



## Human Resources Policy Committee

Wednesday 31 March 2021

### Minutes

#### **Present Members:**

Dr Michael Spence (Chair); Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Paul Ayris; Dr Matthew Blain; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Professor Mark Emberton; Professor Christoph Lindner; Professor David Lomas; Ms Collette Lux; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor David Price; Professor Sue Rogers; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Ms Fiona Ryland; Mr Andy Smith; Professor Anthony Smith; Professor Alan Thompson; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker, Dr Kathryn Walsh.

#### **Apologies:**

Professor Piet Eeckhout; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Mr Phil Harding; Professor Graham Hart; Professor Geraint Rees.

#### **In attendance:**

Mr Kevin Coutinho; Ms Clare Goudy; Ms Fiona McClement; Mr Nick McGhee (acting secretary); Ms Shelley McPherson; Ms Chloe Milano; Ms Lorren Rea; Mr Mark Rice; Ms Kirsty Walker.

### **Part I: Preliminary Business**

#### **9. Updated Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership of Human Resources Policy Committee (Paper 2-01)**

9.1. Human Resources Policy Committee (HRPC) received its updated terms of reference, constitution and membership for 2020/21.

#### **10. Minutes**

10.1. HRPC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2020 [HRPC Minutes 1-8, 2020-21].

## Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

### 11. **Employment Policy Annual Report October 2019-September 2020** (Paper 2-03)

- 11.1. Lorren Rea, Head of Employment Policy, summarised the activity of the Employment Policy team in the academic year 2019/2020. Colleagues had been involved in a number of key activities including the completion and publication of the Safeguarding Policy, the Personal Relationships Code, and the Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy, as well as developing and disseminating guidance on the impact of Brexit and COVID-19.
- 11.2. The team was working with ISD to improve the visibility of policies on the UCL website. It was intended that this be addressed by the summer.
- 11.3. In discussing the Personal Relationships Code, HRPC agreed that there should be a review of the extent to which staff were declaring non-supervisory personal relationships.

***Action – Lorren Rea***

### 12. **Confidential: The Future of Work at UCL** (Paper 2-04)

- 12.1. Exempt from publication; please see confidential minute.

### 13. **Amendments to Flexible Working Appeals Procedure** (Paper 2-05)

- 13.1. Shelley McPherson, Employment Policy Advisor, presented the proposed changes to the Flexible Working Appeals Procedure and to the panel membership.
- 13.2. The key proposed changes would: require managers to give more detailed reasons for refusal of a formal request for a change to working patterns; require the staff member concerned to state the grounds for the appeal, selected from a list of options; and reduce the size of the appeals panel from 3 to 1.
- 13.3. The campus trades unions did not support the proposed change to appeals panel membership. The unions' preference was for the member to staff concerned to have the option of choosing between a panel of three and a single manager. It was UCL's view that the latter was more efficient and less intimidating for staff. It also reflected common practice elsewhere in the Russell Group.
- 13.4. HRPC approved the proposed changes to the policy.

**14. New proposed Neonatal Leave (Paper 2-06)**

- 14.1. Shelley McPherson, Employment Policy Advisor, presented the proposals to introduce additional paid leave for parents of newborn babies requiring more than seven days' neonatal care immediately after birth.
- 14.2. The government would be introducing a scheme to cover statutory pay in these circumstances from 2023. Leave would be capped at 12 weeks for the mother and six weeks for the partner. The estimated cost of £29,000 per annum was based on a review of data over the past two years.
- 14.3. HRPC debated whether the policy should be made gender neutral. It was agreed instead that it should explicitly cover adoption cases. It was noted that this may involve further complications as the current proposal mirrored the approach taken in government policy.
- 14.4. HRPC approved the new policy on neonatal leave subject to an amendment to include adoption.

***Action – Shelley McPherson***

**15. Proposed Withdrawal of Repayment of Occupational Maternity Pay (Paper 2-07)**

- 15.1. Lorren Rea, Head of Employment Policy, introduced the proposal to remove the requirement in the Maternity Policy and Adoption Policy for staff to repay part of their Occupational Maternity Pay where they did not return to work or left UCL within three months of returning.
- 15.2. The current arrangements were inefficient and potentially disruptive to the home department, which may be obliged to lose someone appointed to cover a role during a maternity period. The date of return to work was commonly postponed by the taking of annual leave and closure days accrued during the maternity leave period, and in some cases the use of unpaid leave. There was anecdotal evidence of the implementation of the policy not being consistent across the institution. HRPC noted that practice varied elsewhere in the Russell Group.
- 15.3. HRPC approved the proposed amendment.

**16. Confidential: Institutional Athena Swan action plan (Paper 2-08)**

- 16.1. Exempt from publication; please see confidential minute.

**17. Proposal for a Positive Action Hiring Programme (Paper 2-09)**

- 17.1. Fiona McClement, Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, introduced the proposal for a structured programme to assist UCL in meeting the target endorsed by SMT in January to recruit 50 black academic staff over the next two years. The target seemed unachievable without such concerted action.
- 17.2. It was proposed that a positive action waiver be made available to allow for recruitment panels to be provided with diversity data. Use of the Positive Action Hiring Programme would be voluntary on a departmental basis.
- 17.3. HRPC endorsed the approach set out in the paper, whilst noting that it was also important to be mindful of the need to support new colleagues once recruited. Further work would be carried out with Legal Services and other colleagues on the operational aspects of the proposals.

**18. UCL's 2020 Gender and Ethnicity Pay report (Paper 2-10)**

- 18.1. Mark Rice, Head of Reward and Pensions, presented the paper.
- 18.2. The government had dispensed with the requirement to publish these data during the pandemic, but UCL was publishing the report voluntarily. As at 31 March 2020 the mean gender pay gap stood at 13.8%, down from 17.5% in 2017 and significantly below the average in wider society. The median was 7.6%, higher than in the previous year. This reflected a comparative lack of diversity at grades 9 and 10. UCL had the lowest median pay gap in the Russell Group.
- 18.3. It was a requirement that the report include data on bonuses, although the proportion of UCL staff receiving bonuses was small. The data at UCL were driven by the NHS-mandated Clinical Excellence Awards, which were paid through the UCL payroll.
- 18.4. HRPC asked for the data to be disaggregated on academic and professional services staff, noting that this would not be for publication. This would be circulated to the membership when available.

***Action – Mark Rice***

**19. Confidential: An in-depth Analysis of Pay by Ethnicity (Paper 2-11)**

- 19.1. Exempt from publication; please see confidential minute.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

#### **20. Date of the next meeting**

20.1 The next meeting of HRPC would take place on **Wednesday 7 July 2021** at **10:00am.**

Nick McGhee  
March 2021