

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SCC)

Notes of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Committee** held at 9.00am on Tuesday 12 February 2020 in the Committee Meeting Room, The Chancellery.

PRESENT:

University – Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Liz Burd; Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Mark Jones; Acting Deputy, People and Workforce Strategy, Mark Kelly, Mark Wylie, and Dan Cummins.

NTEU – Emma Joel, Alistair Rolls, Amanda Wilson, Terry Summers, David Rambaldi, Paul Chojenta, Daniel Conway and, Lance Dale.

CPSU – Mark Smith and Lisa Nelson

Chair – Amanda Wilson

Note-taker – Ruth Hartmann

1. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT

Mr Nathan Towney, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Leadership and Mr. Lindsay Hardy, Indigenous Employment Partner attended for this item to provide an update on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy, projects and initiatives as follows:

- New staff appointments in the Office of PVC Indigenous Strategy and Leadership following recruitment of Mr Towney in October 2019
- Collaborating with Faculty of Health and Medicine to develop an on-country nursing degree at Walgett
- Immersion retreat with Faculty of Education and Arts focused on indigenisation of curriculum and employment of Aboriginal people
- Collaborating with Research and Innovation Division on coordinated approach to Indigenous Health Research
- Launch of Maligagu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy and Action Plan in November 2019
- Networking opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff including off-site meeting scheduled for July 2020
- Indigenous staff headcount is 76, comprising 27 Academic and 49 Professional staff appointments
- Recent recruitment of two additional indigenous Academic staff members brings the institutional headcount to 78. For clarification, Cadet positions are not included in headcount data
- Terms of reference reviewed and meeting of the Employment Committee to be convened in the first half of the year

- HR Business Partners will be invited to Employment Committee meetings to engage and progress employment targets with Faculties and Divisions portfolios.

2. CAMPUS PLANNING AND PROJECTS

The Director, Infrastructure and Facilities Services, Brian Jones attended the meeting for this item reporting on the following:

- Callaghan Design Building – work is out to tender. Upgrade expected to commence April 2020 with IT staff accommodated by end of July 2020. Site visits to the new Newcastle Council offices have been arranged to view the types of work spaces similar to fit-out the new ITS space.
- Behavioural Sciences Building – refurbishment of social sciences work spaces.
- Central Coast projects: Work has commenced on the base of the Central Coast Medical School and Research Institute. Base works are due for completion on September 2020 followed by fit-out.
- Honeysuckle – Stage 1 project approved with construction expected to commence mid-April 2020.
- Bio-resources: construction of new facility is expected to be completed by September 2020.
- Chancellery Building – upgrades of Finance space and opening of new staff lunch room facility.
- Hunter Building – interim arrangements to manage asbestos risks are in place including, publishing of the asbestos register and other information on the University website and signage to increase awareness. Longer term strategies about the building are being discussed with the Risk Committee of the University Council. University representatives will continue to consult with staff located in the Hunter Building including a meeting with Health Sciences on 14 February 2020 followed by FEDUA and other staff cohorts.

Discussion followed regarding thermal comfort for staff working in the Hunter Building in the recent hot weather. Mr Jones reported that the University had invested in air-conditioned spaces for staff and students noting heating was also a challenge in the cooler months. Other strategies include re-allocating timetable activities where practicable.

Mark Wylie, Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work Health & Safety agreed to raise concerns regarding the Hunter Building with the University Health and Safety Committee including potential options for portable air-conditioners and fans.

Action 2: University – Mark Wylie to raise thermal comfort of staff working in Hunter Building as an item for discussion at the Health and Safety Committee.

3. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE – STANDING ITEM

University representatives reported on the following change processes:

3.1 ACADEMIC DIVISION

Thirteen staff have been declared detached of which 8 elected redeployment with end dates in July 2020. Five of the 13 detached staff were approved Voluntary Separation Packages (VSP). Eight staff expressed interest and were approved for VSPs.

Staffing for HEW 7 – HEW10 positions – Twenty advertised in November 2019. Filled internally with the exception of 2 roles that have specialist requirements that are now being advertised externally.

Staffing for HEW 3 – HEW 6 positions – Twenty positions advertised in January 2020. Working through multiple interview processes and likely to be completed by the end of February 2020.

3.2 OFFICE OF PVC – FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

One staff member was detached and elected redeployment due to end in March 2020. Two staff members were approved for VSPs. a

3.3 PORT MACQUARIE

Following an extended consultation period, the Proposal Paper will be presented to Port Macquarie staff at a forum on 14 February 2020. The paper will then be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor for consideration and determination.

3.4 NEWCASTLE BUSINESS SCHOOL

Two staff members were detached and elected redeployment due to end December 2020.

3.5 IT SERVICES

Consultation period extended, responses to submissions received are being prepared with an extraordinary meeting of Consultative Committee to be scheduled shortly.

University representatives also noted that a change process involving Library Services will likely be launched in the first half of 2020.

4. UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Acting Director, People and Workforce Strategy, Mark Kelly reported that submissions for the draft Strategic Plan closed on 7 February 2020 and is now being finalised prior to review and endorsement from Council and launch by the Vice-Chancellor in March 2020. Staff have had opportunities to engage with and provide feedback on the strategic plan from December 2019. The staff voice has been central to the development of the plan since March 2019 including establishment of the staff strategy consultation group with representation from each School and Division. Updates were regularly communicated via the all staff SharePoint site as well as campuses conversation and In the Loop content.

5. CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT

University representatives confirmed that the staffing data presented at the Committee meeting in October 2019 was the data collected at 31 March 2019 for provision to the Department of Education and Training (now Department of Education, Skills and Employment). This data will be reported in the University's 2019 Annual Report due for release in April 2020. The 2018 Annual Report available on the University website reports the data collected at 31 March 2018. The data from the two reporting periods indicates an increase in staff FTE employed by the University.

6. WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

6.1 UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS

Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Liz Burd reported that there are no confirmed cases of novel coronavirus at the University and we will continue to implement the NSW Health advice and Australian Government Travel Advice to keep our people safe and well. The 'do not travel to mainland China' alert remains. Staff must not travel to China at this time.

The University has identified over 1,000 students (both taught and research students) impacted from bans imposed in China. While the virus infection rate appears to have slowed, there is currently no indication from the Government as to when the students will be able to return to Australia.

Regular University operations will continue for Trimester 1 and Semester 1. To support our international students who were planning to study with us in these periods who have been or will be unable to reach Australia to start their studies on time flexible arrangements have been introduced for Trimester 1 and Semester 1 as follows:

- Flexible Trimester - allows eligible students (those unable to reach Australia due to the restrictions) to study remotely and if they do not pass their course they will be able to enrol again without academic or financial penalty.
- Flexible Semester - enables impacted students to start their term after the mid-semester break in April - later than the scheduled start date for Semester 1 - and still be able to progress their studies, in time to start Semester 2 if required. The University is also working to put course materials and course work online so that affected students will be able to access them remotely. When those students are able to come to Australia they will be given extra tuition at our University and allowed extra time for assessments and to study for examinations.

Professor Burd clarified that the delayed start would not be practicable for all courses and would be applied on a course by course basis. To date 450 courses have been identified as impacted by students not able to return. Impacted course listings have been sent to the academic staff teaching the course. Business School courses had been significantly impacted.

Impacts are also being experienced in other areas across the University. For example, options are being assessed for isolating impacted students in on-campus residences in groups for the required period; additional staff have been allocated and other less critical work is being rescheduled to support an increased volume of queries to Student Central; and Language Centre staff are considering options for converting resources to on-line or home-study materials. Professor Burd explained that any impact on casual academic and teaching staff is difficult to assess at this time and more will be known at census date as to how many students have been retained. This in turn will determine tutorials and other support structures required to be allocated.

6.2 HUNTER BUILDING – HOT WEATHER

See notes of discussion on this item at item 2 above.

6.3 HUNTER BUILDING – ASBESTOS

See notes of discussion on this item at item 2 above.

7. EQUITY AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

University representatives reported that the Office of the Director, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (part of Academic Division) are looking at dates to convene the working party review of the University's inclusiveness policies. This will likely be following commencement of the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). University representatives will seek an update from the Director.

Action 7: University – seek update on working party review of inclusiveness policies from Office of Director, Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness.

8. STAFF STUDENT INTERACTION GUIDELINES

University representatives tabled the Staff Student Interaction Guidelines. Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Liz Burd explained that the Guideline does not bar staff student relationships but is intended to make the process of disclosure more transparent should close relationships occur. Professor Burd confirmed that the Guidelines had been developed in consultation with student and staff committees and with consideration to feedback from the NTEU and CPSU.

Discussion followed regarding protections for staff from harassment by students. Professor Burd noted that the Student Conduct Rule applies and penalties are available where breaches are substantiated. Other initiatives include the “No Room For” campaign rolled out across the student community.

9. PERSONAL LEAVE

University representatives reported that staff unable to attend their primary place of work due to campus closures from recent bushfire and flood events were advised to work at other campus locations or from home where practicable. The University has not required staff to access leave in these circumstances.

Discussion regarding accrual of Personal Leave deferred. NTEU to provide request for information in writing.

Action 9: NTEU – provide information request regarding Personal Leave in writing.

10. STUDENT TUTORIAL ATTENDANCE – ACADEMIC

Following up on discussion at previous meetings, Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Liz Burd reported that a student tutorial attendance policy had been piloted in the summer term and will be applied to commencing students in 2020. FAQs and a video tutorial are being developed to support staff in using new technologies to record student attendance including a smartphone App. Options for recording attendance on desktop computer or paper rolls are also available. Professor Burd explained that the policy was developed in response to academic staff feedback and attendance data may be utilised to identify and offer early support to students who may otherwise have withdrawn or failed a course.

Discussion followed regarding the potential for additional administrative work for course coordinators in assessing adverse circumstances. Professor Burd explained that students are being advised not to

submit adverse circumstances until they have not met the 80% threshold. Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Mark Jones also reported that he had met with NUSA representatives and the Chair of the Student Advisory Committee. The student representatives were aware of the benefits of student attendance and were comfortable with use of the App.

Responding to concerns regarding impact on campus parking, Professor Burd noted that free parking is not utilised. Options are being considered for better utilisation of all car parking locations not just those that are seen as more convenient. Other initiatives include notifications via an App for available parking spaces.

11. CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT – ACADEMIC

University representatives reported the appointment of an Industry Educator position in the School of Architecture and Built Environment. Discussions on further appointments are continuing with other Schools, particularly in Health and Medicine. As reported in October 2019, there have been 10 Education Focusses Academic (EFA) appointments. Discussions are in progress for a further EFA position in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

12. ELICOS TEACHER REPLACEMENT

University representatives reported that recruitment of ELICOS Teacher positions are expected by the end of Semester 1 2020 following commencement of the new DVC-A and appointments of the Centre, Pathways and Learning Support executive team.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

No further items discussed.

Meeting closed at approx. 11.30am