

SOAS

## Human Resources Committee

10.00am on Thursday 07 May 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 19 February 2009 Appendix A

#### II **Matters Arising**

To approve: the revised strategy and action plan Appendix B

To note: progress in relation to the HR staffing proposals brought to the last committee

#### III **Review of Human Resources Strategy**

To consider: progress on the HR strategy Appendix C

#### IV **HR Strategy Working Groups**

To consider: the proposed membership and terms of reference for the working groups Appendix D

#### V **HR Committee Report to Resources & Planning**

To consider & approve: the paper attached Appendix E

#### 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 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009 in Room 116

Mr Alan Smith, Interim Registrar and Secretary (Chair)\*  
Mr Peter Mitchell, HR Director (Secretary)  
Professor Matthew Craven, Dean of Faculty – Chaired the meeting  
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.

**15. Minutes of meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

With reference to the amendments to the minutes of the meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2008, the Staff Development Manager clarified that the amendment should say that inductions for GTA's had taken place and that they have been carried out for several years now. It was also NOTED that there were other ongoing developments being made to develop the post graduate experience.

Subject to the amendment above, the minutes of the HR committee meeting held on 19 February 2009 were AGREED.

**16. Matters arising:**

HR Director had asked for comments on the revised HR Strategy and action plan. Comments had been received from the External Adviser and these had been incorporated, together with comments made by this committee at the last meeting, into the draft circulated in advance of this meeting (Appendix B).

The HR Director REPORTED that it had not been possible to implement all of the changes to the HR Structure that had been proposed at the last meeting, due to cost constraints across the School. The Committee NOTED that a revised structure (to include a commitment on a two year fixed-term basis to Change Management and to Employee Relations, as well as increased administrative support in payroll) had been approved by Executive Board, subject to them being affordable and of sufficient priority within the coming planning cycle.

## **17. Review of the HR Strategy:**

The Committee considered both the Revised HR Strategy document (Appendix B) and the progress report from the HR Director (Appendix C).

It was NOTED that Appendix B will now go forward through to Resources and Planning Committee, which was due to meet on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009, together with a progress report from this committee. It was NOTED that a number of objective deadlines had not been met and consequently have had to be amended.

The HR Director stated that firm target dates were difficult to give on all occasions as this is a working document with targets dependent upon changing circumstances and resources, some of which, including additional staff resources in HR, have yet to be confirmed.

The External Adviser raised questions about impact and outcomes as well as target dates and also raised the concern that the HR strategy represented a huge agenda for a relatively small department and that there was a need for effective prioritisation. It was NOTED in this context that the later agenda item on HR Working Groups should help with this issue.

HR Director then gave a progress update on the amended request for additional HR staff resource that is going through the current resources planning round. It was NOTED that the proposals outlining further additional resource proposals that were previously brought to this committee will not be going through now and the revised proposals (noted under Matters Arising) still needed to be approved in the current planning cycle.

Committee members asked about the details of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). The HR Director said that HR has a series of objectives and targets, but that these really amounted to an operational action plan. The only reference to KPI's in the HR Strategy document was a reference to improving the scores under the various headings of the Staff Survey, which was due to be repeated shortly. It was NOTED that there is an on-going, institution-wide discussion on the development of appropriate KPI's and it was NOTED that the HR strategy has not yet fully developed KPI's.

A wide ranging discussion then took place over the different types of performance indicators that could be used in the light of the lack of availability of resources to carry out a follow-up staff survey.

The HR Director said that he would like to carry out a repeat staff survey in the next academic session if possible. The External Adviser suggested the possible use of survey monkey as a cheaper alternative to CAPITA, although it was NOTED that this would not provide the HEI benchmarking data that is so valuable.

It was NOTED that the discussion around KPI's and how they are measured is being discussed across the School. Staff Development Manager said that she was developing a staff survey on staff training and development and it was AGREED that this could not wait until the follow-up staff survey. The Chair concluded that further work needs to be done on KPI's in relation to the HR Strategy.

The HR Director then presented his progress report to the Committee:

*Framework Appeals:* It was NOTED that significant progress had been made in recent weeks in overcoming delays in paperwork for appeal panels. HR should have made significant advances by July 2009.

*Red circles:* It was NOTED that some appeals were unlikely to succeed and that not all red-circled role holders had made an appeal. It was also NOTED that where a red-circle role had been confirmed, there was a process to help lift the role back into grade, involving discussions with the line manager, the role holder, HR and union representatives as appropriate. The aim of this process was to eliminate red circle roles where possible before the end of the pay protection period (July 2010).

It was further NOTED that HR will also need to factor in the HERA system into the academic promotions process in order to protect the School against any possible legal challenges over promotions. This work was being carried out by a working group taken from the School Promotions Panel, chaired by the Pro-Director.

*Hourly paid teaching staff:* Again it was NOTED that significant progress had been made and that the issuing of Fractional contracts will be smoother this year. It was also NOTED that there still remain some outstanding issues specifically in the Language Centre.

*HR policies and procedures:* The HR Director REPORTED that the implementation of new, revised and reviewed policies and procedures are slower than HR would like (especially in relation to appraisal).

*Systems and processes:* It was NOTED that the HR filing project to make paper-based records DPA compliant has been completed and that the Web-based recruitment system was almost ready for implementation.

*HR data cleansing:* It was NOTED that this work is essential to ensure that the data held on staff is correct and that any additional information (i.e sexual orientation etc) is incorporated. HR Director stated that data cleansing should be done every 12 to 18 months. It is a current priority as this hasn't been done for a long time.

*Salary sacrifice:* It was NOTED that UCU members will need to ballot locally to get agreement and UNISON will undertake a local agreement with the School. No problems were anticipated with either process and the scheme was receiving the full backing of the campus unions. It was NOTED that this scheme was expected to save in the region of £175,000.

*Process planning:* It was REPORTED that, following the HR process planning away day last Autumn, the HR mission statement had been developed, a proposed new structure brought to Executive Board, the HR objectives re-prioritised and HR moved from Vernon Square to Russell Square. It was NOTED that HR Service Level Agreements (SLAs) still need to be developed, though this has dropped down the priority list for the remainder of this year.

*Staff Development:* Staff Development Manager drew attention to particular points on strategy paper including dates and details of particular training courses. Questions were raised about part time staff training and the payment for attendance. The HR Director said that payment for attending staff training events was one of the items to be discussed as part of an overall discussion with the campus unions on the revised Staff Development

policy and procedure.

#### **18. HR Strategy Working Groups:**

The Staff Development Manager outlined the approach and purposes of the working groups, and who should be on them (Appendix D). The External Adviser thought that the groups should be monitoring rather than prioritising, as the role was to advise and guide and connect with people throughout the organisation to the HR Strategy, rather than taking decision making away from HR and Executive Board in respect of the HR Strategy.

The HR Director said that in his view, the working groups were about feeding into the planning process information and views that would help re-establish priorities within the HR Strategy. It was AGREED that this was necessary as the HR action plan as it stands represents a huge agenda and needed to be balanced with limited resources.

It was also NOTED that there was a need to tighten up the remit of the groups and there was a discussion about whether or not face to face meeting was the best way of working.

It was therefore AGREED that HR will review the purpose and remit of working groups to provide feedback to HR on proposed priority areas and to consider how and when the groups should meet to carry out these tasks.

#### **19. HR Committee Report to Resources & Planning:**

The Committee NOTED and APPROVED the Draft annual report to Resources & Planning committee.

#### **20. Any other business**

There was no other business raised.