which won't be solved by tinkering with structures;
- The question of whether academic priorities are being served should be asked;
- The role of management in academic institutions should be to create systems to protect academics from pressures, allowing them to teach and research;
- Management at UC Berkeley realise that their role is to buffer academics; however their hands-off management approach is based on an expectation of excellence;
- The TUs don't allow managers to have normal management conversations;
- SDRs are a meaningless exercise;
- SDRs are particularly beneficial for more junior academics;
- SDRs are also useful for senior academics who appreciate thinking about longer-term objectives;
- Staff who manage their careers engage in and benefit from the SDR process.

LG reported that she sensed an underlying issue of resistance to change, with staff wanting to be completely autonomous and managers not feeling able to tell anyone anything.

The Committee NOTED that HR Business Partners would provide the necessary continuity of support to new academic managers.

21. Equality & Diversity Staff Annual Report

The Committee NOTED the report presented by the HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett and discussed problems relating to reporting, recording and management of mental health issues. The Committee NOTED that the figures for All HEI's Female Staff in Table 3.2 were incorrect and that a number of tables and graphs had missing headers and labels. It was AGREED that the amended report and a more succinct executive summary highlighting the key messages from the data would be submitted to the next meeting

22. Employment Policies and Procedures

The Committee NOTED the list of agreed Policies and Procedures presented by the HR Manager (Change), Chris Byrne and AGREED to the proposed timetable for review over a period of 4 years presented by Seema Sanyal, HR Manager (Employee Relations).

23. Progress Report on Pulse Survey Action Plan 2014 and preparations for the 2015 Pulse Survey

The HR Manager (Change), Chris Byrne (CB) presented the progress report, which was NOTED by the Committee. The Committee NOTED that, although 44% of respondents indicated that they often think of leaving the School, this is not supported by the School's turnover figures or reflected in the verbatim comments.

The Committee AGREED that any additional questions for the 2015 survey should be forwarded to CB.

24. Equality & Diversity Initiatives Progress Report

The HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett presented the report on Equality and Diversity initiatives being undertaken under the Gender Equality Chartermark (GEM). The Committee NOTED the progress made and further NOTED significant dates in 2015, such as International Women's Day on 8 March 2015, which the GEM working group will be celebrating to raise gender awareness.

25. Fractional Teachers' Recruitment Pilot

The Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta presented the discussion paper on the outcome of the pilot i-Grasp recruitment processes for fractional teachers. The Committee APPROVED the recommendation to extend the use of i-Grasp talent pool functionality to all departments which employ fractional teachers, via a 'soft' non-compulsory launch for 2015/16, with a view to making the process mandatory for 2016/17.

26. Global Corporate Challenge

The HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett presented the proposal to introduce a pilot Global Corporate Challenge to support the School's wellbeing agenda. The Committee discussed the need for appropriate and timely communications and NOTED that Birkbeck, University of London had undertaken the challenge with a competitive approach. The Committee APPROVED the proposal.

27. Model Equality & Diversity Working Party Action Plan 2014/15

The Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta presented the Action Plan on the various Equality and Diversity initiatives being undertaken across the School. The Committee discussed the critical role of mentoring and AGREED that reviewing representation and communications with regard to exhibitions at the School should be added to the Plan. The Committee APPROVED the progress reported against the Plan.

SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Thursday 19 February 2015

ACTION POINTS

Minute	Action	Deadline	By	Status
22 13/14	Seek recruitment benchmark equalities data from other London HEIs	May 2015	BL	
4	Review and submit revised themes for the HR Strategy 2015/16 and beyond	May 2015	DD	
5	Amend and resubmit Equality and Diversity Staff Annual Report and Executive Summary	May 2015	BL	
6	Forward additional questions for the 2015 Pulse Survey to CB	28 Feb 2015	HR Cttee	
7	Add reviewing representation and communications with regard to exhibitions at the School to the MEDE Action Plan	April 2015	BL	