

SOAS

Human Resources Committee

10.00am on Thursday 29th 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.

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| 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 7 th May 2009. | Attached |
| IV | Matters Arising
i. HR Strategy Working Groups | |
| V | Committee Review 2009/10
To consider: review paper and proposals from HR Committee Secretary and provide feedback | Appendix C |
| VI | HR Strategy progress report
To consider: progress made against targets and objectives | Appendix D |
| VII | HR Strategy Advisory Groups
To consider: a paper from HR concerning remit, membership and timeframe for discussion and approval | Appendix E |
| VIII | 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 29th October 2009 in Room 116

Ms Sally Neocosmos, Interim Registrar and Secretary (Chair)

Mr Peter Mitchell, HR Director (Secretary)

Professor Matthew Craven, Dean of Faculty

Mr John Harmer, Computer Network Manager

Dr Ted Proferes, Programmes Convenor & Director of Studies

Dr Julia Strauss, Senior Lecturer

Dr Desmond Thomas, Research Skills Co-ordinator

Ms Deb Viney, Diversity Adviser

Dr Justin Watkins *

Ms Zoe Weaver, External Adviser*

Mr Charles Perry, HR Manager (in attendance)

Ms Serena Yeo, Staff Development Manager (in attendance)

Prof William Boyd, QAA Assessor (Observing)

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

1. Minutes of meeting held on 7th May 2009

The minutes of the HR committee meeting that was held on 7th May 2009 were AGREED.

2. Matters arising:

Key Performance Indicators (Minute 17 2008/09). The HR Director stated that these would be reviewed by the HR working groups whose composition would be agreed later in the agenda.

3. Committee Review 2009/10:

The Committee considered the Committee Review 2009/10 paper and proposals drafted by the HR Committee Secretary (Appendix C). The paper from the Committee Secretary questioned the need to have a meeting of the Committee during the first term, pointed out that the annual turnover of committee members nominated by the School Faculties was causing difficulties in terms of understanding the remit of the committee and in getting

business transacted and expressed the view that there was some overlap and confusion about remit in respect of other committees (e.g. the Equality and Diversity Committee).

A wide ranging discussion then took place amongst members. Points that were discussed included what the role of faculty appointed members on the HR Committee are and whether or not they should act as representatives of faculty staff opinion, and whether or not the role of the committee is to ensure SOAS policies being carried out in correct and proper manner.

The Chair said that the role of HR committee members was to monitor, oversee and support the Directorate in achieving agreed School strategy. The committee would utilise members understanding and knowledge of School structures and purpose to assist the HR directorate. This role however was not a representative one.

Members then discussed how the remit of the HR committee related to that of the SOAS Executive Board. The Chair said that the HR Committee was concerned with governance in a broad sense, including accountability, and not about day to day management.

The HR Director added that HR policies and procedures were also discussed in a number of other committees. For example on staffing matters HR held regular meetings with campus trade unions UCU and UNISON on a range of matters, including local bargaining. HR also consults with Faculty Administrators and Heads of Departments on a regular basis.

The Dean said that the Faculties have a lot of contact with HR on day to day concerns and issues. The purpose of this committee was to assist with the reviewing of strategic aims and objectives. He noted that there are faculty based meetings in which HR could participate and the HR Director said that HR staff will be attending such meetings this year.

The Chair noted that it was useful to distinguish between what was needed to be discussed, and what needed to be decided. She noted that there is a real risk that the School expects HR to resolve all manner of situations on its own. For example, the transfer of hourly paid staff to fractional contracts. HR was responsible for facilitating the process but it was a School wide responsibility to ensure that the correct information and support were given to the HR Directorate to enable this to happen.

The issue of longer terms of membership of the committee was discussed, with the Dean saying that we should try and keep people on committee for as long as possible, although it was noted that a major cause of change is academic staff taking research leave.

The Chair said that institutional consultative processes were always difficult to organise and the school needs to use different methods in order to maximise the range of opinions and experience of staff.

A discussion on improving communications then took place. The HR Director noted that over the last couple of years a lot of work has gone into steadily improving communication about HR's roles and responsibilities. HR went through an internal review about a year ago and actively involved Heads of Departments and Faculty customers. Their opinions had fed into an HR away day. Improving communication was at the top of the list of required improvements. Since then a lot of internal changes had been made, such as improved faculty facing HR service teams, the introduction of additional employee relations and change expertise, setting out scheduled diary meetings with unions and faculty administrators to go through common issues and problems etc. HR is also in the process

of developing Service Level Agreements that will clarify expectations between HR and internal customers.

The Dean said that communication with HR has improved but that the School collectively has some way to go. The School also needs to see improvement in communication and leadership from academic staff.

The Chair said that it was important to distinguish between HR, the professional function, the HR committee and management roles in general. This committee should support the delivery of the HR Strategy and specific HR targets and objectives. Members of the committee needed to bear this in mind when communicating to colleagues beyond this meeting room.

There was also a discussion about the role of ex-officio members and some members asked why there were such a small number of this committee. This led to a wider discussion about whether or not there is a need for this committee to be more representative and to include, for example, student representation. This was not felt to be appropriate as it was noted that the HR committee dealt with staffing issues rather than the student experience.

Following these discussions, the committee recommended that:

- Terms of office: Non-ex officio members should serve a normal term of 3 years, but this could be varied if necessary. It was also AGREED that there should be no consecutive terms;
- Broader input: That there should be two members of academic staff nominated from each faculty, one of whom should also be a Head of Department. It was AGREED to continue to have one Dean on the committee. The committee would monitor attendance, contribution and effectiveness of its membership and there was an expectation that members would report back to faculties (i.e. faculty Head of Department meetings and faculty board meetings) on the discussions that took place at these meetings;
- New HR committee members should be given a modest induction on the role and work of the committee;
- Every paper presented at these meetings should clearly indicate where it had come from and where it is going next in respect of meetings and committees. Reports must be very clear and specific about what it wants the HR committee to act on;
- Committee members will represent faculty institutional interests rather than that of faculty staff;
- The HR committee should review these recommendations / ideas when other committees have undertaken their reviews.

4. HR Strategy progress report:

The HR Director introduced Appendix D outlining the revised HR Strategy and the latest version of the HR mission statement. It was NOTED that the report had been set out in

identical order to that of the HEFCE Self Assessment Tool headings (i.e. A, B, C, D etc) which had formed the framework for the revised HR Strategy.

Remuneration and Fair Employment:

It was NOTED that, in respect of the implementation of the pay framework agreement, most areas are working well, but that there are a small number of appeals against HERA grading (approximately 9) still outstanding. HR is continuing to discuss outstanding red circles roles with line managers and trade union representatives.

It was also NOTED that there is an ongoing office hours / plain time dispute with UCU. The School has made proposals for the resolution of this dispute but negotiations are ongoing. There is also further work required in respect of the Language Centre in relation to fractional contracts which is being addressed this term. It was further NOTED that the School is satisfied that the terms and conditions of employment and the rates of pay being offered to teaching staff transferred onto fractional contracts are highly competitive across the whole sector and especially with regard to local Bloomsbury colleges.

It was NOTED that a sub-group of the School Promotions panel had been set up to draft amendments to the School promotions process and criteria for Academic staff, that the Equal Pay Audit had been delayed and that the Race Equality Action Plan had been updated and agreed at the Equality Committee. It was further NOTED that there had been some progress on agreeing HR policies, with the Change Management policy already in operation and a new, revised Staff Development Review (SDR) scheme also agreed and in the process of being implemented.

Finally, it was NOTED that the pensions salary sacrifice scheme had been implemented successfully and that this was expected to result in savings to the School in the region of £175,000 per annum.

Staff Recruitment and Retention:

The HR Director reported that the feed back HR is getting about the i-GRasp web recruitment system has been very positive. There are some little glitches to iron out as we use it more and training on the use of the system is being provided locally on request.

It was also NOTED that take-up of the compulsory recruitment and selection training had improved as a result of the dedicated training day initiative, resulting in an increase in academic staff attendees. It was AGREED that this objective needs to be re-examined and "SMARTened".

Size and Composition of the Workforce:

Successful actions in respect of data cleansing of records on Resourcelink and HR filing were NOTED. It was AGREED that targets relating to assisting female and BME staff to succeed in being promoted within the School needed to be looked at and “SMARTened”.

Staff Development and Skill Needs:

Successful actions in respect of Management Development programmes, equality monitoring of attendance at staff development events and staff orientation and induction events being successfully run were NOTED. It was AGREED that targets relating to supporting and developing new academic Heads of Department would require further work.

Leadership, Involvement and Change Management:

Successful actions in respect of investing additional resources into Employee Relations and Change Management within the HR Directorate, the development and use of an agreed Change Management policy and the successful change projects that have been supported in IFCELS and in the Professional Services Directorates was NOTED. It was further NOTED that Service Level Agreements were being developed within the HR Directorate, which could then be used as the template for further such SLA's across Professional Services and the School.

Overall, it was NOTED that much had been achieved since the last meeting of the Committee and that now it was intended that the HR Strategy and action plan be reviewed and revised in the light of the School's changing strategic priorities identified during the annual planning cycle this year.

During discussion it was noted that the School was waiting for the outcome of the Equality Bill before adapting school policies and procedures.

5. HR Strategy Advisory Groups:

The committee AGREED to set up two advisory groups as set out in Appendix E.

It was AGREED that the Equalities Adviser would attend both working groups. That the Staff Development Manager (Serena Yeo) would Chair Group 2 and the HR Manager (Reward) (Martine Baraket) would Chair Group 1. It was also AGREED that Julia Strauss would join Group 1.

6. Any other business

There was no other business raised.