



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

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Minutes of the Human Resources Committee

**Thursday, 3rd June 2021, 2pm to 3.25pm
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. Áine Mulcahy (Chief Financial Officer's nominee)
 - Ms. Rose Gaynor (Equality Committee Representative)
 - Ms. Breda Walls (Chief Operating Officer's nominee)
 - 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)
 - Mr. Peter Donohoe (External Representative)
 - Ms. Patricia Callaghan (Academic Secretary) for items 35 to 38
 - Ms. Gisèle Scanlon (Graduate Students Union President) for items 37 to 40
 - Prof. Celia Holland, (nominee of the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences) for items 38 to 40
- APOLOGIES:**
- Prof. Kevin Mitchell (Senior Lecturer)
 - Ms. Rachel Mathews-McKay (Board nominee)
- IN ATTENDANCE:**
- Ms. Eimear Reilly (Deputy Director of Human Resources)
 - Ms. Orla Cunningham (Interim Chief Operating Officer)
 - Ms. Cora Mullins (Human Resources)
 - Ms. Gwen Turner (Head of HR Strategic Planning and Process Improvement) for item 38

Items for specific Board attention are denoted XXX

Section A1

HRC/20-21/35

Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of 21st April 2021 were approved by the Committee for signing by the Chair.

Section A2

HRC/20-21/36

Matters arising from the Minutes

The Chair noted that the paper on stress and wellbeing, the one-page document with tips for Managers and a list of all HR projects being worked on with their current status were circulated to the Committee.

The Director of Human Resources indicated that work is ongoing on the teaching guidelines for Research staff. The continuation of up to 50 hours unpaid teaching per term for those Research staff on IRC grants whose existing conditions permit it will be incorporated into the updated teaching guidelines which will be brought again to a future meeting of the Committee.

ACTION: The updated teaching guidelines for Research staff will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

Regarding HRC/20-21/32, the Committee will be informed in due course of the annual leave year that will be configured within the CoreHR system as part of the ongoing project to set up Electronic Recording of Leave in the University.

Section A3

HRC/20-21/37

Director of Human Resources Report

The Interim Chief Operating Officer and the Deputy Director of Human Resources, who were in attendance at the meeting, were introduced to the Committee.

The Director of Human Resources advised that their report would be delivered by way of a presentation. The main elements were a high-level overview of key HR projects, with a more detailed focus on the Career Framework, Role Grading and the Electronic Recording of Leave; the need for a strategic approach to staffing and a staff appreciation gesture on behalf of the University.

ACTION: The Director of Human Resources' presentation will be circulated to the Committee after the meeting.

The University entered the **Payroll Shared Services** project on a proof of concept basis on condition that there would be no cost increase for the University and the output and service levels would remain unchanged. The University's participation in the project is currently stalled as difficulties have arisen with the HEA about who will own the data and with the Unions about the move from weekly to fortnightly payment which has been referred to the Labour Court.

The Director of Human Resources advised that another University, who have since taken Trinity's place for the proof of concept, have encountered the same difficulties within a month of taking the seat.

The development of a **Performance Management** programme for Professional Services, Technical and Support Staff is ongoing. HR plan to engage with Academic grades to determine the needs of a Performance Management programme for that cohort of staff. Under Athena Swan, performance management in the traditional sense is not fitting for academic grades. HR agree with this and will focus more on promotions and career development.

The Committee were informed that the draft **Consent Framework** which was sent to the Minister for Education in mid-March 2021 and which was openly available on T-Net for comments, is due to go to Board in June 2021. It will be published on T-Net thereafter.

The Graduate Students Union President enters the meeting.

The summer period will be used by HR to consult with staff and the Unions on the **Dignity and Respect Policy** revision through a series of workshops which will also include discussion on the need for a separate **Sexual Misconduct Policy**. Workshops for students will be arranged following their return at the start of the academic year.

The Committee were informed that HR are aware that staff are making enquires with their managers regarding **returning to work onsite and/or continuing to work remotely**. The current advice is that we remain in level 5 and staff should therefore continue to work from home, where possible.

The Director of Human Recourses advised that the Futures Group had worked on a **Remote Working Strategy** last year but there is no University approach on this at present. Pending the confirmation of the University's remote working strategy for the future, HR are working on guidelines for the interim, while we transition out of COVID-19 public health restrictions, which were being presented to the Trinity Living with Covid working group. It was indicated that any interim arrangement would be in place to cover the 2021/22 academic year and would likely be a hybrid of working from home and working on site with a minimum of at least one day's attendance on site being required.

