Introduction

It is pleasing to report that HR is providing effective strategic level support to the university via a number of one-off projects and on-going work which all emanates from the HR Strategy agreed in 2008. The university now has a new Institutional Plan and we are working this year to both implement current projects but also beginning to focus on the new Plan. In addition we are formulating plans for 2013/14 which will involve us undertaking a wide-ranging review of the effectiveness of activity by talking with “Heads” and also undertaking a staff survey in early 2014.

We are providing separate reports to the Committee on the following major projects and areas of activity:

- Reflect, Plan, Develop – new Staff Review (appraisal) scheme
- Staff Connect – new integrated HR/payroll system
- Revisions to Statute 7 and associated Ordnances
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

General Work

The University continues to recruit new staff at unprecedented levels which of course helps to keep us in business! But also means that the across the department HR staff are having to work hard to meet this demand. We hope that the investment in the new integrated system will help streamline some of this activity but it will take time to realise the benefits of this. In general terms there is also an increased demand for HR support in dealing with complex staff cases and we have been taking the opportunity to review our approach to this. We are just in the process of introducing a development programme on dealing with complex investigations both for HR staff but also for other staff outside of HR who lead on investigations into both disciplinary and grievance issues. Finally because of the recent changes to the immigration regulations and the London Met situation and the increased focus in this area we have decided to create a part-time post on a fixed term basis to help us put appropriate processes in relation to staff immigration matters in place. We are also working with Academic Division to “de-couple” the Sponsorship license for staff and students so that each area takes responsibility for its license.
Learning and Development

We continue to make great progress in this area. The pilot LASR programme has been completed and we have received positive feedback on that from both participants and their line managers. The third (and probably final) cohort of participants has just started the LPPSM and we are also running a pilot of grade 6 and 7 staff in conjunction with Helena Torres so linked to the AUA activity. We have supported the Erasmus staff exchange week and continue to work with departments in developing a range of programmes – again the main issue for us is keeping pace with the demand across the Institution.

Pay, Reward and Promotion

This is a significant area of activity with many legislative changes especially related to tax and pensions such as Pensions Auto-enrolment, pensions tax changes for high earners and the introduction of Real Time Information for the Inland Revenue (which means we are having to review the information we hold on staff and other people who work for us such as external examiners).

We have presented a paper to EG/Deans on the current “reward” environment for higher education with low levels of pay awards at a national level and the effect of tax changes on final salary pension schemes. We recognise that the University has an excellent overall reward package but that in some respects the current changes are eroding the value of this which makes it increasingly difficult to compete, where we need to, in terms of recruiting and rewarding the best staff from around the world.

It is also important to report that we feel that the work done in recent years on academic promotion is beginning to realise some real benefits for the organisation. This year we see an increase of 50% in terms of applications for promotion and it would appear the applications present a much richer picture of the range of academic activity which takes place at Kent.

Review of School Governance

The Vice-Chancellor asked David Nightingale to set up a Working Group to examine issues of governance in academic Schools. HR is taking a leading role in coordinating this activity. The Working Group’s terms of reference are:

1. To undertake a review of current practice in Schools across the University
2. To analyse the findings of the review and make recommendations to Executive Group on:
• Structures that might be adopted by Schools to ensure there is transparent governance of Schools
• How communication and consultation should work to help ensure the structure fosters accountability and delegation

3. How Heads of School can be best supported in their roles with effective:
  a. Information from other key parts of the University
  b. Learning and development prior and during their tenure as Head of School
  c. On-going support

A series of interviews were held in the summer with Heads of School, FAMs, SAMS and Deans. These initial interviews provided four key themes for the Working Group to focus their attention on:

1. **Limited Head of School influence across the University**: the lack of opportunities to have reflective and iterative conversations about issues that affect School governance or the role of Head of School in ways that will formally influence the University’s direction or decisions, and concerns that the structural and organisational relationships between Schools and other university governance constructs (e.g. Executive Group, Managers’ Forum, Senate, Council) hinder rather than enable a flexible and intellectually-led environment within which academic excellence and innovation can thrive.

2. **Planning cycles**: the contradiction between the need for Schools and Faculties to plan for the long term while institutional frameworks and budgets support only annual planning cycles (which, even then, do not produce management information in time for the start of a new financial year).

3. **Underperformance**: perceived lack of practical, trusted support for Heads who want to improve academic standards and practices by managing group or individual under-performance, particularly if that might include changing behaviour or ending the employment of members of a School.

4. **Central services controlling, not supporting**: an experience of central service departments expressing attitudes of command and control rather than proactive support and responsiveness to Schools coupled with poorly timed and uncoordinated communications from central departments, often using obsolete email lists, asking Schools to provide information at short notice that the centre should be able to access.

The work is continuing with an opinion survey of academic staff which has just closed. It is planned to produce a report for Executive Group by the end of this academic year.
Input into School Planning Meetings

The final project to highlight is the changes we have in terms of our input into the School Planning process. HR was asked to join the School planning meetings when they were introduced a few years ago. We are keen to ensure that the “people” planning elements of this process are given prominence. To aid this we have changed our approach this year by ensuring we provide the HR information earlier in the year so that Heads have that information when they are writing their plans. Additionally each of the HR Managers has been meeting separately with their Heads to explore the HR reports and I have asked each of the HR Mangers to report the impact of this change this year:

Faculty of Humanities
A verbal report to be given

Faculty of Sciences
I have been really pleased with the levels of HR discussion this year. The data has been enhanced to include School Admin Staff, and was provided to the Schools in early December. I understand that we were the first department to submit the data.

This has enabled that data and HR elements to receive focused comments in each of the School plans, and for Sciences this has combined well with the Athena Swan activity which has also received separate and specific comment in the plans.

Faculty of Social Sciences
Providing the data earlier has resulted in more meaningful responses from Heads of Schools, who, using the new template now comment on HR matters in their school plan. It was good to actually see an area designated to HR in the plan!! The commentary provided for a general high level discussion – but conversations focused on various issues, e.g. recruitment, career development, appraisal and HPLs. The data resulted in Heads talking about issues that had been noted, and actually thinking about how to deal with these in the future – e.g. some of my Schools are keen to embrace the principles of Athena Swan.

I did not discuss “Academics not Promoted” at the reserved agenda part of the meeting, as I had dealt with this by having individual meetings with Heads prior to the planning meetings. A report has been submitted to the Dean which summarised all academics not promoted across the entire faculty.

Data for the first time has been used to INFORM the plan, rather than just an add on at the end. We now need to extend our data further – hopefully get more robust equality data as system changes are implemented and split data in School for staff
based in Medway and Canterbury. This continues to be an evolving process, but it is
great to see HR on the agenda!