



Human Resources Policy Committee

11 November 2020, 10:00am

Minutes

Present Members:

Professor Michael Arthur (Chair); Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Paul Ayris; Dr Matthew Blain; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Dr Celia Caulcott; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Mr Phil Harding; Professor Christoph Lindner; Professor David Lomas; Ms Collette Lux; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Geraint Rees; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Ms Fiona Ryland; Mr Andy Smith; Professor Anthony Smith; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker.

Apologies:

Professor Piet Eeckhout
Professor Graham Hart
Professor Sue Rogers
Professor Alan Thompson

In attendance:

For item 1 - 7 Ms Clare Goudy, Chief of Staff, President and Provost
For item 1 - 3: Mr Mike Higgins, Employment Policy Manager
For item 1 - 7: Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health
For item 1 - 7: Ms Shelley McPherson, Employment Policy Advisor
For item 1 - 3: Ms Chloe Milano, Director of Employee Relations, Planning and Policy
For item 1 - 7: Ms Karen Smith, Head of Workplace Wellbeing at UCL
For item 1 - 7: Mr Paul Stirk, Head of Safety

Officer(s):

Ms Anne Marie O'Mullane (Committee Secretary)
Ms Hannah Swallow, Senior Compliance Officer

Part I: Preliminary Business

1. **Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership of Human Resources Policy Committee (1-01)**
 - 1.1. Human Resources Policy Committee (HRPC) received its terms of reference, constitution and membership for 2020/21. HRPC noted that Mr Andy Smith, Chief Information Officer and Director of IT Services should be included in the membership of HRPC.

2. Minutes of the Meeting: 27 November 2019 and 18 December 2019

- 2.1. HRPC approved the minutes of the meetings held on 27 November 2019 and 8 December 2019.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

3. New Immigration Rules from 1 January 2021

- 3.1. Mr Mike Higgins, Employment Policy Manager, delivered a presentation on the new immigration rules coming into effect from 1 January 2021. The following points were made during the presentation:
- a. The new system would treat EEA Nationals and non-EU citizens equally and transformed the way in which, migrants coming to the UK could be employed.
 - b. EEA Nationals resident in UK prior to 31 December 2020 must apply for pre-settled status or settled status by 30 June 2021. Settled status could be checked via the Governments “online checker”. Five years’ residency entitles applicants to settled status if they have spent no more than 180 days abroad in any rolling 12 months. Applications from outside the UK can be made, if the applicant has lived abroad for less than 181 days in total over the past 12 months.
 - c. For all overseas applicants from 1 January 2021 who are not resident in the UK, the Skilled Workers route was available. This route was open from 1 December 2020. The Resident Labour Market Test was abolished with there now being no cap on numbers. Points would be assigned for specific skills, qualifications, salaries and shortage occupations with visas awarded to those with sufficient points. The route would apply to a larger subset of jobs than did Tier 2.
 - d. Details were provided on the points based system. Seventy points were required for permission to work with some characteristics mandatory and some tradeable. There were 10 points for a PhD in a subject relevant to the job; UCL would determine this relevancy. Unlike the system, the points arose from the individual having a PhD rather than because the role required one. Scenarios were set out for tradeable points combinations. A handout would be made available.
 - e. The Health and Care Visa was a fast track entry route, which required a job offer from NHS or related employer like UCL. There was an exemption from Immigration Health Surcharge applied to this route. The Global Talent Visa Route would be extended to EEA Nationals from 1 January 2021. The Graduate route would be launched in the Summer 2021. There was no immigration route for professions such as cleaning, security, retail and care workers paid the minimum wage.
- 3.2. During the discussion, the following key points were made:

- a. The cleaning and security labour market was under increasing pressure.
- b. While Professional Services Hub and HR Services staff were skilled up to provide assessments, there was a question whether the assessment of eligibility would make the recruitment stage lengthier or whether there was a risk of job offers being made where an individual was not eligible. Dr Matthew Blain, Executive Director of HR Services advised that the matter of eligibility would be assessed by HR Services through the recruitment process so that it could be determined before the job offer. An individual must have right to work before proceeding to employment. The resident labour market test would no longer apply; the test had posed some issues from time to time. Mr Mike Higgins, Employment Policy Manager, advised that the new process ought to make assessment more straightforward with previously ineligible applicants receiving points for salaries and PhDs. However, there was more work to be undertaken on systems to accommodate the changes.
- c. Mr Mike Higgins, Employment Policy Manager, advised that training would be key to operationalising the new rules. As part of the joined up approach, HR Services Compliance Officer, Ashwyn Shaw, would also be attending briefing sessions with Departments.

