University of St Andrews
Research and Teaching Staff Forum

Report on the meeting of the Research and Teaching Staff Forum held on Tuesday 25 March 2014

Attendance: Professor C Hawkesworth, Ms L Milne, Mr J Finer, Dr B Carter, Mr S Bains, Dr D Robertson, Dr L Thomas, Dr R Schick, Dr I Duncan, Dr U Schwarz-Linek, Dr J Byatt, Dr F Laibe, Dr B Bode, Dr C Lovatt

Apologies: Dr R Aspden, Dr S Leahy, Dr C Hooley, Dr R Fares, Dr N Westwood, Dr H Mehrkens, Dr K Oravcova, Prof. S Nutley, Prof. S Bhatti, Dr T Gloster, Dr D Reuschke,

1. Approval of Previous Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9 December 2014 were approved.

2. Matters Arising
At the previous forum meeting, Louise Milne had been asked if she could find out whether the University held data on how many of its RFs and TFs were successful in getting lectureships. Also, how many of our PhD students got RF and TF posts within the University.

Louise confirmed that this would unfortunately not be possible as the information was not currently electronically gathered and therefore not readily available. Thus it would have to be gathered manually, and at present Human Resources did not have the resources to do this. However, this may happen in the future as the information is being looked at for another purpose.

Chris Hawkesworth asked that this be flagged as something that should be done if the time became available and Laura Watson should be made aware of the forum’s interest in this data.

3. Update on open-ended contracts for Research Fellows and length of service profile for Teaching Fellows
Louise Milne circulated the attached charts (Appendix 1), looking at the contract type, length of service and gender profile for Research and Teaching Fellows.

It was agreed that the general balance of gender was good and the majority of the Fellows with 4 years plus service were now on standard contracts. There are 25 people, still on fixed term contracts, but Human Resources are reviewing these on an individual case basis.

There was a discussion on how many of the standard contracts were still dependent on external funding and the extent to which the open-ended contracts do not offer any permanence. However, it was agreed that the standard contracts and bridging funding have made positive changes in the atmosphere within the Schools.

There was a question on what steps were taken once a member of staff has been employed for 4 years. Louise Milne confirmed that the offer of a standard contract is often triggered by an extension over the 4 year period, or Human Resources will run reports to pick these up.

If a Fellow wanted a change of position then he/she would need to make an application for an open position, and the onus would be on the individual.
If funding is not extended and a Fellow is looking at potential redundancy then the Fellow would be included in the Redeployment Register, which Susan Grant, Human Resources, manages alongside the Workforce Planning Group and they would be notified of any positions that may be suitable for redeployment.

4. **Update on Athena SWAN awards**

Sukhi Bains circulated information regarding the Athena SWAN award (Appendix 2) and updated the forum on the current status of applications.

Sukhi confirmed that the University has an institutional self-assessment team that looks at the University’s award, the convener is now Professor N Beech, VP for Governance. The University’s award is due to be renewed in 2015.

The School of Chemistry achieved their Bronze award in September 2013 and it is now scheduled to make an application for Silver in April 2014.

Sukhi is now assisting the Schools of Computer Science, Biology, Mathematics and Statistics and Psychology to apply for their Bronze awards.

Athena SWAN at present only concentrates on the Sciences. A separate award is now to be created for the Arts schools and it will be published in November.

Recently a half-day Athena SWAN training session for Un Conscious Bias Training was held in Edinburgh, currently run by the Scottish Resource Centre. Members of staff that attended had reported it to be incredibly valuable. Jos Finer was asked if it was possible to deliver the session again via CAPOD. Jos will investigate the costs and how viable this would be.

Chris Hawkesworth questioned whether there was still an issue with the gender balance within the University as many women appear to leave the University in their mid-twenties. It is clear from Appendix 1, that looking at the members of staff that have been with the University over 10 years and have open-ended contracts, twice as many are men.

There was a discussion on whether or not there is support within the University for Fellows who go on maternity leave. Louise Milne confirmed they have the same rights as a member of staff on a ‘standard’ contract, either a replacement member of staff will be employed to cover the maternity leave or the appointment will be extended, this is dependent on the nature of the research/teaching the individual does. However, it was felt by members of the Forum that many Fellows have concerns when they are pregnant, they feel discouraged and that there is a lack of information and support. It can be difficult for women to take time out of work; other researchers can release papers before you and if your contract is fixed term and has ended, it could leave you with a gap in service.

Louise confirmed that most Universities have similar types of maternity policies although they can vary in the detail.

It was suggested that a reason for young academics leaving is perhaps because St Andrews is a small town there was perhaps not enough social activities. There is little opportunity for interaction between the schools, and it is difficult for people that aren’t local (especially non UK nationals) to meet people and they may feel isolated.
Sukhi confirmed that he would pull information from the Athena SWAN survey which may offer an explanation to the young members of staff leaving early

5. **Update on HR Excellence in Research award**

HR Excellence is an EU award that recognises institutional alignment with the 7 principles of the concordat to Support the Professional and Career Development of Research Staff. In the UK the award is managed by Vitae, which is supported by the funding bodies.

At the University of St Andrews a submission was prepared by the HR Excellence in Research Award working Group and in May 2012 the University of St Andrews achieved the award.

In order to retain the award it is necessary to conduct an internal review after 2 years and be subject to an external review after 4 years.

So far 49 UK institutions have already successfully retained the award following the 2 year review, and the first institutions are now coming up for the 4 year external review.

Our 2 year review is due in May. This consists of the submission of a 4 page review document, prepared by the working group and which is submitted to the reviewing panel at Vitae. This paper reviews progress made against the original action plan which was submitted when the award was made.

