

**Confirmed**

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY**

**UNITE - JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (JNC)**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 December 2018 in room E213 on the Coleraine Campus.**

**Present:** Mr Richard Young, Ms Judith Hough, Ms Rhonda Black, Mr Craig Shilliday, Mr Ivor McAleese, Mr Martin Garry, Mr Paul Davidson, Mr Damian McAlister and Mr Doherty (Mr Doherty attended for agenda item 6 only).

**Apologies:** Mr Gareth Scott, Mr Mark Latuske, Mr John Mulholland

**Via Skype:** Professor Richard Millar, Mrs Claire Drummond and Mrs Ann Hart-Henderson.

### **18.18 Draft Digital Strategy**

18.18.01 This agenda item has been proposed by Management. It was agreed to start the meeting with this agenda item as Professor Millar (Chief Digital and Information Officer) had joined via Skype. The meeting received a presentation from Professor Millar on the draft Digital Strategy.

Professor Millar outlined his commitment to establishing a world class technology department but noted that he had to be realistic in relation to the financial challenges. He noted that while he had requested an additional investment of £15m over 5 years this may not fully materialise.

He explained that the Strategy provides a roadmap of priorities.

18.18.02 Mr Young spoke of a historic lack of training and staff development ISD which often resulted in staff leaving the University.

Mr McAlister noted that the new People & Culture Strategy will have a clear focus on people development and training required to do the job.

18.18.03 Professor Millar advised that a Steering Group, chaired by Professor Murphy, would be established to oversee the Digital Strategy.

18.18.04 The JNC thanked Professor Millar and he left the meeting at that point.

### **18.19. iPads in Estates Service**

18.19.01 It was agreed to bring this agenda item forward on the agenda as Mr Doherty (Deputy Director of Estates) was in attendance for this item only. Mr Doherty provided an update on technical training that had been delivered on iPads. He noted that he understood that any issues previously raised had been resolved.

Mr Shilliday said staff were uncertain of the planned use of Planon statistics as no terms of reference had been drawn up. Mr McAleese indicated that staff felt that the Planon App was different to the PC version and discussion took place regarding privacy tracking and whether the statistics would be used for time management purposes. Mr Doherty advised that the introduction of iPads did not alter in any way the Departments use of Planon which has been in place for many years.

18.19.02 Mrs Hough said there needed to be clear communication about what is expected from staff, Mr Young asked for clear consistent messages with Terms of Reference.

Mr Davidson asked Mr Doherty if there were plans to send any further communication to the team. Mr Doherty noted that there had already been a significant volume of communications and training and advise that he would now send a direct message to staff to outline why the iPads were introduced. Mr Doherty agreed to draft and share with Mr Davidson and Mr McAleese before issuing to the team.

18.19.03 Mr McAlister noted that this item has been discussed at several JNC meetings and all future discussion should be handled at a local level between Estates and the staff affected.

### **18.20 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018 were approved.

### **18.21 Matters arising from the Minutes of 19 September 2018.**

Mr Young raised concerns over comments made by the VC in which he suggested that technicians had taken part in the recent strike action by UCU. McAlister apologised on behalf of the VC indicating that the VC may have just used the wrong terminology. Mr McAlister reaffirmed the commitment of the VC, the Executive Dean and himself to positive engagement with the trade unions.

### **18.22 Draft Student Mental Health Strategy**

18.22.01 Mrs Drummond and Mrs Hart-Henderson attended via Skye to provide an update on the draft Student Mental Health Strategy. They outlined the seven strands to support students and noted the synergies with the Health and Wellbeing themes in the People and Culture Strategy.

18.22.02 Mr Young raised the issue of suicide prevention interventions and noted the importance of training and awareness for staff.

Mrs Drummond said staff in Campus Life are aware of support available however, greater awareness was required across the University and again noted the link with the People & Culture Strategy. Mrs Hart-Henderson said more would be done to support staff involved with critical incidents including post-crisis trauma.

Mrs Black asked about 24 hour coverage. Mrs Hart-Henderson explained there were clear process maps for 'out of hours' services outlining clear action plans but this would be further developed.

Mrs Hough and Mr Shilliday noted that some staff have concerns in relation to confidentiality issues when dealing with a student in crisis. They indicated that some staff may be fearful of intervening in case they are later challenged on confidentiality concerns. Discussion took place on achieving an appropriate balance between addressing the immediate risk of harm and protecting confidentiality.

18.22.03 Mr McAlister reiterated a commitment to staff wellbeing, highlighting staff absence levels due to mental ill-health and the importance of managers recognising staff mental ill-health. He indicated that there would be a program of training, including resilience training and how to ask appropriate questions.

### **18.23 Recruitment Trawling Sequence**

18.23.01 At the last JUCNC meeting Mr McAlister indicated that the University intends to review the current internal trawling arrangements. Mr Davidson presented paper JNC11/12.01 which was circulated in advance of the meeting

18.23.02 Mr Young and Mr Shilliday advised that UNITE are strongly opposed to the removal of the internal trawl. They indicated that the internal trawl supports staff development and its removal would be inconsistent with the People and Culture Strategy. They indicated that they do not agree with the University's interpretation of the equality issue presented in paper JNC11/12.01.

18.23.03 Mr McAlister stated that he felt that our internal applicants will perform well in competition with external applicants and that the introduction of external competition will allow the University and internal applicants to benchmark skills, expertise, achievements and experience. Mr Young noted that this is not stated in paper JNC11/12.01 and asked that Mr McAlister's comments are confirmed in writing.

18.23.04 The review of the trawling arrangements will be escalated to JUCNC for further discussion.

### **18.24 PS 5&50 Update**

Mr Davidson provided an updates on progress with the PS 5&50 restructuring exercises.

### **18.25 Technician Commitment Scheme**

18.25.01 This agenda item has been proposed by UNITE. The paper circulated in advance directed JNC members to the following hyper-links related to the Scheme:

<http://technicians.org.uk/techniciancommitment/>

<http://technicians.org.uk/>

<http://technicians.org.uk/about-gatsby/>

<http://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/programmes/raising-the-profile-of-technicians>

<http://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/stem-skills-in-the-workforce>

18.25.02 Mr Young requested that the University consider making a commitment to the Scheme and noted that Queen's had signed up to the Scheme. Mr McAlister said he was broadly supportive and would consider this in the context of broader staff development plans.

### **18.26 AOB**

Mr McAlister asked the Committee to note that the Employee Experience Division of the People and Culture Directorate will be reviewing the DAR early in the New Year and details will be brought to a future JNC meeting.

The meeting ended.