

People, Culture and Engagement Committee

TIME /DATE / VENUE	1400, Thursday 29 May 2025 in Room 0.32, Unit 1, St Andrew's Court
PRESENT	Claudia Iton (Chair) David Willan Stacey Parrinder-Johnson Mark Readman Chris Williams (via videoconference)
IN ATTENDANCE	Professor Sherria Hoskins, Provost Wayne Bowen, Deputy Chief People Officer Karen Tiller, Deputy Director of People Operations (Mins 25, 27 and 28) Lisa Rhodes, Training and Research Culture Manager, Department of Research and Innovation (Min 31 only) James Morris, Head of Reward and Recognition (Mins 32 to 33)
SECRETARIAT	Claire Dunning, Director of Legal and Compliance Services Jacqui Bryden, Senior Governance Officer

To facilitate the attendance of staff for specific items, some items were taken out of the order designated in the agenda.

21 Welcome, Quoracy, Conflict of Interest and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

- 21.1 Apologies were received from Professor Graham Galbraith, Becky Miles, Professional Services Governor and Fiona Hnatow, Chief People Officer. The Director of Legal and Compliance Services attended on behalf of the Executive Director of Corporate Governance.
- 21.2 The Director of Legal and Compliance Services confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.
- 21.3 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

22 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

23 Matters Actioned and Matters Arising

- 23.1 Action was reported within the agenda papers on two items: one to be heard on the agenda and one to be heard at a future meeting of the People Committee.
- 23.2 There were no other matters arising.

24 Election of Chair

The Committee noted that Mark Readman had been successfully appointed to the Chair of the People, Culture and Engagement Committee from 1 August 2025.

25 People, Culture and Engagement: New Online Personal Development Review

Karen Tiller, Deputy Director of People Operations provided a presentation on the new online Personal Development Review (PDR) process that could be accessed via the HR information system, ITrent which would be launched for all University staff on 1 August 2025.

25.1 The key points noted were:

- i. The PDR system had been built into ITrent as the one source of HR information; the previous system was a separate software product with limited capability or ability to customise. The end of the contract for the current software system, Simitive, would result in a cost saving. ITrent continued to be subject to considerable data cleansing to ensure that it was ready and accurate for the PDR process.
- ii. The appraisal system had been renamed from 'Performance Development Review' to 'Personal Development review' to reflect that fact that the process was about the development of the individual and was not linked to performance or disciplinary processes.
- iii. In preparation for the launch, users would be provided with training and access to superusers as well as training manuals, PDR booklets and drop-ins for those with questions. A learning module would be developed for users and new starters.
- iv. The cycle for the annual PDR would be aligned to the annual finance cycle. This would make the system future-proof should pay become an element of the annual appraisal process.
- v. There were four stages to the annual cycle:
 - 1) Setting objectives for the year. There would be a maximum of four to six objectives that were in addition to 'business as usual' linked to the delivery of the University Strategy.
 - 2) Informal check-ins for the individual with their manager from the period November to April which would be mandated and meaningful conversations would be encouraged.
 - 3) Preparation for the end of year reviews.
 - 4) End of year reviews. The current ratings system would be the same, but might change in the future. The outcomes of the final year reviews would inform succession planning for next year and from September 2026 would also inform talent acquisition needs.
- vi. Managers would have a dashboard for their team which would provide an overview of the status for each individual.

25.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

- i. Objectives would be agreed jointly between the line manager and employee but the

employee would commence the process as their personal review, for agreement with the line manager. The strategic goals of the University would be incorporated into the system for easy access to cascade to departments, teams and individuals.

