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SOAS, University of London

Human Resources Committee – Minutes

10.00 a.m. on Thursday 22nd October 2015 in Russell Room

Ms Laura Gibbs, Registrar (Chair)

Mr Paul Doyle, HR Director (Secretary) (Ex-officio)

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

Professor Rachel Dwyer, Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema

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

Mr Mark Harrison, Diversity & Inclusion Manager (Ex-officio)

Mr David Atkins, Head of Admissions

Dr Tamsyn Barton, Board of Trustees

Dr Nelida Fuccaro, Reader in the Modern History of the Middle East*

Professor Julia Strauss, Professor of Chinese Politics*

Ms Alka Bhanderi, Employee Relations Consultant – 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. Minutes of the last meeting (21st May 2015)

The HR Committee minutes of 21st May 2015 were APPROVED without amendment.

2. Action Taken

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

Minute 8 - Paul Doyle, HR Director proposed that the benchmark data would be collected by the Equality and Diversity Adviser when in post.

Minute 9 - The Committee NOTED that the highlight report to accompany the HR Strategy Action Plan was provided.

Minute 10 - The Committee NOTED that the HR Strategy Action Plan 2015 -16 was an item on the main agenda.

Minute 11 - The Committee NOTED that 'Model Equality and Diversity Employer Initiatives' was on the main agenda.

Minute 12 - The Committee NOTED that the ACTION to provide a clearer update on the progress of HR Policies and Procedures Review Schedule was carried forward to the next HR Committee meeting.

Minute 13 - The Committee NOTED the ACTION for Executive Board to provide a clear rationale for not conducting the 2015 Pulse Survey and communicate this to the School.

3. Matters Arising

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs (LG) welcomed Paul Doyle (PD), new HR Director to the Committee.

There were no other matters to report.

4. Transforming HR

The HR Director, Paul Doyle (PD) provided a verbal update on the changes to delivery of HR services at SOAS and confirmed that a communication regarding the staffing structure had been provided to the Heads of Departments, setting out progress made.

PD's predecessor, Interim HR Director, Dalia Dasgupta (DD), has assessed feedback on the proposed model and ensured that the comments have been taken into account in designing the new HR Business Partner Model.

The Committee NOTED from the consultation that SOAS is not a commercial enterprise, but PD agreed with the Registrar, Laura Gibb's (LG) statement that professional services need to be seen as an enabling service, and 'business like' in order to attract the right people it is important to advertise new roles with the right job titles.

PD provided a verbal update on the timescales of the HR Business Partner and Deputy Director HR & Head of HR Operations recruitment process and informed the Committee that other new staff will be in place from January 2016, by which time the new structure will be operating.

5. HR Strategy Action Plan 2014 – 2015

The HR Director provided a verbal update, reporting that the highlight report accompanying the Action Plan was sent to EB.

The Committee NOTED the final report and the operational difficulties experienced during the session. The Committee reviewed the objectives of Appendix C and noted:

Objective 1a & 1b - Academic pay was not a problem as there was a reward process in place which should be reviewed after the completion of the current process.

Objective 2d - Paul Doyle (PD) reported that the JNCC meetings were being held as planned, and the JIG meetings, between HR and the TUs, were generally working well.

Objective 2f - Work with Internal Communications to develop Communications plan has commenced in the forum of Open Meetings and Skip meetings which have been made clearer by Valerie Amos, Director of SOAS during her meetings with the departments.

Following the appointment of Susan Roth, new Director of Communications, a significant amount of communications work has already taken place on the Intranet to publish the Academic Board papers.

Objective 3 - The objectives to ensure that staff are remunerated appropriately and fairly for their contribution that have been carried forward to 2015/2016 were internal administration or operational processes.

The Academic Performance Framework is a piece of work being led by Richard Black, Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) setting out expectations for staff performance at different levels. The framework has been finalised and is ready to be implemented.

The Review of the HERA job evaluation process had commenced but it was felt that there were fundamental issues with using HERA as the job evaluation tool. It was highlighted that there was a need to think about the internal/operational processes, in order to manage the customer expectations

Objective 4e - A recruitment process is in place for 1 year fixed term contracts. The previous HR Director requested a review of the HR system, in order to obtain as much useful management information as possible from ResourceLink. The project board reviewed and focused the Enhancing ResourceLink Project (ERP) to help customers and the business to modernise. Serena Yeo reported that in relation to the SDR module the design was difficult to change and required further User Acceptance Testing to make a decision if it is useful for the School, and to also ensure that people are happy to use the system.

The Registrar, Laura Gibbs confirmed that the ERP should ensure that it focuses on what practices the business will adopt.

Objective 5c - The Committee NOTED that the ongoing Leadership Programme will be completed in April 2016. The measure of success would be to assess progress at the end of the 12 month period. Engagement would also be a valuable measure.

Objective 5d -The Erasmus staff mobility scheme has been renewed until August 2016 with 15 places available last year, of which 13 were taken up.

Concern was raised as to how widely the exchange programme was open to Professional Services. Serena Yeo confirmed that messages were provided via DoPS to pass on to their staff, and it was also communicated via the staff Bulletin.

Objective 6 - The Committee NOTED that the various strands for Equality and Diversity actions needed to be streamlined and focused as there were too many different groups and people involved. The streamlined groups would address the School's commitment to Equality and Diversity issues and how it meets the set objectives.

6. HR Strategic Priorities 2015 - 2020

The Committee CONSIDERED Appendix D and NOTED it was detailed and strategic. It was suggested mapping out and aligning it to the Professional Services Planning priorities so that the differences across the School could be viewed. PD mentioned he would like to obtain feedback and comments of high level decisions set out in the paper and the annexes (Appendix D) which require Committee approval to deal with strategy and proposals. The Committee AGREED to provide comments to Paul Doyle (PD) to enable him to set out the approach and identify the priorities.

Regina Everitt (RE) commented that the paper read as a document relating to academic staff only. The first bullet should be changed to include specialist academic and professional services staff.

General comments about concerns of displacement activity were raised with regards to the HR Strategic Priorities. The Committee members were relieved to see strategic prioritisation to the changes that need to occur, and felt the approach was adopted for sustainability. The Strategic priorities scheme was focusing on management and overhauling processes, but was clear the considerations would need to interface with other Committees. The Chair asked all Committee members to review the paper and provide Paul Doyle with comments.

The Committee reviewed Annex 1 of the Plan (Strategic Priorities for 2015-2020) and NOTED that the relationship with the TUs over sustainability issues has historically been adversarial but positive partnerships have started and there is a joint aim to meet the objectives and encourage re-engagement on the issue. RE mentioned the need to develop the management skills in this respect as currently there is no training for managers on working with staff representatives to enable them to build effective relationships.

PD explained that Annex 2 of the HR Service Plan 2015-16 set out other priorities with which HR resources are currently engaged. The papers were distributed before the Director's Address to the School, which provided context around the Strategy and the Plan.

The Committee NOTED that Mark Harrison was meeting with union representatives to review the Dignity at Work policy.

7 Business Agenda

The Committee NOTED that engagement on the HR Committee was a challenge for the School, due to the academic commitment, and sometimes prevented the committee from functioning fully. The Committee NOTED there is currently no sanction in place should Academic staff not participate in the HR Committee. The Chair asked to NOTE that the HR Committee does normally have academic representation. Academic representation is required in order to bring balance to the Committee, but other forums were also available to academic staff.

The Committee NOTED that there would be further Equality and Diversity (E&D) matters referred to the HR Committee following the amalgamation of the various E&D related groups. Mark Harrison (MH) suggested that the E&D Plan and E&D issues should be on the Agenda for all meetings for a general discussion, as this would provide an opportunity to inform the Committee of the challenges faced as well as obtain feedback. Paul Doyle requested the item to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

8 Equality and Diversity Framework

Mark Harrison (MH) provided an update on the various Working Groups and asked the Committee to NOTE the proposed reviewed Equality and Diversity Framework and how change can be achieved. The Committee NOTED that it was evident that there needed to be a change of culture, and whilst it was proposed to review the Framework, there should be no obligation to drop the focus or key objectives.

The Committee was provided with an update on the Inclusion Forum set up by the Student Union, Student Advice and Wellbeing Team and Diversity Office. The purpose of the Forum was to make the current Framework more organised as there is currently no agenda or Chair. The proposed review of the Framework aims to reduce duplication and promote effectiveness, whilst retaining a focus on EDI issues. The purpose would be to ensure progress is made via the new Forum, as opposed to the 9 separate action plans that currently hold in excess of 300 actions.

The Committee was asked to NOTE the MEDE reports to the Equality and Diversity Committee. Laura Gibbs commented that her suggestion would be for the MEDE meeting to be chaired by an Academic, the Dean or a Head of Department. The Committee AGREED it was logical for MH to facilitate the meeting; for Chris Ince to provide the Student/Academic focus as he would have a good understanding; and for Paul Doyle to provide the employment focus (MEDE).

9 Model Equality and Diversity Employer

Concern was raised as to how GEM and Equality would be embedded to ensure that the actions coming out of the action plans were not lost. Mark Harrison (MH) confirmed that this would be managed by Sue Caro, Diversity and Inclusion Manager and himself as well as via the development being reported to MEDE. Concerns about how the open forums would be managed was raised, and a suggestion to log the task start date and end date was made. It was NOTED that the structure of the forum would enable views to be aired and would encourage constructive discussion. The process set out by MH would also help to embed the actions.

10 School Promotions Panel Report

The Committee NOTED the successful applications for promotion to Reader and Professor, endorsed by Governing Body with effect from 1 September 2015.

11 Annual Report to Resource and Planning Committee 2014/2015

The condensed HR Committee report to Resources & Planning Committee was circulated for approval. A revised copy will be sent by email for comments to be submitted to Paul Doyle by email.

SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Thursday 22 October 2015

ACTION POINTS

Minute	Action	Deadline	By	Status
1	To circulate the note that was sent to the HoDs and DoPs about Transforming HR	TBC	PD	
2	To provide comments on HR Strategic Priorities 2015 - 2020	TBC	HRC	
3	Equality and Diversity Themes & Strategy to be placed on the next meeting agenda	ASAP	PD	
4	Mark Harrison to speak to Chris Ince about representing the Student/Academic Focus on the Equality and Diversity Committee	ASAP	MH	