

# SOAS

## Human Resources Committee

10.00am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October in room 116

### 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	Terms of Reference To note	Appendix A *
II	Annex XIV of Standing Orders – Conduct of Meetings To note	Appendix B *
III	Minutes To approve: minutes of the meeting held on 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2008.	Attached
IV	Matters Arising  i. Hourly-paid teaching staff proposals ii. HR Policies and Procedures iii. HR Systems and Processes	
V	HEFCE Self Assessment Tool (SAT)  To Note the Report & Outcome	Appendix C
VI	Annual Report to Resources & Planning Committee  To Note the Report	Appendix D
VII	HR Strategy Update  i. Report on progress to date ii. Rescheduling of priorities  Any Other Business	Appendix E

*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**

### **Human Resources Committee**

**10am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 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 Graham Dyer, Lecturer in Economics  
Dr Rachel Harris\*, Lecturer in Ethnomusicology  
Dr Monik Charette, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics  
Dr Desmond Thomas, Research Student Adviser  
Ms Deb Viney, Diversity Adviser  
Ms Zoe Weaver\*, External Adviser  
Mr Charles Perry, HR Manager (in attendance)  
Ms Serena Yeo, Staff Development manager (in attendance)

- I. Terms of reference – **noted**
- II. Annex XIV of Standing Orders – Conduct of meeting – **noted**
- III. **Minutes of meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 – approved**

#### **IV. Matters arising**

- i. Hourly-paid teaching staff proposals
- ii. HR Policies and Procedures
- iii. H R Systems and Processes

**HR director will report on these matters arising under his report.**

#### **V. HEFCE Self Assessment Tool (SAT)**

The HR Director reminded the Committee what the SAT was. It was **noted** that HEFCE has approved the School's SAT submission and that the remaining RDS grant monies had as a consequence been released into the core grant of the School.

The report of the external adviser was **noted**, and in particular the need to marry up the action plans with the HR strategy. HR Director raised possibility of working groups to take up some of the recommendations made and it was

**agreed** to prioritise work rather than setting up a working group for each of the 7 headings of the SAT.

Committee also wanted more involvement from others outside the Committee. It was **agreed** that this should be more of a two-way process.

Chair asked that HR Director and others to set out proposals for prioritising SAT recommendations. HR Director stated that we need to prioritise pay and reward for one such working group. Chair **noted** that group needed to include a broad range of staff.

It was **noted** that the HR Director reviewed progress reports and revisited the staff survey results and what came out of it in order to reprioritise and refocus the action plan contained in the HR Strategy.

The possibility of using the SOAS email bulletin to provide a regular update on staffing issues was discussed. Suggestions were made about using links to feedback directly from staff, creating a two way community.

It was **noted** that one of the actions in the HR strategy was to carry out another staff survey but that this would be difficult in accordance with the original planned timescale. It was **Agreed** to postpone the staff survey for coming year, with a revised timeframe of summer 2010. Concern was raised by Chair about lack of management information that we need to report on – for example management information packs for all key committees.

General discussion followed on data collection, warehousing, filtering and house styles and making data freely available. The committee also **noted** the recommendations of external adviser.

## **VI. Annual Report to Resources & Planning Committee**

The committee **noted** the update on the HR Strategy that had been presented to Resources and Planning Committee.

## **VII. H R Strategy Update**

### *i. Report on progress to date*

It was **noted** that progress continued to be made in number of areas, with the main achievement being the agreement and implementation of the pay framework. It was, however, **noted** that there remains much work still to complete, such as dealing with appeals.

It was further **noted** that ECC would be assisting with the time consuming work of resolving the outstanding appeals, but that this was being addressed

as quickly as possible. This led to a discussion about specific problems in the IT department as a result of the outcome of the JE project and the time taken to deal with appeals.

The Chair pointed out that in comparison to many other HEI's the implementation of HERA had been relatively quick and calm at SOAS. The HR Director said that a formal appeals panel hearing had been scheduled to meet before Christmas.

*Hourly paid to Fractional Contracts:* HR Director outlined progress of the translation of hourly-paid teaching staff onto fractional contracts. The committee **noted** that although there had been difficulties around obtaining the necessary information to ensure payment and to issue contracts, as well as difficulties about communication, these matters were being dealt with by HR and by the Faculty officers.

*HR Policies and Procedures:* HR Director was pleased to report that there had been a positive meeting with campus trade unions. This meeting discussed the sickness absence management policy, draft appraisal scheme, the change policy and the dealing with industrial action policy.

Committee **noted** that it was important that these discussions about HR policies are taking place.

*HR Systems:* It was **noted** that work was still continuing to make the HR filing system, which has been in a poor state, DPA compliant. It was further **noted** that the School would be investing in Stepstone I-grasp web recruitment system, and the contract would be signed by the end of this month. It was **noted** that there would be a presentation to managers and academic Head of Department about the advantages of this system. It was anticipated that the new system will streamline the process at HR and Line Management level and reduce advertising spend.

The chair **noted** that a number of the School processes will be reviewed and replaced where found wanting. Recruitment has been a priority and this will be moving away from a paper system to an updated electronic system.

There was a discussion on providing IT with updates of staff who have left and it was **noted** that this would be taken up by IT with HR outside of the meeting.

*Staff development:* Staff Development Manager reported back on progress being made. It was **noted** that induction processes for Graduate Teaching Assistants have started. It was further **noted** that the Recruitment and Selection training Part 2 course cancelled for next week. There was an

ongoing issue with getting people to attend, despite the mandatory nature of the course.

There followed a general discussion concerning mandatory training and what training should be given to certain grades and positions. It was **noted** that whilst it was relatively easy to develop the training framework, ensuring that people attend remained a considerable difficulty.

In this context, it was **noted** that the proposed introduction of the new appraisal scheme should assist with this. The committee discussed how staff could be encouraged to undertake such important training, and the Chair **noted** that Staff development is definitely a SAT working group area.

**j. Rescheduling of priorities**

The HR Director tabled the HR Strategy reprioritisation discussion paper and asked the committee to review the main points and what they thought that the priorities are. It was **noted** that there remained around 21 priority actions associated with the HR Strategy to be implemented in the next 12 – 18 months. It was further **noted** that this would be challenging given the resources available.

**The Chair asked Committee members to feedback to HR Director after reading the paper.**

**VIII. Any other business - none**