



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

Wednesday, 21st April 2021, 3pm to 4.25pm

Conducted Remotely on Zoom

- PRESENT:**
- Prof. Ross Mc Manus (Chair)
 - Ms. Antoinette Quinn (Director of Human Resources)
 - Ms. Claire Marshall (Vice Provost / Chief Academic Officer's nominee)
 - Ms. Patricia Callaghan (Academic Secretary) for items 27 to 30
 - Ms. Áine Mulcahy (Chief Financial Officer's nominee)
 - Ms. Sinead Mac Bride (Equality Committee Representative)
 - Prof. Gareth Brady (nominee of the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences)
 - Prof. Robert Armstrong (nominee of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences)
 - Ms. Rachel Mathews-McKay (Board nominee)
 - Mr. Peter Donohoe (External Representative) for items 29 to 34
- APOLOGIES:**
- Prof. Kevin Mitchell (Senior Lecturer)
 - Prof. Celia Holland, (nominee of the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences)
 - Ms. Breda Walls (Chief Operating Officer's nominee)
 - Ms. Gisèle Scanlon (Graduate Students Union President)
- IN ATTENDANCE:**
- Ms. Cora Mullins (Human Resources)

Items for specific Board attention are denoted XXX

Section A1

HRC/20-21/27

Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of 10th March 2021 were approved by the Committee for signing by the Chair.

Section A2

HRC/20-21/28

Matters arising from the Minutes

A member of the Committee sought clarification on HRC/20-21/22 regarding the application of the teaching guidelines to those Research staff on Irish Research Council (IRC) grants whose existing conditions permit up to 50 hours of unpaid teaching per term.

ACTION: Arrangements will be made for the teaching guidelines to note the continuation of up to 50 hours unpaid teaching per term for those Research staff on IRC grants whose existing conditions permit it.

Again, under HRC/20-21/22, a member of the Committee noted that the Consent Framework Working Group is led by the Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion not the Director of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

Section A3

HRC/20-21/29

Director of Human Resources Report

The Committee were informed that the draft consent framework sent to the Minister for Education in mid-March 2021 is openly available on T-Net for comments. The communications rollout will also be published to T-Net to raise awareness of the revised policy. It has also been circulated to the Students Unions.

The **Dignity and Respect Policy revision** is being socialised and a number of focus groups are to be set up in the coming weeks. The revision is a revamp of the existing policy with a greater emphasis on sexual violence and sexual harassment. The aim of the revision is to educate staff and students and to create an understanding of how the policy operates.

The External Representative enters the meeting having encountered technical difficulties.

A discussion ensued and a member of the Committee asked if it was a possibility for HR to act on suggested dignity and respect issues in an area without a complaint being made. The Director of HR indicated that it may be possible for HR to look at the culture in an area where there is noise in the system about repeat inappropriate behaviours on the part of an individual or a number of individuals.

The burden of proof on a complainant to show that an incident did occur was raised by another member of the Committee. The Director of HR advised that it will be the impact of the behaviour on the recipient, whether intentional or otherwise, that will be considered and all that will be required of them is to raise the alleged incident(s) or unacceptable behaviour(s) under the revised policy for the matter(s) to be addressed.

It was confirmed that external investigators will be used for formal complaints made under the revised policy. A member of the Committee felt that there may be a reluctance to pursue a complaint

formally as the process can be stressful for all concerned and therefore, there should be a very strong emphasis on the informal route in the first instance to preserve the relationship where possible. They also stressed that training is very important and perhaps it could be built into an online induction and made a compulsory element of the onboarding process.

The Director of HR confirmed that the existing Dignity and Respect Policy places an emphasis on informal resolution in the first instance and this will remain unchanged in the revised policy. It was also confirmed that the creation and implementation of a training plan is a requirement of the consent framework.

The Committee were informed that the University has revised its policy on the **use of fixed-term contracts for Administrative grades in the Faculties** up to and including Administrative 1 and equivalent grades. Where there is a permanent and ongoing need for a post, it should now be filled on a permanent basis with the exception of School Manager posts which are not included in this phase and Senior Administrative Officer 1, 2 and 3 posts which should continue to be filled on a fixed-term basis up to a maximum of 7 years.

A communication to all Heads of School and School Managers confirming the revision, exceptions and further particulars will issue. HR will continue to work with the Unions in respect of historical posts identified for review on an individual basis.

A **paper on stress and wellbeing** was to be presented to the Trinity Living with Covid Oversight Group on 30th April 2021 with proposals including extending the Weekly Wrap-Up to all staff and quiet days or weeks over the summer months where no meetings are scheduled or they are kept to a minimum.

A member of the Committee welcomed the idea but noted that summer is a peak time in some areas and leave is restricted. Should any such proposals be approved by the Group for implementation, they asked that all situations be considered when scheduling them.

There is also a **one-page document with tips for Managers** on showing appreciation and communicating effectively with staff during the current pandemic, celebrating successes to boost morale etc.

ACTION: The paper on stress and wellbeing and the one-page document with tips for Managers will be circulated to the Committee after the presentation to the Trinity Living with Covid Oversight Group on 30th April 2021.

A member of the Committee noted that **mental health post COVID-19** could be problematic for some staff as they start to return to work onsite. They suggested that a first responder programme for Managers may be beneficial to enable them to deal with people experiencing any such difficulties. The Director of HR indicated that this is already a noted concern and a programme is being developed.

