

Minutes of CRS forum 19
Held on 31/5/05, CAP, University house.

Present:

Michelle Ellefson	(Psychology, chairing)	ME
Shona Agarwal,		SA
Christine Hirst,		CH
Jenny O' Leary,	(Careers)	JOL
Marie Garnett, (CAP)		MG
Ruth Ayres	(CAP)	RA
Mark Potter	(Physics)	MP

Guest Speakers:

Helen Bird	(AUT)	HB
Pam Lowe	(AUT)	PL

Apologies:

Mairi-Ann Cullen
Mark Burrow

Items:

1. Minutes from the last Meeting

It was agreed that the notes represented an accurate record of discussion at the last meeting.

2. Presentation by HB and PL on employment issues relating to CRS from the viewpoint of the AUT:

Two main issues discussed:

(a): New national pay framework. By August 2006, all university staff will be moved to a common pay "Spine". The university is currently assessing where existing jobs will lie on this new spine. This was the cause of an AUT strike in February 2004. This strike achieved several objectives; the proposal for incremental pay increases based on performance was withdrawn, a 6.44% pay increase was granted over 2 years, and wage cuts decided by job assessment to be deferred as pay freezes over a number of years, during which the employees role might be re-defined to restore their original level of pay. The AUT has proposed increases of approximately £1000 to £5000 per annum over the RA salary ranges when transferred to the new spine. Although Warwick has not yet implemented the new pay structure, some universities have, and are offering higher RA salaries. All staff have a right of appeal if they believe they are graded unfairly on the new spine. The AUT will represent its members in this case.

(b): Fixed Term Employees Prevention of Less Favorable Treatment Regulations 2002

To clarify some points of this (relatively) new employment law

You must not be treated less favorably than someone in essentially the same position as you but on a permanent contract. There is a difficulty in bringing cases for research staff under this law due to a shortage of “Named Comparators”, i.e. researchers on permanent contracts with the same experience and duties as those on fixed term contracts.

Redundancy rights waivers in contracts are now illegal, at least if signed after October 2002 these are not valid.

If you have worked for 2 or more years you are entitled to a redundancy payment of (the lesser of £280 or your WEEKLY wage) multiplied by the number of WHOLE years worked (1.5 times this if you are over 41). This applies even if you leave into other employment with a different university, as long as you do not resign or leave early.

Your employer has an obligation to consult you before the end of your contract to confirm it will not be renewed, offer advice etc.

If you have been employed on two or more fixed term contracts for four years or more by 10th July 2006 you will be moved to an indefinite contract unless there is a justifiable and objective reason to continue the use of a fixed term contract. Until a test case comes up, there is not yet a precedent for “justifiable and objective reason”.

HB and **PL** left after this presentation.

3. Feedback from the ASDAC Subgroup extraordinary meeting on the 17th May.

RA: the ASDAC meeting was held to discuss a framework and proposed programme of skills training for research staff to meet the requirements of the Research Councils. Funding is being received at a rate of £850 for every research council funded CRS member; it is being negotiated currently how much of this will be allocated for the provision of training at Departmental level and how much for centrally provided training. It is hoped that the training programme will be opened up to all CRS, not just those who are research council funded. The possibility of arranging inter-university training sessions amongst the “Midlands Hub” university network is being explored.

ME commented that submitting papers should count towards the 10 days “compulsory training” for CRS.

4. Recording CRS training.

JOL showed us a prototype form for recording CRS training activities counting towards the 10 days per year compulsory training. Also an e-portfolio was demonstrated. Apparently this is now available on request to Warwick staff, and can be used for holding a CV as well as other career details online, for inspection by potential employers. This could also be used to record CRS training. The system uses Sitebuilder, and would be easy to customise and to transfer to another website.

ME stated that a similar system was already available for Psychology staff, and suggested that privacy options would be useful.

JOL will arrange for Robert O'Toole to give a more complete demonstration of the e-portfolio system at the next CRS Forum meeting.

5. Feedback on the Job Evaluation Scheme

MG reported that CRS will now be classed as academic rather than support staff for the job evaluation. **MG** will endeavor to find out whether there will be CRS included on the panel.

6. Feedback on "Welcome to Warwick" event on 25th May

RA reported that the event was successful; John Jones gave the welcoming speech, and the arrangement of sitting people at a number of tables worked better than the previous arrangement.

The next scheduled "open house" event on the 19th of July is to be postponed until early 2006, where it will be combined with the next "welcome to Warwick" event.

7. Joint CRS social event

This occurred on Thursday the 26th of May. Attendance was limited to Biology and Physics, with a strong emphasis on Biology since it was their regular social event.

ME suggested forming a CRS social club. Options for this will be reported on at the next meeting.

8. Any Other Business

JOL has joined a group (started by the Open University) for support of CRS career development. There are plans to set up a national website for CRS.

9. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 3rd August, 12-2pm, @ University House.