

SOAS

Human Resources Committee

10.00am on Thursday 25th February 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 29th October 2010.
- II **Matters arising**
- III **HR Strategy progress report** Appendix A

To consider: progress made against targets and objectives
- IV **HR Strategy Advisory Groups**

To consider: progress and action undertaken so far:
 - i) Oral report from Staff Development Manager
 - ii) Oral report from HR Manager (Reward)
- V **School Promotions Panel** Appendix B

To consider and approve suggested changes to the membership of the School's Promotion Panel
- VI **Equal Pay Audit** Appendix C

To consider: Equal Pay Audit results
- VII **Annual Staff Diversity Report**

To note: Staff Diversity Report Appendix D
- 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 Tuesday 25th February 2010 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, Senior Lecturer*
Ms Zoe Weaver, External Adviser*
Ms Martine Baraket HR Manager (in attendance)
Ms Seema Sanyal HR Manager (in attendance)
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.

7. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 25th February 2010:

The last meeting had agreed that Serena Yeo (Staff Development) should be invited to attend the HR Committee. This amendment to the minutes of the last meeting was AGREED.

8. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

9. HR Strategy progress report

HR Director tabled the latest HR strategy report and drew attention to the following:

Plain time hours: Prof. Craven and ER Manager, Charles Perry, had presented UCU with the costing and calculations of the latest UCU plain time proposal. It was noted the negotiations were continuing in a positive manner.

Sickness absence: Attention was drawn to Statutory changes which will need to be implemented by April 2010. Instead of sick notes, new 'fit notes' will need to be provided. HR will produce a new policy and procedure in due course. The HR Director said that a sickness absence report produced for EB, when the procedures were last being reviewed, had found good reporting in Professional Services but not amongst academic staff.

There was nothing to report about Staff Development or Equality and Diversity, apart from separate items on the agenda today.

The HR Director confirmed that the new change management policy is available on the website and that the policy and procedures were currently being used in the School.

Concerns about the relationship between HR and UCU

The Chair referred to an email sent to her by a member of the committee outlining concerns about what they perceived as negative communication between HR and UCU. There then ensued a general and wide-ranging discussion of the issues relating to communications, not just between HR and UCU, but between HR, School management and the wider academic community. The discussion also explored issues relating to how the School was managed, the role of academic managers (such as Heads of Department and Deans of Faculty) and increasing demands on academic managers to carry out functions related to HR and other professional services directorates.

There was general agreement that the tone of communications was sometimes inappropriate on both sides and it was NOTED that some of this was as a result of frustration due to perceived increases in administrative and managerial workload for academic staff and perceptions about poor service being provided by HR and other professional services Directorates. It was NOTED that HR were revising the HR strategy and developing Service Level Agreements to help to resolve some of these issues of perception.

It was also NOTED that academics in management positions would return to their departments at the end of their term of office. In such circumstances, they are likely to be circumspect in how they manage their academic colleagues and engage with professional services, such as HR, during their term of office.

Finally, it was NOTED that these issues were not solely the responsibility of HR and the other professional services Directorates. There were statutory requirements, which necessarily involved the input and co-operation of the academic community and it was the responsibility of all parties to work together to ensure that the School was being run efficiently and effectively. There then followed a brief discussion about the effectiveness of internal communications, including the following points:

- Email was generally not a suitable medium through which to handle individual casework
- 'all staff' emails are not suitable for discussion items and elicit little response from the School community
- More informal communication in the School might be useful, as well as more face to face communication rather than using email

- It was NOTED that the School did not have a forum for open discussion, and the suggestion was that perhaps we could build on the example of the briefing that the Principal does on an annual basis.
- It was also suggested that HR should look into developing better communication about HR issues through setting up email lists, and maybe creating an HR discussion list, so that non-union staff could be involved in dialogue over policies and procedures, rather than just union members.

The Chair thanked the Committee for the useful discussion that had taken place.

10. HR Strategy Advisory Groups

10.1 The Staff Development Manager outlined the HR strategy objectives for issues E-F. As requested she had put together a small working group to look at those objectives. Membership of the group included the HR Change Manager, H&S adviser, an academic, (Professor Craven), and three members of professional services. She reported that the group had met twice first to look at the objectives and decide what was still valid, and the second to look at possible new objectives. Other processes in the School (e.g. Planning cycle) needed to feed into the review and a coherent report would be presented in due course.

The HR Director asked for details of any significant budgetary implications before 11th March 2010 to feed into the Professional Services Directorates planning meeting. Any reprioritising for beyond 2010/11 would need to be discussed at the next meeting of the HR committee.

Two priorities already identified were the HR staff survey and management development for groups of more senior staff such as Heads of Departments and Professional Services, the new Dean, the incoming Registrar and Secretary. Options were being discussed with the Interim Registrar and Secretary.

10.2 Martine Baraket, HR Manager (Reward), reported back from the second HR working group. Her remit was to look at Objectives A, B and C. The group was aiming for SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) objectives and included Seema Sanyal, HR Manager, an academic (Professor Furniss) and Dr Julia Strauss. The group had reviewed progress with outstanding HERA appeals and red circle cases and it was noted that the process needed to be completed by the end of July 2010. It was noted that HR was finding it difficult to get the union side to participate in the process.

10.3 The HR Director concluded that the future development of the HR strategy needed to involve others in the School and that these groups were a

good start in making this happen. It was AGREED that the groups should meet again and feedback to the HR Committee next term.

11. School Promotions Panel

The proposed changes to the remit and make up of the School's promotions panel were NOTED and AGREED.

12. Equal Pay Audit

Seema Sanyal, HR Manager (Equality & Diversity), spoke to this item which is a part of HR strategy. The School is not legally required to undertake an equal pay audit (although the Equality Act does have provision for it) but it is good practice to undertake regular audits to ensure that there are no obvious pay gaps. With the implementation of the National Framework Agreement SOAS now has in place a harmonised structure which should ensure that such pay gaps do not exist. The HR Manager went through the headline findings :

- there was a difference in pay across the School of 13.1% between men and women which compares well with the national picture for staff at all levels
- There were no significant differences at any grade in terms of gender, broader ethnicity, disability, or between part time and full time staff
- at Grade 10, senior management, the report showed a slight bias in favour of women (though it was NOTED that there were very small numbers in that grade)
- the report found that disabled staff were on average paid slightly more than their non-disable counterparts, although, again, the numbers were small

The report made a series of recommendations with regard to increasing the representation of women and BME staff in the higher graded roles within the School.

The Committee noted the recommendations and encouraged HR colleagues to begin to address them. The Chair congratulated HR for this useful piece of work.

The HR Director commented that the findings were very encouraging and the largely reflected achievements associated with the pay framework agreement. It was NOTED that the Equal Pay Audit will be undertaken on an annual basis.

13. Annual Staff Diversity report

Seema Sanyal, HR Manager (Equality and Diversity) outlined the trend data in the fourth Annual Diversity report. It was NOTED that there were major concerns with regard to disability reporting and the lack of female employees in senior roles and that HR were working with the Equalities and Diversities Adviser to address these concerns.

The data had been broken down by gender, BME staff grouping, disability and grade and it was NOTED there had been not much change over the last year. It was also NOTED that there had been little change in respect of turnover, recruitment applications, short listed applicants and job offers, although there is a continuing need to encourage staff who might serve on recruitment panels to attend the mandatory recruitment and selection training.

The Staff Development Manager commented that it was important to differentiate between attendance on training courses by part and full time staff. Numbers tended to fluctuate from year to year but she had no concerns with any differences in terms of attendance on the basis of BME groups or gender

The Chair raised the issue of mandatory training for recruitment and people not attending. After discussion it was AGREED that the requirement to attend Recruitment and Selection training for all those who are required to serve on a recruitment panel should be reiterated. It was noted that if recruitment and selection training had been undertaken during employment at another HEI this was deemed acceptable. It was further NOTED that both research supervision training and new staff orientation are mandatory.

A question was raised about the necessity of collecting data on sexuality and religious beliefs, in the light of the very poor response rates in the first year of collecting the data (5%). It was NOTED that staff do not have to respond but monitoring was needed since it was the only way to discover if discrimination on the basis of sexuality or religious belief was actually taking place.

The Diversity Adviser said that Stonewall (the LGBT rights body) had reported that although monitoring of sexuality is controversial when initially introduced, this reluctance to participate tends to drop over a period of time, usually to an average of 40% refusing to answer. It was NOTED that an increase in the percentage of staff responding to this question might demonstrate that that felt secure in providing such information. It was also NOTED that SOAS has one of the largest LBGT student groups and they feel that SOAS has a positive environment for LGBT people.

14. Any Other Business

There was no other business.