In the meantime, all Schools/Areas are advised to wait for these interim guideless to issue before making any arrangements with staff that are not already covered under their local Resumption of Activity Plan, which they were required to develop last year or the Procedure for Leave and Working Arrangements during COVID-19 Outbreak.

The Director of Human Recourses noted that whilst HR hadn't been asked to do so, over the coming weeks, they will be arranging focus groups of managers to seek their thoughts and comments on the guiding principles for remote working and on what they expect from a remote working policy.

The consideration for **conversion to permanency** exercise is ongoing whereby HR are working with unions and Managers to identify staff in permanent, ongoing posts who were hired on a fixed term basis.

The **Senior Academic Promotions** Committee are preparing a call for applications in September 2021. The Director of Human Recourses indicated that the application process is easy to follow once it is understood but there are rumblings that staff are unhappy with the process. HR will be launching workshops for academic staff to support their understanding, explaining what is involved and what is required. This may also be used as a means of gauging what it is that academic staff do and don't like about the existing process.

The HR Annual report incorporating HR metrics isn't yet finalised but will be going to Board in June 2021. Despite growth of over 14% in staff numbers, we still do not have an overall Strategic Plan in terms of staff which is required to get the best value outputs. The HR

Metrics also show that, compared to 2014 figures, there are 423 additional staff working in Trinity. The increases are proportionally greater in Academic and Research staff than in Professional Staff and proportionally greater in Faculties than in Divisions.

The Director of Human Resources indicated that a communication is set to issue to Managers in the coming weeks on the **Career Framework and Role Grading** noting that there are two sides to the Career Framework - People Development and Organisational Development.

People development is focused on employing staff through a competency-based recruitment process, then motivating and retaining them through the provision of effective staff development programmes. Organisational Development aims to have the right roles to deliver Trinity's goals through the development of comprehensive, pre-approved job descriptions, a salary spine, job sizing of vacant posts and role grading where an incumbent is in a post.

The Committee were reminded of the EOG's approval for the implementation of a system for the **electronic recording of leave** in 2019 following which, engagement with stakeholders commenced and continued into early 2020. The recording of leave is a statutory obligation on an employer. Staff are already applying for leave in some way and Managers are already recording it in some format.

The Director of Human Resources indicated that a recent communication about data gathering for the new platform was met with some resistance and HR became aware that some Managers felt there hasn't been enough communication with them on it.

Aside from the statutory obligation to record leave, the benefits of doing so electronically include a streamlined mechanism for leave requests and approvals, which is easy to access and having all information available in one place. The data is entered once which removes duplication of records and also reduces the possibility of administrative errors.

The Self-Service functionality of the system will enable staff to apply for leave through the CORE Portal and see their balances remaining. Managers will be able to review staff leave requests online, in real

time and can view the leave bookings for their team at any given time. The electronic system will also enable Managers to produce reports and it will act as a data repository for Athena Swan and other Institutional reporting requirements.

The Director of Human Recourses confirmed that there is no change to the University policy on the recording of sick leave arising from this initiative. As outlined in the University's Sick Leave Absence Management Policy, it is the responsibility of Managers *"to keep accurate and up to date sick leave records for all employees for whom they are responsible"*.

A dedicated webpage with details of the project is available on the Employee Services Section of the HR website and the policies relating to the various leave types to be recorded on the CORE Portal are available on the HR A-Z tab of the website. These include annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, career break etc. The data will be input locally and stored centrally.

The Director of Human Recourses advised that IFUT submitted a number of queries on the the electronic recording of leave which were responded to accordingly.

The nominee of the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences enters the meeting having encountered technical difficulties.

The Committee were advised that, to acknowledge the efforts made during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the University is organising a **thank you gift** for all staff which will include a specially commissioned picture, chocolates, an exclusive keyring and a letter of thanks from the Provost.

The Trinity Living with Covid Working Group acknowledge the need for staff to take a break and the need for the pace of University activity to slowdown. The **recommendation for a slowdown** of two to three weeks or the possibility for the closure of the University for a period will be considered by the Working Group at an upcoming meeting following which, a communication will issue.

The Corporate Services Division newsletter, the **Weekly Wrap-Up**, which has been running since early 2020, is extending to all staff.

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that while some staff may be anticipating a communication from HR again this year regarding the **discharge and carryover of leave annual leave**, no such communication will issue. Last year, the EOG approved a once-off carryover allowance of a maximum two weeks annual leave (up to 10 days FTE) and required all staff are to discharge a minimum of two weeks annual leave by a fixed date to be agreed with their line manager. This was approved as a means of addressing concerns around the impact on the provision of services due to a high level of undischarged annual leave and lack of leave requests from staff.

