

THE ASSEMBLY



Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2018

Present: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor N. Ward) (in the chair).

Safiya Waley (RIN), Polly Harrison (RIN), Roger Baines (PPL), Mark Hobbs (IIH), Georgia Philip (SWK), Andrea James (AMA), James Mclean (AMA), Michael Kyriacou (PPL), Jack Massie (AMA), Georgia Walker Churchman (IIH), Jonathan Middleton (HIS), Esther Priyadharshini (EDU), Rachel Henderson (LIB), Simon Dell (AMA), Grant Young (LIB), Michael Frazer (PPL), Martin Mahony (ENV), Ben Jones (HIS), Grant Wheeler (BIO), Brigitte Nelson (FMH), Catherine Tremain (HIS), Usha Sundaram (NBS), Jenny Baxter (VCO), Ian Callaghan (VCO), Gareth Edwards (DEV), Marisa Goulden (DEV), Arjan Verschoor (DEV), Craig Smitherman (ARM), Hannah Gray (DEV), Akiko Tomatsuri (PPL), Jo Drugan (PPL), Rhys Jenkins (DEV), Rob Grant (DEV), Laura Camfield (DEV), Pierre Bocquillon (PPL), Mark Tebboth (DEV), Lucio Esposito (DEV), Roger Few (DEV), Tracy Moulton (RIN), Ludek Stavinoha (DEV), Fiona Lettice (VCO), Jacqueline Collier (VCO)

(Please note the above are those who completed the attendance list)

With: Secretary to Assembly – Becky Price, Widening Participation Manager

1. MINUTES

Confirmed

the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2017.

The minutes could be found online at:

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/committee-office/uea-committees-and-boards/assembly>

2. STATEMENTS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

3. STATEMENTS BY THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor

- Welcomed Ian Calaghan (Chief Resources Officer) and Jenny Baxter (Chief Operating Officer) to their new roles.
- Outlined that the University will be working in the latter part of this calendar year on the development of the second of three five year plans to work towards its Vision 2030.

4. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ASSEMBLY

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5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ASSEMBLY

Reported

- (1) that the membership of the Standing Committee of the Assembly was:

Ex-officio – VC & PVC's

Members elected by the Assembly:

Ms L. Dack (2020) (S&C)

Mr K. Harper (2019) (Chair) (S&C)

Mrs J. Lawrence (2020) (S&C)

Ms T. Moulton (2019) (ALC)

Mrs B. Nelson (2018) (ALC)

Dr U. Sundaram (2020) (ATR)

2 Vacancies

Secretary: Mrs Rebecca Price

- (2) that there were 2 vacancies on the Committee and the term of office of Mrs B. Nelson comes to an end on 31 July 2018.
- (3) that the membership of the Standing Committee of the Assembly provides for 8 members elected by the Assembly;
- (4) that nominations were invited for the vacancy arising for 2018-19;
- (5) that the following nominations were received (and the candidates are declared elected without need for a vote).

Nadia Mobbs (SCI-LS) (ALC)

School Manager

Mr Ian Mortimer (STS) (S&C)

Administrative Assistant

- (6) for 2018/19 there will therefore be 7 members and 1 vacancy. The two proposed nominees will be declared a member of SCOTA without a ballot being required.
- (7) after the Standing Committee of the Assembly meeting Ms Lucie Dack resigned her position on SCOTA.
- (8) Therefore currently for 2018/19 there would be 6 members and 2 vacancies.

6. ITEMS PROPOSED

From Dr Gareth Edwards (SSF)

Which area/s of the University would you like to pose your question to? The whole University and The Executive Team.

'Assembly calls on the Vice Chancellor and Executive Team to (a) institute a policy to reimburse visa application and settlement charges for non-British staff, and (b) update the Assembly on concrete steps taken following the resolution made on 24 May 2017 as recorded in ASM16M001'

Dr Gareth Edwards expanded on his motion

- Outlining the high cost of visas for non-EU staff. The cost of Tier 2 visas has risen to £2220 per person. In 2018, the Government plan to double the immigration sur charge up to £400 per person per year. It is not possible to stay in the UK on a Tier 2 for more than 6 years. Therefore, after 5 years staff have the 'non-optional option' to apply for indefinite leave to remain at a cost of £2389 per person.
- Highlighting the impact of these costs especially if staff members have dependents; suggested that between staff are spending between 3% and 7% of take home pay in their first year at UEA.
- Acknowledging the positive change made by UEA to allow the relocation allowance to be used towards Visa costs but highlighting that this is limited to one month gross salary so is unlikely in most cases to cover the full cost.
- Raising that he feels that the University has waited too long to take action on this issue giving the example of the personal spend of £10,000 he has made in last year to continue to work at UEA.
- Raising UEA's commitment in its Vision 2030 to recruiting and retaining high quality staff and the risk that international staff will not chose to work at UEA or will not be retained due to these costs.
- Highlighting that some other institutions are paying for Tier 2 visas for both individual staff members and their family and increasingly also for resettlement costs and providing relevant support and advice.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor agreed that Higher Education in the UK relies on international recruitment and expressed that he wished that these charges were not being levelled at international staff.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor outlined that the Executive Team had discussed the issue frequently in the last year and agreed that they would like to pay the charges for staff but that this needed to be considered in terms of affordability due to the potential annual costs between £70,000 and £270,000 per year (dependent on whether funding was to be for individual staff member or including dependents). The University would need to ascertain where the funding would come from.

