University of St Andrews
Research and Teaching Staff Forum

Report on the meeting of the Research and Teaching Staff Forum held on
Thursday 27 November 2014

Attendance: Professor D Woollins, Ms L Milne, Dr H McKiggan-Fee, Dr C Hooley, Dr T Gloster, Dr N Westwood, Dr H Mehrkens, Dr R Schick, Dr K Oravcova, Dr G Smith, Dr D Robertson, Dr F Laibe, Dr S Leahy, Dr C Lovatt

Apologies: Mr J Finer, Dr B Carter, Mr S Bains, Dr U Schwarz-Linek, D R Aspden, Dr B Bode, Prof. S Bhatti, Dr S Purdie, Dr D Reushke, Dr P McLoughlin, Dr J Clark, Dr L Thomas, Dr M Mackenzie, Dr G Cramb, Dr L Dean, Dr J Byatt, Dr L Donaldson

1. Approval of previous minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25 March 2014 were discussed.

Item 4 – Dr Westwood did not agree with the statement in paragraph 10, ‘There is little opportunity for interactions between schools...’. It was agreed to remove the wording, ‘between schools’. Revised minutes attached. Appendix A.

2 Matters arising

Item 11 – In response to Dr Duncan’s query as to whether the Teaching Fellows were now represented in Senate, Dr Hooley confirmed that there are 5 senate assessors but no Teaching Fellows. Dr Hooley believed that an application would have to be made at Privy Council level and that might be expensive.

The question was raised as to whether or not Research Fellows are represented on Senate; there was uncertainty about this so it was agreed that it would be explored further.

Professor Woollins stated that he believed all University staff should be represented on the Academic Council and should have equal rights.

3 Update on open-ended contracts and length of service profile for Teaching Fellows.

Louise Milne confirmed that there are currently 106 research staff on standard contracts with a further 20 being considered if their contracts are extended beyond their current end date.

There are currently 81 Teaching Fellows, 44 on standard contracts and 37 on fixed term contracts. Out of 37 fixed term contracts only 1 has to be investigated to see whether he/she would be eligible for a standard contract. This is a big improvement.

Bridging Funding - Dr Oravcova had raised the question of what opportunity there is for bridging funding. Louise Milne confirmed that there is now a policy in place for the School/Unit to provide bridging funding. Appendix B, Page 5. Professor Woollins did state that the Principal Investigator would need to convince the Head of School that the funding would be worthwhile and then the School would need approval from the Master.
It is dealt with on a case by case basis and there is no guarantee that this funding will be available.

The Forum discussed whether there was still a problem with repeat contracts, mainly with Teaching Fellows that are not employed over the summer months. Louise Milne confirmed that Human Resources were monitoring these cases as it probably does still happen occasionally. There are often genuine reasons for a break over the summer but it is important that breaks are avoided if at all possible.

4 Update on Athena Swan and diversity awards

In Sukhi Bains' absence Louise updated the Forum on the University's recent success with Athena Swan. On 24 September 2014, the School of Chemistry was awarded the Silver and the Schools of Mathematics and Statistics and Psychology and Neuroscience were awarded Bronze.

Professor Woollins attributed the success of the School of Chemistry to the assistance of Sukhi Bains, Equality and Diversity Officer, the hard work of all staff in the School of Chemistry and the strength of the case studies submitted.

A new Race Equality Survey will be made available for all staff and students open to complete in December/January – email link to the online survey will be sent to all members of staff.

The University is taking part in the pilot for the Race Equality Charter Mark and the Gender Equality Charter Mark will be incorporated into Athena Swan.

5 Update from CAPOD

Louise Milne confirmed that Jos Finer was unable to attend the meeting because he was attending the Times Higher Education Awards ceremony where the University had been shortlisted in the category of Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers. Unfortunately, on this occasion the award went to the University of Sheffield.

Dr McKiggan Fee updated the Forum on the following items –

- **Staff Survey:** The next survey is planned for April 2015. The last survey was in 2012 so this is overdue. More information will be made available as plans firm up in the new year.

- **Lunchtime Legends:** This is a series of panel sessions with expert contributors. Emma Compton-Daw will be organising the sessions and will be publishing details soon. The plan is to run one a month from January to July, each addressing a different theme. This will be aimed at research staff specifically.