ACTION: A list of all HR projects being worked on and their current status will be sent to the Committee in advance of the next meeting.

Section A3.1

HRC/20-21/30

Presentation on the Role Grading Policy and Process Pilot

The Head of HR Strategic Planning and Process Improvement presented a high-level overview on the role grading process. The Committee were informed of the following preparatory steps being taken before launching on the pilot basis in September 2021, subject to the availability of the service provider and no unforeseen circumstances arising in the interim:

1. Develop communication plan to promote understanding of Role Grading and how it will operate
2. Engage with Kornferry (service provider) to:
 - Develop the Role Grading Framework for Management, Administrative, Technical and Library staff
 - Train the Role Grading Committee members
 - Complete all engagement elements of the project proposal
3. Establish a Role Grading Committee as per the Policy and finalise the terms of reference

The Director of HR advised that there is now engagement from all Unions with the working group comprising a representative from each of the three Unions, a HR representative and two School Managers.

A discussion ensued with a member of the Committee querying the relationship between the steering group and the working group. It was clarified that the working group will do the work on the pilot and report into the steering group.

It was noted that 100 benchmark jobs would be evaluated to provide a spine of reference points within the University. A member of the Committee noted that this had been done previously and queried why the same exercise would be repeated.

It was confirmed that this exercise took place in 2017/18; however, another tender process subsequently took place with the three Unions being involved in the selection process.

Kornferry were appointed again; however, the exercise would be repeated to get buy in from the Unions.

A member of the Committee asked if there is an appeals process. It was confirmed that the process is management led and there is no mechanism for an individual in a role to appeal the outcome as it is the role that is reviewed, not the person in the role.

The composition of the seven-person Role Grading Committee who will be accountable for the reviews was reiterated and the Committee were reminded that a role may be reviewed again after a period of three years under the policy. It was confirmed that a frequently asked questions document would be developed to accompany the policy and process as the pilot progresses.

The Academic Secretary departs the meeting.

Another member of the Committee queried if the criteria would be accessible. It was confirmed that the criteria will not be accessible nor will they be provided. The importance of submitting all information required to make a full assessment of the role as described was stressed as was the importance of managing expectations going into the review and during the feedback process. The sizing will be carried out by specified individuals explicitly trained to use the professional tool who will be accountable for the reviews.

Section B1

HRC/20-21/31

Oversight of Policy Matters

There were no submissions for consideration under section B1.

Section B2

Any Other Business

HRC/20-21/32

Electronic Recording of Leave - Annual Leave Year

The Head of HR Strategic Planning and Process Improvement informed the Committee that HR need to configure the annual leave year within the CoreHR system as part of the ongoing project to set up Electronic Recording of Leave in the University.

It was noted that some parts of the University currently operate a January to December leave year, and some operate an October to September leave year.

The options presented to the Committee were as follows:

1. Standard annual leave year *October – September* for all staff
2. Standard annual leave year *January – December* for all staff
3. Two Annual leave year approaches:
 - *January to December* - Buildings & Services staff, who predominantly use this pattern.
 - *October to September* – all other staff (Professional, Administrative, Library, Technical, Academic and Research) as this pattern is predominantly used.

The Committee were advised that one annual leave year is easier to administer but two annual leave years is manageable, provided there is consistency within the job families as outlined above. It was emphasised that no matter what option is selected, there is no loss or gain on annual leave for any person.

The Committee agreed that HR should look at what is best institutionally and implement the leave year that is currently used the most across the University.

ACTION: HR will apply one annual leave year to the to the CoreHR system for the Electronic Recording of Leave, as directed.

Section C

Items for Noting

HRC/20-21/33

Changes to the University's Parents Leave Policy

Parent's Leave entitles eligible staff to two weeks' leave within the first year of the birth or adoption of their child or the child of their spouse or partner. This is unpaid leave from work for which eligible staff receive a state paid standard benefit, provided they have made sufficient PRSI contributions.

From 1 April 2021, as a result of legislative changes, Parents Leave increased from two weeks to five weeks for any child born or adopted on or after 1 November 2019. The University's Parents Leave Policy will be updated accordingly.

Eligible staff can now take unpaid Parent's Leave during the first two years of the child's life or two years from the date of adoption which can be discharged in a five-week block or in separate weeks. The state paid standard benefit also increased from two weeks to five weeks, subject to the provision above.

ACTION: The Committee noted the increase from two weeks to five weeks Parents Leave due to the recent legislative changes and the resulting updates to be made to the University's Parents Leave Policy.

HRC/20-21/34

Changes to the University’s Sick Leave and Sick Leave Absence Management Policies

The University’s Sick Leave and Sick Leave Absence Management Policies were updated to reflect changes introduced to the illness benefit payment process by the Dept. of Social Protection (DSP).

From 1 March 2021, the number of waiting days reduced from six days to three days. This means that no illness benefit payment is made for the first three days of illness. However, claims should still be made from first day of illness.

The traditional remittance slips are no longer issued by the DSP; however, staff are still required to submit confirmation of payment to the University to their Manager. Staff can request this information online, by contacting their local DSP office where the claim was made or by contacting the Illness benefit Section of the DSP directly.

Human Resources issued an email to Heads / Managers notifying them of the changes and an all staff email subsequently issued. The changes were also posted to the HR website and T-NET.

ACTION: The Committee noted the changes to the University’s Sick Leave and Sick Leave Absence Management Policies arising from the change introduced to the illness benefit payment process by the DSP.

Signed:

Date: