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SOAS

Human Resources Committee

9.00am on Thursday 14 February 2008 in room 116

Minutes

Ms Sharon Page, Registrar & Secretary, (Chair)
Mr Peter Mitchell, HR Director, (Secretary)
Professor Matthew Craven, Dean of Faculty
Mr John Harmer, Computer Network Manager
Dr Jane Harrigan*, Head of Department & Reader in Economics
Dr Rachel Harris*, Lecturer in Ethnomusicology
Dr Bengisu Rona*, Senior Lecturer in Arabic Literature
Dr Desmond Thomas, Research Student Adviser
Ms Deb Viney, Diversity Adviser
Ms Emily Crofts*, HR Manager (in attendance).
Ms Serena Yeo, Staff Development Manager (in attendance)

*Those marked with an asterisk were unable to attend the meeting.

5. Minutes of the Meeting of 25th October 2007

Minutes were approved.

6. Matters Arising

The Chair **reported** that the HR Strategy had been formally approved by the School's Governing Body in December, and that a new appointee to Governing Body, Zoe Weaver, who is an experienced HR practitioner, had also agreed to be the external member of HR Committee.

(i) HR Strategy Status Report

The HR Director talked the committee through the update paper previously circulated.

It was **noted** that although many of the actions being undertaken under the HR strategy were underway, progress had been slower than hoped because of the delay to the implementation of the pay framework and job evaluation project. This was because of the on-going and difficult negotiations with the trade unions. It was further **noted** that the new timescale for implementation was the end of April 2008.

The issue of how and when to communicate with staff and managers about the red and green circle roles was raised and it was **noted** that the details of this still needed to be agreed with union colleagues, but the expectation was that individuals would be informed of their HERA scores and what that means in terms of grade etc in advance of the union ballots, which in turn would be carried out in order to meet the revised deadline of the end of April 2008.

It was **noted** that the translation of hourly-paid teaching staff onto permanent, fractional contracts (as appropriate) was also taking longer than anticipated. HR was awaiting information back from the Faculties that would enable the calculation of fractions to be made and contracts issued. It was **noted** that because of this delay, the pay framework project and the hourly-paid project were now converging in terms of timescale.

Another area of disappointment was the relatively poor attendance on the “compulsory” recruitment and selection training courses for all staff who sit on an appointment panel (either for staff or students). Whilst it was **noted** that Executive Board had now committed to compulsory training in Recruitment and Selections and Equality and Diversity issues, this raised a general discussion about the adoption of a compulsory training framework, addressing both legal compliance issues and competency issues. It was **agreed** that a working group consisting of , for example, an Academic Head of Department, a Head of Administration and HR staff should be set up to help identify mandatory training requirements (ACTION: Peter Mitchell/Serena Yeo).

The inclusion within the HR strategy of the recruitment of another Staff Development Manager for Academic staff was discussed. It was **noted** that there would be overlap with the LTU and work already being carried out in that unit. It was also **noted** that the Heads of Administration were due to have an Away Day on 11th March to consider all the additional resource requests contained within the various strategies being developed across the School, including the HR Strategy. The intention would be to prioritise any such additional resource, the results of which would be reported back to Executive Board for a decision.

(ii) Appraisal

The HR Director introduced the appraisal scheme and associated documents that had been previously circulated.

The Chair pointed out that this was the first public viewing of the scheme and it was **noted** that appraisal was important in helping the School to address some of the issues identified in the Staff Survey, including issues relating to role clarity, communication and staff being valued etc. She also said that she had considerable previous experience of a variety of appraisal/performance management systems and that this was a particularly “user-friendly” version.

Feedback from the Committee was generally positive, but concern was raised about rolling the scheme out across the School and training requirements. Committee

members were also concerned about the administrative burden that such a scheme would add to already busy line managers.

In answer to these concerns, it was **noted** that it was intended for a comprehensive programme of training for both appraisers and appraisees to be developed and delivered during the calendar year of 2008 (ACTION: HR/Staff Development), with a view to the scheme being used “live” in January/February 2009.

It was further **noted** that the Scheme details needed to be agreed with both Executive Board and with the trade unions before this programme could be delivered.

7. Any Other Business

None

No reserved business was considered at this meeting.