He then went on to outline the actions the Executive Team had undertaken regarding this issue since the last meeting of Assembly

1. Monitoring the sector – keeping a much closer eye on what other institutions are doing
2. More detailed work on cost and liability
3. Actively considering the issues at meetings of the Executive Team

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the option of funding for the employee was being actively considered for the 2018/19 financial year but with consideration of the following still necessary

- This would require the cost to be absorbed by the School or Faculty as part of recruitment costs. Variability in capacity of Faculties to absorb that cost.
- That savings to offset the cost needed to be identified
- That this would mean that the funding would not be available for use on the recruitment of additional academic staff (approximately 1 to 5 across institution).

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- That this proposal for spend needed to be considered alongside other proposals including paying the living wage.

Dr Gareth Edwards further raised the following points

- That the projected cost is 70k to 270k seems low within the context of University budget
- The issue of equitability with international staff specifically being disadvantaged.
- That this issue should be considered separately from the living wage not as an either/or decision.
- That UEA financial accounts show a surplus for each of the last five years.

Members of Assembly

- Raised that the cost could be offset by a reduction in salary of ET members.
- Raised that the University should not be waiting for other universities to take action.
- Raised that more progress should have been made in last year.
- Queried that large capital spends planned on grounds and buildings at a time of reducing student recruitment.
- Raised that savings made by retaining staff (and avoiding recruitment costs) may balance the cost of funding visas.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor responded

- That considerable progress to a much more positive position has been made since last meeting of Assembly. Whilst he was not in a position to say that visa funding will definitely happen, ET are minded to implement for 2018/19.
- In relation to the living wage, that there was no direct offsetting of the two costs but that this was given as an example of another request that had to be considered in the round in financial planning. There is a long list of potential areas of spend including learning technology and the estate.
- To explain the separate parts of the University budget for capital and revenue spend. The capital plan is focussed on structural refurbishment of the building (large proportion is 50 years old) that is essential for the long term health and benefit of university. Recent annual surplus is to allow for investment in this project.
- To acknowledge the current challenge in recruiting students and to explain that this is due to a current temporary demographic dip.

This motion was carried by members of Assembly.

7. QUESTIONS

Question (Rosanna Miller - LIB)

'UEA does not currently have a published smoking policy, whereas other HEIs including Nottingham, Durham and Reading have been successful in producing clear, accessible statements – stating that smoking is not permitted within 10m of doors and windows. There are certain areas around campus where smoking is an issue, such as the Library, Catering Outlets, and outside the Arts and SCI buildings. Although there is legally required signage stating that smoking is not permitted it is largely ignored. This leads to staff time being taken up trying to request people move away from such

areas, which is at a detriment to the efficiency UEA pursues as it interrupts the working day. Having a clear statement or policy would be beneficial to staff efficiency, it would also show that UEA considers the welfare of staff, students and other stakeholders, as well as promote a positive image to external visitors to the campus.

What actions will UEA consider taking in implementing a policy that would give more transparency across campus about the acceptable areas to smoke or not to smoke?

Reply:

"The Executive Team have recently considered smoking on campus and are minded to introduce a new policy requiring no smoking within 10m of buildings (with some exceptions for existing designated smoking areas eg outside LCR on gig nights). A new policy is currently being drawn up for consideration and it is hoped that this can be introduced for the next academic year."

Question (Daisy Mailey – ARM):

'In the recent Gender Pay Gap Report, the University's asserted that 'it is important that [they] continue to examine [their] policies and practices to ensure that [they] eliminate bias and promote fairness and equality of opportunity wherever possible';

Can the University please address the disparity between annual leave allowances under staff terms and conditions (in which higher salaried staff receive 30 days and lower paid staff receive 20 days) and how this ties into the University's commitment to the Athena SWAN Charter and its commitment to promote fairness across the University, particularly as it is women who appear to be disproportionately affected?'

Reply:

"The University is committed to review regularly its policies and practices and will continue to do so as the People section of the UEA plan is developed. However, there is no immediate plan to review holiday allowances which should not be considered in isolation. It is useful to note that staff who are entitled to 30 days holiday have no specified working hours and could be working extended hours without overtime payments. Staff who have 20 days holiday in their terms and conditions have defined working hours and could be paid overtime if working longer hours. A change in holiday allowances would impact on other terms and conditions of employment and on business operation but could be considered in the future."