University of Aberdeen

Workload Planning Review Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 09 July 2020 (Teams Meeting)

Present: Karl Leydecker, Debbie Dyker, Brian Henderson, Amanda Lee, David Muirhead, Chris Collins, Tracey White, Ruth Taylor, Marion Campbell, Laura McCann, Neil Vargesson, Adam Price, Syrithe Pugh, Brian Paterson, Hulda Sveinsdottir Laura Benvie, Sarah Duncan, Lindsey Hamilton

1. Welcome

1.1 Karl Leydecker opened the meeting, welcoming everyone to the new Workload Planning Review Group. Karl explained that this was a hugely important area for the University and would build on the work of the previous Workload Review Group convened by Adam Price.

2. Remit, Composition and Membership

2.1 Karl invited the committee to consider the enclosed proposed remit, composition and membership of the group. Karl explained that the group was required to support the University in reviewing how workload was managed in the short and longer term.

Karl invited the group to make comments on the terms of reference.

2.2 It was suggested that Garry Fisher be invited to join the group.

Action LH to invite on behalf of the group

2.3 It was confirmed that the remit of the group was to consider workload across all staff groups (academic and professional services).

3. Update from Convenor of Workload Review Group

3.1 The group received a verbal update from Adam:

Adam confirmed that the group was formed in April 2019 and comprised of senior management and union representation and was constituted in response to a request from AUCU. The remit of the group had been to gather and collate relevant data from different sources in order to investigate whether and where the problem of overwork exists among staff, and if it did, its extent and causes. Adam continued that the group had spent a substantial amount of time collecting and analysing the data from the two staff surveys, absence data, as well as HESA staff and student data and that a report from the group would be available for the next meeting.

4. Short Term Planning

- **Staff Survey results (Pulse Survey)**

4.1 It was noted that the survey results that had been included with the paperwork provided high level indicators and that work was underway to analyse the free text comments from the survey, which would provide more detail about how the community was feeling.

The group were asked to comment on the paper and to think about suggestions that would make a positive difference to the community.

The following points were made:

- That the survey highlighted where individuals were overworked but didn't highlight where people might have a lighter workload and that there should be discussions about how work was distributed or could be distributed differently.
- It was suggested that the group discuss what is meant by a heavy workload and a fair workload.
- As well as workload; dignity in the workplace should be discussed so there was more of an understanding of each other's roles, and workload requirements. It was noted that work around mutual interdependency of work had started and would continue.
- A better understanding of different teams' work process and flowcharts would be beneficial.
- Clearer guidance about what work is a priority for the University was required.
- Schools had been reviewing school administration staffing levels and SAMs had the authority to review the requirements in their Schools.
- That there could be work pressures issues for Schools with tasks that had formally been undertaken at College level; it was worth identifying a plan to ensure all required duties are captured appropriately.
- That workload pressures for many parents will continue as the need to home-school through next semester is likely to still be there and that each Head of School had an annual review objective to consider the individual circumstances of each member of staff in the School. In addition, as part of the return to work plans, managers would be holding discussions with staff which would include identifying where caring commitments will impacted on return to campus so discussion would take place through that process too.
- It was highlighted that many staff were commenting that they had struggled to take time off since lockdown and whether there was a chance to take time off at another time. It was noted that SMT and the Unions would reflect on the matter of annual leave, noting the importance of encouraging people to take leave in timely manner where possible.

    4.2 The group agreed that the return to work guidance from furlough should be reviewed to suggest a phased return to duties.

    Action: TW to review return to work guidance

    4.3 It was noted that the digital strategy didn't currently look at productivity, however, Schools and Directorates would be contacted to explore if digital systems would help their area be more productive.

    Action: BH to contact Schools and Directorates

4.4 Workload Issues arising from the Research Sub-Group

The following points were noted:

- Expectations had to be managed about what to expect when staff returned to campus and communication made clearer that return to campus will be slow and controlled. For instance, in relation to laboratory staff it won't be possible to use

equipment and facilities straight away as equipment needs to be tested and other checks undertaken before actual work can commence.

5 Discussion on Longer Term Planning

The following points were made in relation to longer term planning:

- It was noted that to support longer term workload planning in the first instance there had to be a process of gathering documents, understanding actual workloads and how they are managed from each School's perspective.
- It was noted that although there had been a request for TRAC data to be reviewed in relation to workload review and planning, the system was not designed for this purpose, so it was not appropriate to release.
- Workload planning was an iterative process discussion on high level principles were required.
- That a Home Working Policy had been drafted and should be with the Policy Review Group in the near future.

5 Date of Next Meeting

The Group will next meet by Teams on Wednesday 12 August at 10.30am

TABLE OF ACTIONS

Reference	Description	Action by	Action Date
2.2	Invite Garry Fisher to the group	Lindsey Hamilton	01 August 2020
4.2	Return to work guidance to be enhanced	Tracey White	20 July 2020
4.3	Digital System requests	Brian Henderson	12 August 2020