- ii. Value would be measured using the University's values which were incorporated into the system. The simple name change would set a cultural shift in motion for all staff to recognise the longer-term benefits and create a keen interest in engaging with the process.
- iii. The completion rate for PDRs 2024/2025 had been approximately 50% in total although professional services had a higher completion rate than academics. From 2025/2026, the onus to engage with their PDR was with the individual and the manager would ensure completion; it was not a management tool and would be a positive activity for staff.
- iv. The PDR system had tended to be a list of transactional stages and resources would be invested in management training to support managers in making conversations more meaningful and less fearful as some managers had indicated some anxiety.
- v. The number of managers with more than 15 direct reports would reduce significantly as the data and reporting structures within the system were cleansed and updated.
- vi. As the system developed, career pathways and options for personal development would become clearer as the University recognised the need for internal talent development using operational coaching and a more blended approach to learning and development. The current mentorship scheme would be refreshed to facilitate this approach.
- vii. The costs of the new learning module would be recouped over three years and the initial benefit would be to capture learning information such as time spent on completing modules. The soft costs would be harder to quantify in terms of learning through mentoring and coaching or through interaction with colleagues rather than formal learning processes. The new Learning Management System (LMS) captured all formal training information such as attendance at conferences and seminars and other CPD activities.
- viii. It was important for all staff to engage in their own PDR to maintain their personal motivation. Opportunities to follow different career pathways and development through the use of the new apprenticeship levy would provide personal growth. The longer-term plan would be to link the development process to reward.
- ix. The University SLT, led by the Provost, would head the launch and new approach to encourage engagement and participation to ensure a significant change in culture.
- x. Guidance and training would emphasise the need for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) objectives and not objectives that were seen as 'business as usual'. Annual objectives should therefore not exceed six in total.
- xi. It had been anticipated that year one would be imperfect as the process was a reset in managing personal development and it was important in the first year to ensure its simplicity and manageability. Employees were able to invite comment from significant contributors other than their line manager, such as project managers. Consistency of assessment was important and HR would review and facilitate calibration across the University and monitor success.
- xii. Introducing the new system following Reset was a good idea and was aligned and

connected to the new University strategy. It would be essential to have the resources in place to ensure success.

- xiii. Senior managers would benefit from longer term University-wide objectives beyond three years as an indicator of commitment and measure of leadership. It was important that objectives were qualitative.

25.3 Following discussion, the Committee noted the presentation and the introduction of the new PDR system in 2025.

26 People, Culture and Engagement: Professional Services Transformation Programme – confidential

27 HR Workforce Analysis Dashboard - confidential

28 Staff Survey Update

28.1 Karen Tiller, Deputy Director of People Operations presented an update to the annual Staff Survey which would be launched on 1 October 2025. There would also be a race and equality survey held in June 2025 for the purposes of Athena Swan information.

- i. The University had appointed People Insights to carry out the survey as the company were able to provide benchmarking data from across the HE sector from 75 other HEIs. The last survey had been held in 2022 which had also been carried out by People Insights.
- ii. The last survey response rate had been 52% and the aim was to achieve a 65% response rate for the 2025 survey.
- iii. The survey would be called 'Have Your Say' and consisted of 52 standard questions which could not be changed apart from terminology to facilitate the ability to benchmark. There would be three free text questions and the ability to leave anonymous feedback.

28.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

- i. The reason for the 52% response rate had been identified as being post-Covid. Across the sector a 30% response rate was considered credible and the University would aim for 65% or higher. The recent research survey had received a completion rate of 15% due to Reset.
- ii. It was important to have a staff survey following Reset and a three-year gap since the last one was too long and should be a maximum of two years. It was also important for the resulting action plan to be taken seriously and was open and honest about taking necessary action and that managers were committed to this from the top.

28.3 Following discussion, the Committee noted the presentation and looked forward to seeing the results.

29 Executive People and Culture Committee - confidential

30 UK Supreme Court Ruling Update

30.1 Wayne Bowen, Deputy Chief People Officer provided an update on the recent UK Supreme

Court ruling on 16 April 2025 and University support for staff and students. The key points noted were:

- i. The University had responded quickly to the ruling and released a statement on 17 April 2025 to remind all staff of support available.
- ii. The judgement had not changed the University's priority to fully support all staff and students and the University estate had a wide range of facilities that provided options for users.
- iii. The government would release additional information at the end of June following a period of consultation and the University would respond accordingly. The University had had to temporarily remove some e-learning modules and the Gender Identity Policy until more information was known.
- iv. The University's Employment Lawyer was ready to advise on any necessary changes quickly should it be necessary and there had been no current concerns that the University had been unable to address.

