

SOAS

Human Resources Committee

10.00am on Thursday 19 February 2009 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 **Minutes**

To approve: minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2008 Appendix A

II **Matters Arising**

III **Review of Human Resources Strategy**

To consider progress on the HR strategy Appendix B
(to be tabled)

To consider the revised strategy and re-prioritised action plan Appendix C

IV **Review of Human Resources Department & Structure**

To consider a paper on the HR Away Day Appendix D

To consider the proposed new HR structure Appendix E

V **Effectiveness Review of Committees**

To consider the paper attached and to propose feedback Appendix F

VI **Any Other Business**

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 19th February 2009 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)

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

9. Minutes of meeting held 23rd October 2008

The Staff Development manager NOTED that the Induction for GTA's had actually taken place. Subject to this amendment, the minutes of 23rd October 2008 were approved.

10. Matters arising

The Staff Development Manager tabled a paper on how best to set up HEFCE SAT working groups, in order to meet the objectives planned. It was AGREED that two groups should be set up to cover the seven SAT areas and the Staff Development Manager was asked to develop a proposal paper to include membership and remit for each of the groups. A discussion on timings and meeting frequency ensued and it was further AGREED that these things should also be included in the proposal paper (ACTION: Staff Development Manager).

The Chair noted that any other matters arising are covered in progress reports.

11. Review of Human Resources Strategy

The Committee considered Appendix B (tabled) by the Director of Human Resources.

HERA appeals: Although relatively small in numbers, the process is taking a longer time than expected. It was NOTED that the target date for completion remains the end of April 2009, but that this was dependent on paperwork being completed and processed in time for scheduled appeals meetings. It was further NOTED that action has been taken to factor in HERA into the School promotions process, with a sub-group of the School promotions panel set up to look into this issue.

Hourly paid teaching staff: There had been many problems with this process due mainly to the difficulties in getting accurate and up-to-date information about hourly-paid teaching staff employed by the School. This, coupled with resources problems within HR / Payroll, had lead to unexpected difficulties in implementation. It was reported that there remained quite a lot of unravelling from a payroll perspective and it was NOTED that this will take time to achieve. It was further NOTED that EB has approved additional temporary support into Payroll to help with this process. It was reported that the issuing of updated fractional contracts is due to start in the next couple of weeks and that the bulk of the work is expected to be completed by end of May 2009.

HR policies: It was NOTED that the new Code of Conduct for Personal Relationships had been agreed with UCU and UNISON. However, since then, it was reported that UCU had withdrawn from all scheduled HR/Union meetings, so delaying the process and giving rise to consideration about alternative methods of consultation if the withdrawal continues. It was further NOTED that since the tabled paper had been produced, UCU had returned to scheduled discussions and that HR will continue to seek co-operation from campus trade unions for this important work.

HR systems and processes: It was reported that HR hoped to have completed both the SUMS review of the recruitment process and to have the new web recruitment systems up and running by end of April 2009. It was further NOTED that the Data cleansing process for staff information held on Resourcelink has been brought forward to end of March 2009. It was AGREED that this would include the collection of data on sexual orientation and religious belief for the first time.

The Diversity Adviser said that it was important that such monitoring will be sensitively introduced but the Committee NOTED that there will be legislation introduced shortly requiring employers to collect such data.

The Staff Development Manager updated the Committee on staff development issues including further recruitment and selection training and data for the Equality Committee. It was NOTED that other ongoing developments were being made to post-graduate teacher training.

There followed a discussion about the School's Change Management policy and it was NOTED that this had been developed to try to ensure that there is a fair and transparent process followed when major re-structuring exercises are being undertaken within the School.

The Committee then considered Appendix C, the revised HR strategy and re-prioritised action plan. The Director of Human Resources said that the paper is useful for reporting to HR Committee and the wider School community. It was NOTED that the list of objectives is very large, given restricted resources, and may not be possible to achieve.

There followed a discussion about the wording of the HR Missions statement:

Under internal drivers / impacts: Concern was raised about the language of 'resistance to change' and it was AGREED that there was might be a need to review this, with comments or suggestions on changes in wording invited by e-mail following the Committee.

The External Adviser said that she felt that there was a need for greater communication about HR strategy to the wider School. The Chair said that there was no dedicated internal

communication resources within the School at the present time but it was recognised that there was a resource need here.

Under External driver's impacts: Questions were raised about national pay negotiations. HR Director gave an overview of UCEA guidance on such matters.

12. Review of Human Resources Department and Structure

The Committee was updated by HR Director on the HR process planning day, with reference to the papers contained in Appendix D. It was NOTED that very useful customer feedback had been received which in turn had been discussed at the process planning day. From this, the proposals for the new HR structure had emerged, as well as a recognition that too much was being asked of the HR department by the School in relation to its' current size and structure.

Following on from this discussion, the new proposed HR team structure was NOTED by the committee in the paper at Appendix E. The HR Director highlighted the need for additional resources in the areas of Change Management and Employee Relations in particular, as well as further resources in payroll. It was NOTED that this had already been presented to EB on the 15th December 2008, but that any final decision had been deferred pending the budget setting and planning process for 2009/10 being completed.

The Chair reported that she had attended part of the HR process planning day and felt that the exercise had been very constructive, with active engagement of participants, who wished to provide a good service to HR customers and the School in general.

Discussion and observations followed on proposed internal structure, communicating responses to customer feedback and resourcing of Human Resources. Whilst it was NOTED that in respect of the benchmarking survey data presented as part of the proposals for the new HR structure HR was not, on the face of it, under-resourced, it was further NOTED that SOAS presented particular challenges in respect of its' employee relations climate and the need for dedicated support for managers trying to engender change. It was also AGREED that the number of objectives contained within the HR strategy to be achieved within the next 12 to 18 months would be almost impossible to achieve without additional resources.

13. Effectiveness Review of Committees

The Effectiveness Review of Committees paper was considered and it was AGREED that comments on the HR committee should be fed back as appropriate by individual members of the committee.

14. Any Other Business

No matters raised – meeting ends