**Updates:**

1. The working group includes one researcher, Dr Olexandr Konovalov, Research Fellow, Comp Science. The working group would welcome further representation from research staff on the group.

2. The CROS/PIRLS Summaries that were circulated at the last meeting have now been published on the University website. Based on these results a number of additional actions have been added to the HR Excellence action plan.

   e.g. Local Induction, Mentoring for PGRs

   We have invited constructive comments and suggestions on other actions that could be taken to address the outcomes of these surveys.

3. The 2 year review document has been drafted and circulated with the papers. This will be signed off for submission at the next meeting of the HR Excellence Working Group on 27th March.

If there are any comments on the document Jos can report those to the working group.
6. **Update from CAPOD**

*Passport to Research Futures*

CAPOD are running Passport to Research Futures events in April and May which is a good opportunity to meet people from other Schools. These don’t run on a cycle, they are orientation events on demand and are flexible.

There is a networking session on 15 April 2014, 11.00 am – 2.00 pm, Master’s Room, Hebdomadar’s Block. All Research Fellows are invited. It will be a semi-structured event, table discussions, lunch and a themed presentation from a visiting speaker.

Also, specific to the Arts and Social Sciences, there is a separate event taking place on 14 May 2014, which will follow the same format.

You can sign up for these events via the CAPOD online booking system.

*Epigeum*

CAPOD are also launching access to new online resources – Epigeum – which offer professional development skills for research leaders. This is a new pilot programme for Research Fellows and Principal Investigators, available directly from the Epigeum website, rather than via Moodle. There is funding for a limited number of people to undertake a limited number of courses. Researchers can access information and materials at the following address –

http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/capod/epigeum/

(Attached Appendix 3)

7. **Research Staff Associations**

Jos Finer presented on The Research Staff Association (UK), which is in association with Vitae and it promotes and supports research staff in institutions. It is flexible, there is no fixed model, and it is run by research staff for research staff. They run activities for socializing, professional development, support events, conferences, speakers and surveys. (See Appendix 4)

Jos asked the Forum to consider if they are interested and confirmed he would be happy to actively support the Association, arrange events and find out more information. CAPOD will offer funding initially, subject to a long term review.

8. **Updated Code of Practice for the Employment of Research Staff**

Louise Milne confirmed that she has updated the wording of the Code of Practice and any outdated links.

The Forum felt that the section on Grievance/Discipline and Bullying and Harassment at Work (Page 9) was too short a paragraph for such a serious problem, they requested more structure to the section and definitions for each issue separately.

Also the section titled Non-Research Duties (Page 11) was discussed due to the sentence which 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)’
Duncan Robertson had asked 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 approximately 9 years ago.

Duncan said that researchers in the School of Physics and Astronomy felt they are under a lot of pressure to contribute to teaching. Chris Hawkesworth reaffirmed that researchers should not be under pressure to do the teaching if they didn’t want to and if it interferes with their research.

TRAC data are kept within the Schools to record the amount of teaching that staff do, but the data are variable between schools. Chris Hawkesworth noted that if a workload model is agreed, then schools would not need to use diaries for TRAC data. This might be a way of monitoring what teaching all staff do in the School.

9. **CROS/PIRLS Surveys: Update**
The CROS/PIRLS summary survey results will be published shortly on In The Loop and e-newsletters.

10. **Initial Teaching Survey results**
Louise Milne confirmed that the Survey had a 59.2% return rate which was excellent. A report and action points will have to be drafted and discussed with the appropriate member of the Principal’s Office which should be the Proctor as she looks after Learning and Teaching within the University.

Summary observations are that the issues that will need to be considered further are:
- career progression
- work load
- employees being unclear of what is expected of them in their role
- opportunities for professional development

Some of the actions were discussed at the Forum which could be taken into consideration.
- to consider titles on appointment, Temporary Lecturers or Teaching Fellows
- can it be made clear at advertising stage that if it’s a short term Teaching Fellow post there will be no advancement route to an academic post.
- can discussions be held at interview stage as to what the candidate expects from the position, acknowledging the research time required/want.
- A strong mentor scheme could be arranged

11. **General Teaching Fellow Matters**
Ishbel Duncan had asked if the Teaching Fellows were now represented in Senate. Chris Hawkesworth agreed to find out.

12. **Promotion/Regrading 6 to 7 for Teaching Fellows/ Research Fellows**
A question had been raised regarding why Teaching Fellows/Research Fellows going from grade 6-7 go through the regrading process for promotion rather than the promotion process that those on grade 7 and above apply to.

Louise Milne confirmed that during the Framework Agreement negotiations the Unions had wanted all jobs to go through regrading but the University had argued that those requiring quality judgement were not suitable for regrading. It was agreed that grade 7 and above would go through promotion and grades 4-6 would go through regrading as there is more of a
quantitative judgement involved. Although Louise confirmed with Research Fellows going from 6 to 7 it is sometimes difficult to assess through HERA.

However, more recently there has been discussions that Research and Teaching grades at 6 to 7 should be included in the promotion process. Duncan Robertson had asked if the grades 6-7 were to be included would the process be slimmed down and made simpler. This is currently under discussion.

13. **General Update (including REF) from the Deputy Principal**
   Chris Hawkesworth confirmed that the REF had been submitted with an 82% inclusion rate.

14. **AOCB**
15. **Date and time of next meeting**
    Thursday 27 November at 2.30 pm in the Boardroom, Gateway Building.

Professor C Hawkesworth  
Convener