30.2 The Committee noted the update.

31 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

31.1 Lisa Rhodes, Training and Research Culture Manager, Department of Research and Innovation presented the annual report on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The key points noted were:

- i. The Concordat was aimed particularly at contract researchers to support their long-term career development. The University had been committed to the Concordat and supporting research staff for 11 years.
- ii. The Concordat was reported annually to the Committee prior to publication on the web and then sent to Vitae, which is an organisation that provides support for researchers across all sectors. An action plan would be sent to Vitae and follow up reports on the progress of the action plan.
- iii. There was a particular focus on developing the culture of research and ensuring that research was accessible and inclusive.

31.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

- i. The pulse survey carried out in May 2024 across University research staff and managers had received a response rate of 15% and potentially due to the impact of Reset. This was a sector-wide historical issue and the recent national CEDARS (Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers) survey had a response rate of 59% which might indicate an increase in engagement amongst researchers.
- ii. A 50% response rate would have allowed for a more in-depth analysis and to facilitate the development of a more detailed up to date action plan.
- iii. The professional development of research staff was a combination of resources and University research staff had access to many colleagues at different career stages. Careers often moved horizontally as well as vertically and a number of researchers had chosen to become lecturers.
- iv. The Careers and Employability staff provided advice and guidance on careers outside of academia and how to structure applications to enter industry, which would provide

wide-ranging experience.

- v. The Concordat was fully aligned to the equality and diversity and worked closely with the EDI team to provide advice and to support the award of Athena Swan across the University.

31.3 Following discussion, the Committee noted the report.

32 Annual Gender Pay Gap Report

32.1 James Morris, Head of Reward and Recognition presented the annual report on the Gender Pay Gap and pay analysis for other protected characteristics: ethnicity and disability. The key points noted were:

- i. The annual Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap Report included pay information as of 31 March 2024.
- ii. UASL (University Academic Services Ltd) was not included in the report as it recently been established. It would be included next year as it had more than 250 employees and it was a statutory requirement to report on organisations of 250 or more.
- iii. Ethnicity and disability pay reports were not yet a statutory requirement under the law but would likely be included in the future. The University had provided pay gap reports on these protected characteristics for two years.
- iv. The gender pay gap had remained stable against last year although the overall trend since 2021 was downward particularly for the median pay gap.
- v. The mean ethnicity pay gap had reduced from 5.9% in 2023 to 2.5% in 2024 and the median pay gap from 0% to -3%. The mean disability pay gap had reduced from 7.6% in 2023 to 4.1% in 2024 and the median disability pay gap from 9.2% to 5.7%. The bonus data for these two categories was negligible.
- vi. The ethnicity and disability pay gaps were either equal to or below the sector and the UK economy as a whole from the comparative data that is available.
- vii. Analysis of the mean gap by grade indicated that that women were under-represented at the top of the pay spine and over-represented at the bottom of the pay spine. Grades 10 and 11 for professors were notable in which only 26% of professors were women and of these most women were in the higher band.
- viii. A potential approach to reducing pay gaps might be in improving gender distribution particularly in grades above grade seven.

32.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

- i. The fall in the pay gaps for ethnicity and disability were significant. The comparative data was only available over that last year and the improvement was encouraging.
- ii. The gender pay gap would start to improve as the application for academic progression from grade seven to grade eight was promoted and implemented.
- iii. The application process for professors had been improved and in the last selection round, there had been equal appointments for both men and women candidates. The current selection round was in progress and there appeared to be some evidence that women were reluctant to apply but their applications indicated that women were

more than ready for appointment.

- 32.3 Following discussion, the Committee noted the update and that the information has been published on the University external webpages on 30 March 2025 in accordance with both statutory and non-statutory reporting requirements.

33 New Recognition Scheme – confidential

34 Annual Payroll Movements 2023/2024

Committee received and noted the annual report on payroll movements for 2023/2024 provided by Finance. The report analysed the payroll costs of the University over that period.

35 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting and scheduled meetings of the People Committee for 2025/2026 would take place once agreed with the new Chair.

36 Record of Thanks

The Chair noted that this was the last People, Culture and Engagement Committee for David Willan and Chris Williams, External Governors. The Committee thanked them for their outstanding contributions and wished them well for the future.

It was the last Committee for Claudia Iton, Chair of the PCE Committee. David Willan noted the Committee's thanks to Claudia for the last six years as well as the Chair of the Remuneration Committees.