

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SCC)

Notes of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Committee** held at 10.00am on Friday 25 October 2019 in the Committee Meeting Room, The Chancellery.

PRESENT:

University – Liz Burd and Mark Wylie

NTEU – Terry Summers, Emma Joel, Alistair Rolls, David Rambaldi, Louise Noell, Ros Larkin, Lance Dale
Elizabeth Adamczyk

CPSU – Sue Freeman

APOLOGIES:

University – Tina Crawford

Chair – Mark Wylie

Note-taker – Ruth Hartmann

1. ACADEMIC – TRIMESTERS

Following on from discussion at the August meeting, Interim DVC (A) Liz Burd reported that a proposal for trimesters was still in consultation. While the concept would likely be included in the University's new strategic plan, Professor Burd confirmed that there had been no decision made on what the model will be and that this would not be implemented for the 2020 academic year.

Union representatives were of the view that a change to trimesters would be a significant change affecting staff and students across UON, including impacts to timetabling, staff workloads, and program requirements. Union representatives requested clear information and appropriate consultation with staff should the proposal be progressed to implementation. Furthermore, it is appropriate that consultation and implementation processes would include faculties, schools and work units to prevent a top down approach that would result in poor outcomes for staff and students on the ground.

Professor Burd explained that resourcing for planning, investigation and consultation would be allocated on the basis of the trimester concept being included in the strategic plan.

2. ACADEMIC – STUDENT COURSE AND TEACHING FEEDBACK

Responding to a request for information on consultation regarding the amalgamation of student feedback on teaching (SFT) and student feedback on course (SFC) surveys, Interim DVC (A) Liz Burd noted Academic Senate and the Teaching and Learning Committee were consulted. Requests from students wanting to provide feedback on individual teachers was also considered.

Noting the shift to compulsory student feedback on teaching, union representatives expressed concern that negative feedback may inadvertently be attributed to an academic, for example where courses are delivered by more than one academic. This negative feedback may result in no further employment being offered to a casual academic. Members also expressed concerns regarding the validity and sampling of these evaluation tools if they are to be used in staff performance measures.

Professor Burd indicated that she viewed teaching feedback more positively, for example it could demonstrate individual teaching contributions for promotions. Nevertheless, she agreed that accurate

representation of data sampling and appropriate measurement is necessary, and as such determination of the use/application of this data for this purpose may be some time away.

3. EA IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 EQUITY AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Responding to enquiries regarding the status of the working party review of the University's inclusiveness policies Interim DVC (A) Liz Burd noted that no meetings were scheduled at this time. Professor Burd explained that based on student feedback regarding representation of gender as a binary term there had been administrative changes to the Diversity and Inclusiveness Policy.

NTEU representative, Lance Dale expressed frustration that there had been no progress on the working party review despite the commitment made in bargaining and prescribed in the University's enterprise agreements.

Professor Burd considered the review would be appropriate for Tina Crawford's new appointment as Director Equity and Diversity and undertook to communicate this task to her.

3.2 CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT

Mark Wylie, Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work Health & Safety presented an overview of staff categories of employment for UON and the HE sector sourced from data submitted to DEET. The data indicates that compared to the HE sector:

- UON has a higher percentage of ongoing staff FTE
- UON has a higher percentage of fixed term staff FTE
- UON has a lower percentage of casual staff FTE.

Union representatives requested that the staff numbers presented for UON be checked as they appeared to be higher than those reported on the University website.

University representatives reported on Education Focused Academic (EFA) appointments this year as follows:

- Faculty of Business and Law – 4 fixed term
- Faculty of Science – 1 fixed term
- Faculty of Medicine and Public Health – 5 fixed term.

To date, University representatives reported that there have been no appointments to the new category of Industry and Clinical Educators (ICE). However, discussions are ongoing with organisational areas such as HASS, Health Sciences and Nursing on options for offering longer term employment to clinical staff that are otherwise engaged as casuals or on fixed term contracts of less than 12 months. Discussion followed regarding the job appointment form used for fixed term contracts. It was noted that the Industry and Clinical Educator category was not listed as an option.

Action 3.2:University – follow up and confirm staff FTE numbers; review job appointment form and consider options for including ICE as a category.

3.3 WORK HEALTH & SAFETY

Mark Wylie, Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work, Health & Safety reported that the Work Health and Safety Strategy document had been out to consultation with the University Council and Academic Senate and was now back with Faculty/Division Health and Safety Committees for further feedback. Mr Wylie noted that the unions had previously been invited to comment on the document and may now make submissions if they so choose by mid-November.

Reporting on asbestos contamination in the Hunter Building, Mr Wylie noted that swabs on some fixtures had tested positive, however, no airborne particles have been identified. Positive samples had also been identified in unoccupied areas of University House. The positive samples had been identified by IFS in preparation for building works. The University has implemented ongoing monitoring procedures in these areas, including placement of appropriate signage. NTEU representatives sought clarification as to whether the monitoring and containment measures being implemented were in accordance with NSW health Guidelines. Mr Wylie confirmed that they were.

Union representatives reported concerns from staff located in the Hunter Building, specifically a lack of clear ongoing communication following positive sampling.

Mr Wylie undertook to continue discussions with relevant IFS staff and will consider communication approaches including whole of building meetings. This will also include an explanation of how any future remediation works would be undertaken

Action 3.3: University – consider communication approaches to inform and update Hunter Building staff on asbestos identification and monitoring including options for all staff forums.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Union representatives requested discussion at the next Committee meeting regarding the University's decision on compulsory student attendance at tutorials.

Action 4: University – schedule discussion on compulsory student attendance at tutorials for next Committee meeting.

Meeting closed at approx. 11.00am