

SOAS, University of London

Human Resources Committee

10.00 a.m. on Thursday 21st May 2015 in Room 116, Russell Square

Theme: “Promoting Equality & Diversity”

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 19th February 2015 [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 Promoting Equality & Diversity** [Appendix B]
To consider and comment on: the progress report
- VII Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - plans for review summer 2015** [Appendix C]
To receive and note: the priorities for review
- VIII Equal Pay Audit** [Appendix D]
To receive and consider: the 2014 annual report and Executive Summary
- IX Sustainability of SOAS proposals and the Voluntary Severance Scheme** [Oral Report]
To note: an update on the proposals and on the VS Scheme
- IX Transforming HR – Progress Report** [Oral report]
To note: the work undertaken to date

- IX Employment policies and procedures**
To note: various HR policies and procedures agreed at EB & JIG and progress on reviewing policies and procedures [Appendix E]

- X 2015 Staff Survey**
To note: plans for the next full staff survey [Oral report]

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 21st May 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 *

Mr Mark Harrison, Diversity & Inclusion Manager

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.

28. Minutes of the last meeting (19th February 2015)

The HR Committee minutes of 19th February 2015 were APPROVED without amendment.

29. Action Taken

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

Minute 22 (2013/14) – Brenda Lett, HR Manager (Equality & Diversity) reported that she and Jacqui Smith, former Interim Diversity Adviser, had looked at the possibility of obtaining recruitment benchmark equalities data from other London HEIs. The Committee NOTED that it had been decided to seek wider general equalities data for benchmarking, to be reported at the next meeting.

Minute 4 – The Committee NOTED that the HR Strategy Action Plan 2015-16 was on the main agenda.

Minute 5 - Brenda Lett, HR Manager (Equality & Diversity) reported that the Equality and Diversity Staff Annual Report and Executive Summary would be / had been amended for publication on the School's website.

Minute 6 – Chris Byrne, HR Manager (Change) reported that he had received no additional questions for the 2015 Pulse Survey. The Committee NOTED that the Pulse Survey would not be held in 2015, as previously planned.

Minute 7 - Brenda Lett, HR Manager (Equality & Diversity) reported that reviewing representation and communications with regard to exhibitions at the School had been added to the amended MEDE Action Plan.

30. Matters Arising

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs (LG) welcomed Mark Harrison, new Diversity & Inclusion Manager to the Committee.

The Committee NOTED that Paul Doyle, former HR Director at the Institute of Education and current Deputy HR Director at UCL had been appointed HR Director at SOAS and would take up the role in July 2015. LG thanked the Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta for her contribution to the School.

31. HR Strategy Action Plan 2014 – 2015 Progress Report

The Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta provided a verbal commentary reported on the Action Plan for the 2014/15 session. The Committee NOTED that, although progress had been made in various areas, others had been overtaken by new priorities, such as leadership and management development, the Academic Performance Framework, the sustainability agenda and the Voluntary Severance scheme.

The Committee discussed the need for a mechanism to capture and record the new priorities and AGREED that a highlight report to accompany the Action Plan was necessary.

32. Review of HR Strategy 2015/16

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs reported that the development of a new SOAS strategic plan which had begun in September 2014 had been overtaken by the Director's announcement of his decision to retire and the REF results. The Committee NOTED that it had been agreed not to finalise and launch the new strategic plan until the new Director is in place, but to submit a final, working draft to Academic Board and Governing Body in June 2015.

The Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta tabled a paper entitled 'SOAS Strategic Plan: Enabling themes – People' setting out 7 draft revised themes, which had been written in March 2015.

The Committee NOTED that the themes were ambitious and necessary as hooks on which to hang all-important actions. The Committee AGREED that staff engagement and sustainability should be added to the themes, with building the capacity of the HR team to be added as a sub-strategy under 'Fostering a culture of continuous improvement and achievement of excellence'.

33. Promoting Equality & Diversity

The HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett presented a progress report on the various Equality and Diversity (E&D) initiatives being undertaken across the School, including the Gender Charter Mark and promotion via the Equalities calendar. The Committee NOTED the progress and achievements made and discussed reverse mentoring, under which junior mentor more senior staff. It was AGREED that the impacts of the E&D initiatives should be evaluated and publicised.

34. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – plans for review, summer 2015

The Diversity & Inclusion Manager, Mark Harrison (MH) presented a report on the areas of review in respect of the School's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. The Committee NOTED the current complex structure in which a number of working groups (Model Equality & Diversity Employer, Public Sector Equality Duty, Gender Equality Chartermark, Disability Liaison Group Time to Change and the Accessibility & Inclusion Forum) report to Equality & Diversity Committee; the groups often comprise the same people, and each has their own action plan, totalling of around 100 actions.