- **HR Excellence in Research Award:** The University successfully retained the award following the 2 year review. The working group will reconvene in the new year to review progress against the action plan. The group is currently without an academic lead, following the departure of Professor Nic Beech; this will be addressed shortly. The next major milestone is the 4 year review in May 2016.

- **Healthy Working Lives Award:** The University recently achieved a Bronze Award. The institutional Wellbeing and Engagement group (responsible for the HWL submission, and for organising various health and wellbeing-related activities over the
last 2 years), will implement the HWL action plan and work towards achieving the Silver Award.

- The group are drafting a campaign programme for 2015, with monthly health and wellbeing themes, many linked to national campaigns.
- The group are seeking to refresh its membership, to be more inclusive of different staff groups and would welcome participation from a staff researcher and an academic. Please contact Jos Finer if you would be interested in attending (jaf21@st-andrews.ac.uk)

- Epigeum: CAPOD have launched ‘Professional Skills for Research Leaders’ for research staff and they have been very popular. They have 23 people currently signed up to them. They have been particularly well received by researchers who work away from St Andrews.

- Research Staff Associations: Emma Compton-Daw held an information session back in June. Not many people turned up, but those who did were very enthusiastic and are looking into setting one up in Biology. Emma has also spoken to some other members of research staff in other schools who may be interested. Chemistry have also expressed an interest in closer links with Careers & CAPOD, and will be in touch once the new postdoc representative has taken up post.

In response to a question about what teaching development is available to Research Fellows and Teaching Fellows, Dr McKiggan-Fee highlighted the following courses available:

- The Academic Staff Development Programme which consists of 2-3 hour workshops most Wed afternoons each semester. (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/ppdresources/academicstaff/)

- Dr McKiggan-Fee’s workshops for postgraduates who teach, which research staff are welcome to attend (two 4-hour workshops which take place before the start of each semester). (http://www.standrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/studentspostgraduate/postgraduatepostgraduateswhoteach/)

- CAPOD’s Learning and Teaching Development Fund, to which staff can apply to help towards the cost of attending external or online courses/workshops that will develop them in their teaching role. (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/capod/funding/)

- Introduction to University Teaching Modules, which are 10-credit Masters-level modules that might be of interest to CRS who are already doing some teaching. (http://www.standrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/studentspostgraduate/postgraduatepostgraduateswhoteach/)

Dr McKiggan Fee also reminded the Forum that CAPOD has a learning and teaching development fund which is underused. Staff can apply for £300 every academic year. Therefore if staff cannot find a University course which is suitable to them they could enquire as to whether they could use this fund to contribute towards an external course, this includes online courses.

6 Q6 and Research Staff

Dr Robertson notified the Forum that the School of Physics and Astronomy had introduced a tailored version of the Q6 last year which they felt was more appropriate to Research Fellow staff. Out of the 77 Research Fellows within the School only 19 completed a Q6. Therefore Dr Robertson initiated a discussion as to how the other Schools were implementing the Q6.

The Forum was informed that the School of Geography and Geosciences and the School of History were implementing Q6 assessments each year.
The Forum felt there was a level of uncertainty and cynicism relating to the Q6, many not sure if this Q6 relates to development or appraisal. New members of staff feel under pressure and Principal Investigators are uncertain if they are to be giving friendly advice or making an assessment. It was agreed that the Q6 should be related to development. Most Schools found it easier to offer an annual Q6 to more recently appointed members of staff through the probation process. Many of the Research Fellows and Teaching Fellows are not interested as perhaps the Q6 is only formalising conversations that are already happening.

The Forum agreed that it was a good idea to have a formal mechanism of development and review and people should be reminded of this. There is a culture of disinterest and a lack of time available. Professor Woolins suggested that perhaps in the run up to the REF many Schools were holding REF interviews and Head of Schools did not want to add a second burden.

Dr Mehrkens had informed that panel that when she was initially appointed at the University and faced with the Q6 she felt under pressure. She attended the briefing session run monthly by CAPOD (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/opd/q6/) for reviewers and reviewees which improved her understanding of the process and she felt more comfortable with it. Dr Mehrkens made the suggestion that these Q6 sessions could be publicised better for a higher uptake.

Louise Milne suggested that a new form could be devised for research staff in the first instance, consulting members of the Forum, to make it more suitable for Research staff. It should focus on development needs, ensuring that staff get access to the experience and support they require.

