

University of St Andrews

RESEARCH AND TEACHING STAFF FORUM

Report on the meeting of the Research and Teaching Staff Forum held on Tuesday 3 April 2018

Attendance: Professor Derek Woollins, Ms Louise Milne, Dr Diane Munday, Professor Martin Dowling, Dr Richard Malham, Dr Fiona Fox, Dr Graham Smith, Dr Duncan Robertson, Dr Sarah Bennison, Dr Bela Bode, Dr Ruth Bowness, Dr Anita Laidlaw, Dr Will Eves, Dr Paul Egan,

Apologies: Mr Sukhi Bains, Mr Tom Jones, Dr Michael Morrissey, Dr Jennifer O'Meara, Professor Len Thomas, Professor Saleem Bhatti,

1 Approval of previous minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2017 were approved with no amendments.

2 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3 Equality and Diversity/Athena Swan Update

Louise Milne confirmed that Sukhi Bains had been appointed to the position of Chair of the Scottish Equality Network.

The University is waiting to hear if it has received their institutional Bronze award.

Derek Woollins confirmed that Athena Swan will be a component of the upcoming REF and the University will be expected to report on the status.

4 Update on contractual profile for Research Fellows and Associate Lecturers (Education Focused)

Research	Gender	
	Female	Male
346	142 (41%)	204 (59%)
258 – Fixed	117 (45.3%)	142 (54.7%)
88 – Standard	25 (28.4%)	63 (71.6%)

Teaching	Gender	
	Female	Male
114	61 (53.5%)	53 (46.5%)
42 - Fixed	24 (57.1%)	18 (42.9%)
72 - Standard	37 (51.4%)	35 (48.6%)

There is concern that the conversion rate of women from fixed to standard contracts is significantly less than that of men.

This is a negative issue for the Athena Swan agenda. Sukhi Bains is copied in to the Research and Teaching Staff Forum minutes and Louise Milne will raise the issue separately for discussion.

5 Update from CAPOD

Diane Munday issued a draft document on the RTSF Representative Roles and Responsibilities.

Diane is taking on an intern this summer who will be completing a survey of the research community, looking for information and ideas on ways to connect staff, network and make people aware of events taking place around the University. CAPOD would like to encourage some people to take on extra responsibilities to and engage staff.

Sarah Bennisson did suggest that CAPOD consider using an Instagram account where staff/students can host daily 'takeovers'.

Bela Bode asked that CAPOD remember that not everybody likes to receive their data online and would like other avenues to be used. Diane did say that CAPOD always use email and newsletters but there is a low uptake on these.

Derek Woollins did suggest that a Powerpoint Slide be sent out to teaching representatives which can be displayed prior to research/teaching presentations including the details of any upcoming events. This could be updated every two to three weeks.

Diane reminded the Forum that CAPOD does have a Staff Rep Fund which provides £250 for staff to hold a professional development event within their School. This fund can be used up to 4 times per year. CAPOD would like people to use this fund and then they can make a case for the fund to be increased, if it is not used it will be lost.

The Forum discussed the lack of engagement of research/teaching staff with the Research and Teaching Staff Forum. It was considered that perhaps people do not want to be involved as they do not have the time available and they are happy with their current working environment. Or there are concerns that line managers may not be supportive of time away from research/projects, or perhaps that this is how this is perceived.

Derek will promote the RTSF at his next meeting with the Directors of Research.

6 Draft Policy on the Use of Fixed Term and Standard Contracts for initial consultation.

Louise circulated the updated draft Policy on the Use of Fixed Term and Standard Contracts for review and feedback. The Forum is the first panel to view the revised draft policy prior to the documents going to the Unions for approval.

The Fixed Term Worker Agreement had been discussed at previous meetings and the policies of other institutions had been considered. Louise asked that the Forum now seriously considered what they wanted for a complete policy overhaul.

Duncan Robertson did ask if the service requirement of 4 years before movement to a standard contract could be reduced to 3 years? Derek was not opposed to the suggestion and did not feel that this offered any practical disadvantage for the University and therefore the Forum made a recommendation that the service requirement is reduced 3 years.

The request was also made that details of the maternity provision were also noted in the revised policy, making it clear that any maternity leave taken will not affect length of service. Sukhi Bains will also circulate the draft policy at the Career Women event taking place on 12 April 2018.

Duncan Robertson queried point 4. Definitions, 4.1 – the fixed term contract ‘terminates automatically on the completion of a particular task.’ It was thought that this was an ambiguous statement and therefore could be abused. Louise clarified that this statement would relate to Academic Related staff that are working on specific projects, outlined clearly on appointment, rather than Research staff where the end of contracts would depend on external funding. The use of this policy would not be related to performance, rather than the end of funding or particular fixed term projects.

Once the revisions requested have been made to the draft policy there will be further consultations with the UCU. If Alastair Merrill deems necessary the Office of the Principal will also be consulted. Louise hopes that the draft policy would be in suitable form to be taken to the Research Committee for approval in May/June.

7 General teaching and research matters

Strike Concerns

Sarah Bennison raised a concern of many early career researchers over the recent pension strikes. There is a general concern of the impact on the University if it is required to make increased payments for pensions, that it would decrease the job opportunities within the University, there would be less new/replacement positions and less chance for career progression.

Derek felt that at present there are so many uncertainties – Brexit, student numbers, student fees – that it would be impossible to comment as it would be speculation. The current situation is thought to be difficult for all parties concerned.

Will Eves also raised the concern that many people on working visas were uncertain as to how industrial action affected their visa. If they are on strike and not working a continuous 14 days can the Home Office rescind their visa? Martin Dowling confirmed that the UCU has provided guidance on the right to strike but they were not completely certain on the Home Office view. Louise Milne confirmed that she would check with Cameron Little, HR Business Partner for Immigration.

Education Focused – Promotion Track

Paul Egan queried what the promotion track will be next year for Associate Education Focused staff, what will be the criteria to promote?

Louise will send out a draft role descriptor as agreed by the Master and Proctor. The panel will be looking for higher level administrative duties, demonstrable performance in leadership, development and growth.

North Haugh, Cafeteria

Diane Munday made the point that many staff within the North Haugh area are unhappy with the provision for food after the closure of the Gateway Cafeteria. Certain days when conferences had been held the Physics café had been closed and nobody was told in

advance. Replacement facilities have been requested as enhanced vending facilities suggested are not considered to be satisfactory.

Derek has confirmed he will take feedback to the Office of the Principal.

8 General update from Vice Principal (Research)

- The University is pleased with the research awards that have been brought in this year, so far 29 million in research grants has been generated this year.
- The work on the REF will be beginning shortly which will entail developing a code of practice. Schools will shortly be nominating outputs for review, pressure is now beginning to mount for submission. Richard Malham stated that his team will be taking on a lot of the work to minimise the impact of additional work on academics.
- The web research pages will be moving to a new website style, repackaging content and making thme more accessible. The hope is the site will go live at the end of summer. There will be focus groups initially and then researchers will get the chance to test the site.

9 AOCB

Diane reminded the Forum that the next Step Count Challenge run by CAPOD is to start shortly and it is open to researchers and post docs. CAPOD would like to get more academics involved.