MH reported his intention to simplify the structure, with the aim of creating one clear, overarching action plan, with a realistic and manageable number of actions in order to focus on outcomes and change. The Committee NOTED the proposed structure of an open, all-inclusive forum to be facilitated by the Diversity & Inclusion Manager; this would report to a formal forum which would include HR and would in turn report to Equality & Diversity Committee.

The Committee discussed the scope for confusion and duplication of effort by the various working groups and the status and purpose of the Accessibility & Inclusion Forum and NOTED that MH had spoken to the Students Union's Campaign Officer, Georgie Robertson to offer to facilitate the Forum.

The Committee discussed the Dignity at SOAS policy and NOTED that complaints that come under this policy are normally dealt with initially outside HR. MH reported his intention to review the policy and procedures in order to clarify them further.

35. Equal Pay Audit

The HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), Brenda Lett presented the 6th annual report which was NOTED by the Committee. The Committee further NOTED that the overall pay gap of 13% did not represent an average of pay gaps within grades, but indicated that fewer women than men are in senior posts at SOAS. The Committee discussed the possible reasons for this, such as women not preparing well for interviews and presentations or not engaging in senior academic roles and NOTED the School's current and planned measures to address this, such as providing unconscious bias training for interviewers, research leave for returners from maternity leave and leadership and management development.

36. Sustainability of SOAS proposals and the Voluntary Severance Scheme

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs (LG) provided a verbal report and confirmed that these items could not have been raised at the previous meeting as they were subject to decisions by Executive Board at that time.

The Committee NOTED that the Sustainability proposals had been triggered by the REF results and its impact on student recruitment and School finances, and by the target set by Governing Body of cost savings of £3-5 million in order to achieve a reasonable surplus in future years. The Committee further NOTED that the Voluntary Severance Scheme was intended to produce immediate savings, whilst the Sustainability proposals focussed on longer-term planning, with certain initiatives, such as the Academic Performance Framework and curriculum reform already in train.

LG reported that the Voluntary Severance Scheme had not been strategically targeted and had a disappointingly low take-up, mostly by Professional Services and Teaching only staff, whose posts would not be replaced.

The Committee NOTED that the suggestion that early retirement should be offered was supported by the Trade Unions and was being considered and costed by the School.

LG confirmed that that the curriculum review and restructuring would take 2-3 years to achieve in order to allow students to complete their courses.

The Committee NOTED concern about falling morale and that SOAS would lose its distinctive identity, should loss-making area courses be closed. Concern was also raised that underperformance had not been tackled and that the REF process had been mismanaged. The Committee further NOTED the suggestion that the Sustainability agenda provided an opportunity for transparent and open consultation.

37. Transforming HR – Progress Report

The Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta (DD) presented an oral report on progress, which had involved stakeholder meetings with Executive Board (EB) members, Directors of Professional Services and Trade Union representatives about required service levels and expectations. DD reported that the initial business case had been agreed by EB on 18th May 2015 and that she was due to share this confidentially with the Trade Unions in advance of consultation with the HR team and the wider School community from 1st June.

The Committee discussed whether different HR models are available and had been considered and NOTED that there are many different models, appropriate for different organisations. The Committee further NOTED that stakeholders had been consulted and they indicated that they wanted Business Partners to work with them.

Regina Everitt reported that candidates for the HR Director role had been asked at her interview discussion group what they would do to ensure that managers would cope with the work shifted to them from HR.

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs stated that professional services need to be seen as an enabling service, and that DD was working towards this in HR.

38. Employment Policies and Procedures

The Committee NOTED the list of agreed Policies and Procedures presented by the HR Manager (Change), Chris Byrne and progress against the 4-year timetable for review. It was AGREED that a clearer update on progress would be provided and that the standard template for policies and procedures would be sent to Mark Harrison, Diversity & Inclusion Manager.

39. 2015 Staff Survey

The HR Manager (Change), Chris Byrne (CB) invited the Committee's views on what information should go to staff regarding the decision not to conduct the 2015 Pulse Survey. It was AGREED that the reasons should be communicated clearly to the School.

The Committee discussed the timing of a possible full staff survey and suggested that it be launched either after the move to Senate House, although it was NOTED that this only affected a small group of staff, or in Spring 2016.

SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Thursday 21 May 2015

ACTION POINTS

Minute	Action	Deadline	By	Status
8	Seek equalities benchmark data from other London HEIs	Oct 2015	BL	
9	Provide a highlight report to accompany the HR Strategy Action Plan	Oct 2015 and ongoing	HRD	
10	Add staff engagement, sustainability and building the capacity of the HR team to the HR Strategy 2015/16	June 2015	DD	
11	Evaluate and publicise the impacts of E&D initiatives	Oct 2015	BL	
12	Provide a clearer update on the progress of HR Policies and Procedures review schedule	Oct 2015	CB	
13	Provide clear and transparent communications on the reasons for not conducting the 2015 Pulse Survey	June 2015	DD	