Professor Woolins made the suggestion that Heads of Schools would find it easier to implement and keep track of the Q6 for all staff members if a timescale was given and the same date/month were used each year.

7 Research staff and payment for teaching

The University rule states that 'the University permits researchers to undertake up to 12 hours teaching per semester without pay, provided that these hours and all associated preparation and follow-up (e.g. marking) are contained within the normal working week (36.25 hours). No more than 6 hours of teaching should be done in any one week.'

The Forum were querying the reason for this ruling as PhD students who are less experienced and less qualified are paid. Louise confirmed that this was an agreement that the Forum and the UCU had made in 2005. (Appendix D attached).

There is a feeling that many researchers can come under pressure to contribute to teaching, but it is difficult to commit to it when they are not paid extra and it interferes with their research. Principal Investigators don't encourage teaching as it reduces the work output.

The Forum was of the opinion that the rule should be revisited to see what the rationale behind this agreement was and if it is still relevant. Any decisions made should be republished as many of the Heads of School are unaware of this ruling and there are inconsistencies amongst the Schools.

The question was raised as to whether teaching time could be banked with the research councils which would extend the Fellow's funding so that an extension to the contract could be provided by the University. It was thought that deadlines with grants may complicate things but the idea could be investigated further.
Professor Woollins agreed to follow up on this issue by suggesting that it is put on the agenda at the next Heads of School lunch.

8 Teaching Fellow Survey Report (Appendix 1)

Louise informed the Forum that the Proctor is taking forward the issues highlighted in the report. Professor Woollins has also spoken to Professor Milne who recognises the issues involved and is committed to progressing and improving the situation for Teaching Fellows.

The findings of the report were discussed and the representatives included the point that some Teaching Fellows are overloaded with work and suffering from stress. They don’t complain about it as they are worried that their fixed term contracts will not be renewed. It was suggested that the Forum find out how many TFs have gone to Occupational Health because of this.

The report results for fixed term Teaching Fellows were more positive than the standard employees, but the suggestion was made that perhaps this was because many of the fixed term employees were near the completion of their contracts and they didn’t have the same expectations.

It was felt it would be useful if the survey results could be separated out, fixed term versus standard contracts.

Louise informed the Forum that there have been meetings with some Schools already to ascertain the attitudes and practice towards Teaching Fellows and this has yielded some positive feedback with Schools learning lessons from past mistakes and having a good knowledge of some of the issues that face TFs.

Louise will distribute the Survey Report to all Teaching Fellows within the University.

9 General Teaching Fellow Matters

Relocation/Removal Expenses - Dr Oravcova had brought up the question of relocations expenses, as a number of Research Fellows had queried why they did not have expenses reimbursed for fixed term contracts. As per the policy attached (Appendix E) removal expenses are only available to staff members appointed to posts for more than 12 months and financed from general University funds.

The Forum would like to know how many ARs we appoint each year that re not entitled to relocation expenses. And also how much do relocation expenses cost the University each year.

There was a discussion on whether Research Fellows can be offered reimbursement for removal expenses if the cost is factored into the grant application. Could FAS advise Principal Investigators when they are making the initial application? There were opposing views on whether research councils would approve these costs or if they would consider them too expensive.

Professor Woollins was speaking with an EPSRC representative on 28 November 2014 and would discuss the inclusion of the costs of relocation into grant applications.

Timetable for reporting results – the Forum discussed why there was such a quick turnaround after the Christmas holidays for reporting the results of exams for the first semester.
Results returned within the School – 8 January 2015
Modules reported – 19 January 2015
Results released to students – 21 January 2015
Students start back – 26 January 2015

The general feeling was that this adds pressure to staff marking exams and that the Schools are perhaps being over cautious in making sure that administrators have sufficient time to input the results. Could the Schools give different deadlines for the results return depending on the date of the December exams?

10 General Update from Vice Principal (Research) - No update

11 AOCB
Dr Lucy Donaldson (School of Philosophical, Anthropological and Film Studies) and Dr Charles Lovatt have been added to the list of Forum members.

12 Date and Time of Next Meeting
Friday 20 March 2015 at 2.30 pm in the Boardroom, Gateway Building, North Haugh.

Professor Derek Woollins
Convener