A communication will however issue to staff shortly to encourage them to apply for and discharged their annual leave as normal for their mental health and wellbeing, to ensure they have a break from work and to ensure compliance with the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997.

The Director of Human Resources advised that anyone who is in receipt of Public Sector pay must be in country. A member of the Committee asked if consideration was given to how the mandatory hotel quarantine would be addressed where a staff member who relocated abroad during the pandemic is required to return.

It was confirmed that there are associated tax and employer liabilities for staff working abroad. Trinity banned all work-related travel during the current pandemic and any staff member who may have relocated is not insured to work abroad. It was recommended that any such staff should start to make their way back. The mandatory hotel quarantine requirements will depend on the purpose of the travel, the place from where they are travelling and the Dept. of Foreign Affairs advice in place at the time of their return.

Section B1

Oversight of Policy Matters

XXX HRC/20-21/38

Occasional Staff and Casual Payroll Policy

The Head of HR Strategic Planning and Process Improvement appraised the Committee on the draft Occasional Staff and Casual Payroll Policy.

The policy has been developed to address a number of issues including audit recommendations. It was developed with extensive consultation including focus groups, heads of school committee, audit

committee, Planning Group, Faculty Deans, Vice-Provost/CAO and the Graduate Students Union.

Casual work is intended to supplement the work of salaried staff and is not an alternative to engaging salaried staff where work is required on a regular and ongoing basis.

The Head of HR Strategic Planning and Process Improvement was asked if the draft policy was approved by the Finance Committee. They confirmed that the Finance Committee approved and support the draft policy.

A member of the Committee asked why casual staff were not entered into a pension scheme. It was confirmed that staff who work less than 20% of full-time hours are not eligible for entry into a pension scheme. It was indicated that the average annual pay on the casual payroll is €2,500 approximately which is significantly less than 20% of full-time hours.

A member of the Committee referred to page 3 of the draft policy where it states that *“Pre-employment checks of work permits, Garda-vetting, references and qualifications must be completed in advance of the work commencing. These checks are carried out locally and are the responsibility of the hiring manager”*. They indicated that it would be helpful to refer to the HR Partners here in the draft policy as it appears very onerous for local Managers.

The Head of HR Strategic Planning and Process Improvement advised that, during the consultation process, when asked whether local Managers wished to engage HR under the draft policy going forward regarding the above or whether they wished for the hiring manager to continue to do so locally, the majority response was for the hiring manager to continue doing so. However, it was agreed that reference to the HR Partners would be added to the Occasional Staff Engagement Form.

ACTION: Arrangements will be made for the HR Partners, to whom hiring managers may refer to for assistance with the pre-employment checks for new hires engaged under the Occasional Staff and Casual Payroll Policy, to be briefed on the Occasional Staff Engagement Form.

The Academic Secretary departs the meeting.

The Graduate Students Union President indicated they would like further clarification on the draft Occasional Staff and Casual Payroll Policy, and they wished to discuss elements of the policy which may require further development going forward. The Head of HR Strategic Planning and Process confirmed that there is a review process built into the draft policy for such eventualities. It was agreed that this matter would be taken offline as it is beyond the scope or remit of the Committee.

A member of the Committee asked if Occasional Lecturers are included in the draft policy. It was confirmed that they are and noted that under the existing process, a form must be completed for them to be set up and paid so the process remains fundamentally unchanged in that regard.

A member of the Committee asked how matters of confidential data are addressed with staff who are engaged on the casual payroll. It was confirmed that all staff, regardless of how they are hired or in what capacity, must adhere to GDPR requirements regarding sensitive or confidential data.

ACTION: The Committee approved the Occasional Staff and Casual Payroll Policy as drafted which will progress to a future meeting of Board for its consideration and approval.

Section B2

Any Other Business

HRC/20-21/39

Self-Evaluation Survey 2020/2021

The Committee were advised that the self-evaluation survey for 2020/2021 needs to be completed to ensure the 'Performance Evaluation' requirement set out in the terms of reference is met.

ACTION: The self-evaluation survey for 2020/2021 will be circulated to the Committee after the meeting.

Section C

Items for Noting

XXX HRC/20-21/40

Technical Staff Committee: Creation of Experimental Officer Post in CRANN

In accordance with the prescribed procedures, the Technical Staff Committee (TSC) considered a submission from CRANN for the creation of an Experimental Officer post. The Committee agreed to recommend the creation of a post at the Experimental Officer grade.

ACTION: The Committee noted the creation of this post for onward endorsement by Board.

Signed:

Date: