

### Joint Communications from Southampton University/UCU JNC

What is the UCU Joint Negotiating Committee (UCU JNC)?

This is the formal committee within the University for the purpose of communication, consultation and negotiation between Southampton University and College Union (UCU) and University management on matters of mutual interest, generally those that impact terms and conditions of employment. Meetings of the committee are held termly, and it most recently met on the 17 October 2019.

On the main agenda for this meeting:

Firstly, a discussion on the work to review the Reward Policies. Following a previous appraisal discussion with the Unions, feedback has been gathered from management teams across the University and has been presented to UEB. The feedback gathered will be incorporated into a refreshed proposal for the appraisal process, whilst ensuring the guiding principles are still adhered to. A meeting will be arranged with the unions once this proposal has been developed. Any changes will not come into effect within the 19/20 appraisal cycle. The use of Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) within appraisal discussions was also discussed along with the need for further work to be carried out on how MEQs contribute to the broader context of solicitation of feedback from students. (At a previous JNC it was agreed that MEQ 'scores' should not be embedded in personal appraisal objectives. This is not least due to low response rates for online versions and research that indicates these MEQ-style evaluations often show bias against (for example) female and BAME staff. The University has removed the requirement for inclusion of MEQ 'scores' from the updated University CV template).

Next, a discussion on how appraisal can be used to address wellbeing. Managers should be regularly discussing with staff any wellbeing issues, and these discussions should not just occur in appraisal meetings. Managers need to have continual dialogue with their staff through regular one-to-ones, as promoted in specific courses such as Maximising Contribution, Appraisal Training and Managing Underperformance. A manager's guide on "Make your one-to-one meeting count" has been produced which provides an overview of what is a one-to-one. Further information on Health and Wellbeing can be found [here](#).

Mary White, Finance Director provided an update on USS. The 2017 valuation has been finalised and the final contribution rates under the 2018 valuation have been confirmed. Members will contribute 9.6% of pay and employers 21.1% until October 2021, followed by 11% and 23.7% respectively thereafter subject to a 2020 valuation. Finance are proposing to run another session at the end of November by a pensions expert to keep staff updated. UCU expressed their concerns about how Professor Jane Hutton had been removed from the USS trustee board and has called upon Universities including Southampton to place pressure on the board to be transparent. UCU confirmed that strike ballots were open over USS pensions and pay, workloads, casualisation and equality. It is likely that the ballot results will be communicated on Friday 1 November. All agreed to continuing constructive and open communications locally between UCU and the University throughout the dispute.

Mary White also responded to concerns raised by UCU on the use of the Transparent Approach to Costing for UK Higher Education Institutions (TRAC) within a specific school. In order to improve engagement of completing the required timesheet, a pre-populated template had been provided. It was confirmed that there has been no change to the purpose of collecting and using the data and that individuals can override the figures provided. If following feedback the revised template is found not to be useful then it was possible to revert back to the blank template previously in use.

It was confirmed that a meeting has been arranged in November to share progress made on revised contract templates for Hourly Paid Lecturers and accompanying manager guidance on the use of these contracts. UCU informed JNC that a group of representatives were looking at the issue of casualisation within the University and would have evidence to share with the University later in the year. HR is currently preparing data on *UniWorkforce* data as requested by UCU to understand more about the local situation.

Finally, UCU requested further information on the review of Ordinances. The University confirmed that a concept paper has been discussed at the 10-Year Plan Board meeting; however it was agreed that revisions were needed to be clearer about the scope and timeline of the project and that a revised version will need to return to a future meeting. If approved, a Business Case would need to be developed before the University would be in a position to engage further with UCU.