3.3. HRPC noted the new immigration rules coming into effect from 1 January 2021.

4. Annual Report of the Health & Safety Committee (1-04)

- 4.1. Mr Paul Stirk, Head of Safety, introduced the Annual Report of the Health & Safety Committee 2019/20. The following key points were made during the presentation:
 - a. An update was provided on how UCL responded quickly and flexibly to safety concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health and Safety Committee (HSC) increased its meeting frequency from every term to every two weeks. This enabled continuous consultation with senior management and trade unions to manage risk and ensure the safety of staff and students. COVID-19 General Risk Assessments were developed to support return to on-site working at UCL and Estates prepared buildings for re-entry. HSC approved a mandatory “return to work health and safety induction” which all staff are required to complete before attending campus. A large number of staff continued to work at home. UCL invited all staff and postgraduate researchers to undertake a DSE workstation risk assessment and HSC liaised with Professional Services colleagues to create a structure to enable staff to purchase equipment necessary for their comfort and health whilst working from home.
 - b. There had been only one RIDDOR report during the period which was down from five the previous year. The total number of injuries reported was 284 in comparison to 314 for the previous year with 120 staff

reporting injury. Exposure to or contact with harmful substance/material' was the leading cause of injury at UCL for both 2019/20 and 2018/19 while 'slips, trips or falls' remained the main cause of work-related injuries in the university sector. There were online resources, working safely with chemical.

- c. Fire alarm activations decreased significantly in this period in comparison with the previous year, for both Student Accommodation and other buildings and could be attributable to reduced activity and the presence of staff and students on site because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- d. In January 2020 Safety Services became aware of a historic radiation store at the School of Pharmacy (SoP). Upon inspection the store contained a number of historic radioactive items that UCL was not permitted to hold. Safety Services conducted a full radiation audit with the external Radioactive Waste Adviser and as an outcome of that audit, recommended to the department that the permit be surrendered. SoP accepted this recommendation and Safety Services will be working with the department to complete the surrender process. An update was also provided on a permit breach at Mullard Space Science Laboratory as well as suspension of work with radioactive material at the Division of Biosciences.
- e. An overview was provided on Enforcement Agency Inspections/Contacts. There were no formal Enforcement Notices issued by the Fire Brigade during this reporting period but UCL received a Notice of Deficiencies (NoD) and details were provided on this.
- f. From 1 January 2021 UCL would be subject to the Nuclear Safeguards (Eu Exit) Regulations 2019. Details were provided on how UCL would achieve compliance.
- g. The Fire Safety team moved from Safety Services into Estates (Operations) with effect 1 August 2020.

4.2 In response to a query on confidence whether RIDDOR Reporting was capturing all serious accidents, Mr Paul Stirk, Head of Safety confirmed that he was confident. Safety Services and the HSC were commended for their work during the pandemic and advancing the culture around health and safety in the organisation.

4.2. HRPC received the Annual Report of the Health & Safety Committee 2019/20.

5. Annual Report of Workplace Health (1-05)

5.1. Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health introduced the Annual Report of Workplace Health 2019/20, which set out the supports provided to UCL staff and student, and activity data for the period. The following key points were made during the presentation:

- a. Lockdown restrictions had impacted heavily on the ability of Workplace Health to undertake a number of types of clinical activities including immunisation and spirometry.
 - b. Through collaborations with Organisational Development, Safety Services, Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Information Services Division, Workplace Health had delivered interventions including the Remote, not Distant platform and Your Wellbeing pulse survey. The latter survey enabled UCL to understand the wellbeing of staff with access to weekly results available on Tableau.
 - c. A second step challenge was held this year with 88 team entries walking over 111 million steps over a four-week period. Workplace Health shared a Wellbeing newsletter each month with a peak of 1500 unique openings in May 2020.
 - d. Approximately 5,000 vouchers had been requested for the staff seasonal vaccination programme in partnership with Boots and the programme would be rolled out to students also.
 - e. In March/April 2020, Care first increased their counselling staff in anticipation of the impact of Covid-19. They developed a daily webinar series and delivered 701 telephone counselling sessions.
 - f. Through a collaboration with Organisational Development further budget was secured to develop managers around mental health and wellbeing. This had enabled the delivery of Lead at UCL, a series of resilience webinars and Managing and Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing (I-ACT) workshop. Over 140 managers had attended the I-ACT workshop which is accredited by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.
 - g. There had been a drop in Workplace Health referrals compared to the last year reported on. The majority of referrals related to psychological symptoms and a smaller amount to musculoskeletal issues. Usually there was a 50/50 split between these two categories. Guidance had been recently published on Long Covid and a number of cases had been referred to the service.
 - h. Health Surveillance remained central to Workplace Health and work had to be modified due to Covid to reduce the risk to clinicians from spirometry. Confidence was good in terms of capturing symptoms and progressing any individuals based on paper screening within the COVID restrictions for specialist support. It was expected to move back to spirometry in March 2021. There were some logistical challenges and personal protective equipment was needed.
 - i. Workplace health had recruited an in house Occupational Health Physician, 0.6FTE for the first time which will help Workplace Health respond to the needs of the organisation.
- 5.2. The Workplace Health Team were commended for their excellent work particularly in the areas of prevention and education.
- 5.3. HRPC received the Annual Report of Workplace Health 2019/20.

6. Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan (1-06)

- 6.1. Ms Karen Smith, Head of Workplace Wellbeing, introduced the paper, which sets out a draft Staff Health and Wellbeing Plan for 2020-22. The following key points were made during the presentation:
- a. The Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan outlined UCL's vision and the steps to improve the psychological health and wellbeing of our staff community. It replaced the existing wellbeing strategy, Wellbeing at UCL, launched in 2017 and included longer term aims and interventions beyond 2021.
 - b. Professor Peter Fonagy had produced a forward for the Staff Health and Wellbeing Plan. The plan had been developed in a collaborative manner with input from the Vice Dean Wellbeing for Arts & Humanities, Dr Samantha Rayner, as well as Professor Steptoe, Professor Tony David and other academics. As a result, the plan reflected the latest research.
 - c. The plan contained four objectives which sat across the three themes of Healthy Mind, Healthy Body and Healthy Environment. The accompanying graphic was intended to demonstrate the breadth of support at UCL and would be used to initiate dialogue and campaigns.
 - d. Objective One was about a whole-university approach to staff mental health and wellbeing. Objective Two was about reducing stigma and creating simplified pathways to support. Objective Three was about working towards/maintaining Healthy Body and would involve working with other including Sustainability, Wild Bloomsbury and the Students' Union UCL to deliver on the objective. Objective Four was about healthy behaviours. The plan had a number of appendices, which included a delivery plan and timescales for delivery.
 - e. Budget had been approved by the Crisis Leadership Team for a number of interventions including line manager development opportunities in team mental health and wellbeing and mental health awareness development for staff in student facing roles. These interventions had been in demand.
- 6.2. During discussion the following key points were made:
- a. The Head of Workplace Wellbeing and all who contributed to the development of the plan were commended for their efforts.
 - b. In response to a question on what would happen to the funding allocated to providing counselling to colleagues who had returned to NHS front line should there not be a demand for it, Ms Karen Smith, Head of Workplace Wellbeing confirmed that funds would be used to assist with implementation of the Plan.
 - c. There was an observation that the PULSE survey indicated that there were many staff who were scoring low for mental health. The question remained why Being Well at UCL was not working. Ms Karen Smith, Head of Workplace Wellbeing advised that a number of stress focus groups were being convened to hear directly from staff what was causing the

stress. HR Business Partners were facilitating the focus groups and data would be shared with the Health and Safety Committee. Workload was considered to be a likely high driver of stress.

- d. There was discussion about the return to campus and the anxiety of some colleagues with returning and the need to have a strategy to encourage people back. Ms Karen Smith, Head of Workplace Wellbeing confirmed there was a longer term piece of work planned to address this with offerings being built into the Silver Cloud Platform around health anxiety and social anxiety.
- e. There was discussion about workload. The communications framework and the message that “good enough” was sufficient were very important.
- f. The Step Challenge was very much welcomed and more of that type of activity was encouraged.
- g. In response to a question on benchmarking, Ms Karen Smith, Head of Workplace Wellbeing confirmed benchmarking had taken place across the UK and information from Universities UK along with the use of links and networks. Some other institutions had much greater resources and people to deliver interventions. The Committee confirmed that they were interested in hearing how the plan benchmarked against comparator institutions in London.

6.3. HRPC approved the Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan for 2020-22.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

7. Date of the next meeting

7.1. The next meeting of HRPC would take place on 31 March 2021 at 10:00am.

8. Final Meeting of the Chair

8.1. As this was the final meeting of the Chair, the Chair thanked Human Resources and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for their work.

Anne Marie O’Mullane
November 2020