NOTES FROM THE JOINT MEETING OF STAFF CONSULTATION
COMMITTEES (ACADEMIC STAFF)

Meeting: 23 March 2006, from 3.30 – 5.00pm in the Council Room, Registry Building

Chair: Barbara Fergusson
Present: Dani-Louise Bryan (Health Sciences), Tony Hooker (Health Sciences), Duncan McKay (Science and Engineering), Molly Whalen (Science and Engineering), Michael Tlauka (Social Sciences), David Powers (Science and Engineering), Cecile Cutler (Social Sciences), Deb King (Social Sciences), Donald Pate (EHLT), Ingrid Belan (Health Sciences), David Palmer (Social Sciences), Janet Phillips (Social Sciences). Mary Solomon and Jane Bromley (from Human Resources) also attended.

1. Introduction and welcome
Barbara Fergusson thanked all for attending and noted that the meeting would cover: enterprise bargaining and HEWRRs, performance management and taking of long service leave; and that notes would be circulated by the administrative officer of the respective consultation committees.

2. Enterprise Bargaining – brief overview (Barbara Fergusson)
   - Negotiations commenced in early February.
   - Formal Negotiating Group and Academic Staff and General Staff Working Teams have met a number of times to progress the drafting of a new enterprise agreement (EA) for the University that meets Flinders’ needs and the Government’s requirements
   - Quite a different negotiation environment this time round – impact of the HEWRRs; National Governance Protocols having the effect of increasing the level of Council / Resources Committee involvement; impact of pay rises in current EA still flowing through; prospect of more broader and far reaching workplace relations legislative changes
   - Aim to have a new EA ready in mid-May, which achieves a number of objectives for staff and the University
     o salary and conditions which maintain the good working environment at Flinders and which are financially responsible for the University
     o compliance with the HEWRRs so that the University receives the associated additional funding for 2007
   - The final EA will be principle-based (HEWRRs requirement). In response to a query about employment policies and the EA:
     o the principle-based clauses in the EA must be understandable and actionable
     o policies may be as detailed as necessary but must still comply with the HEWRRs (with regard to being flexible, tailored, direct consultation with staff, support organisation productivity, efficient processes etc – more info available at [http://www.flinders.edu.au/staff/workplace.html](http://www.flinders.edu.au/staff/workplace.html))
     o Employment and staffing policy matters are covered in both EA and policies as appropriate
   - University is committed to direct consultation and communication with staff
During EB, an additional consultation channel is available with the inclusion of the directly elected staff representatives in the negotiations - Dr Barbara Kameniar and Associate Professor Michael Brunger

For contact details and information regarding other ways of finding out about / contributing to EB

see http://www.flinders.edu.au/Local/hrd/eb/your_say.html

- In relation to the current negotiations – seeking feedback about two particular developments concerning: performance management for academic staff and the management of excess long service leave.
- It was noted while the focus is currently on finalising a new collective agreement (ie the new EA) under the HEWRRs the University must also offer an Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA) to all staff, by the deadline of 31 August 2006. Hence the importance of having the new EA in place as soon as possible (it too, must be final and compliant by 31 August – but will need to be in place earlier to time in with the offer of the choice between an AWA and the EA.)

3. Performance management framework for Academic Staff

Mary Solomon introduced this matter:
- Academic Staff Performance Review Scheme – been in place for over 10 years and served the University and staff well
- The University wishes to retain the current APRS as a basis for the framework and the academic profiles as the key reference point regarding promotion, probation, performance review etc
- HEWRRs requires universities to have in place a “fair and transparent performance management scheme which reward high performing individual staff … and efficient processes for managing poor performing staff”
- Other key requirements from the HEWRRs in relation to performance management include:
  - Support organisational productivity and performance
  - Tailored to suit the organisation
  - Not inhibit the capacity of the organisation to respond to changing circumstances

Discussion focussed on the new requirements and how they might be accommodated at Flinders;
- A set of key points concerning a “best practice performance management system” provided by DEST was tabled
- Regarding, “…the performance management system is designed to meet the needs of the organization…” the discussion covered:
  - link between APRS / detailed expectations in academic profiles and Flinders’ strategic plan- challenge in measuring individual performance against much broader organizational goals
  - challenges in gaining comparable measures of performance across different areas and (much debated in regard to research output, “measuring impact” etc)
  - teaching evaluation – performance management vs review and development purpose
- Regarding, “…the system aligns with other processes…” – the University will need to align incremental progression with the performance management process – will need to build this in to the current process, including the capacity to defer an increment (for example, where gaps in performance are identified)
possibility of using 360 degree reviews? [MS noted – very intensive process; not sure that the University is in the position at this stage to adopt on wide scale]

potential difficulty for research staff on grants administered by the University but supervised by staff external to the University – disconnect between contributions required as per profiles vs contributions required by external supervisor and the research grant

Regarding the new requirement to recognise and reward high performing staff – ideas were invited about: what constitutes “exceptional”, suitable mechanisms and rewards. Comments/suggestions put forward included:

- Access to assistance as a reward – eg administrative support, postdoctoral support
- Other ideas that had been aired elsewhere included, in addition to promotion, access to conference leave, one off bonus, public recognition
- Preference for being “nominated” – eg for a promotion (rather than having to put significant time into an application); being “nominated” preferable to having to “put oneself forward”
- Citation (eg by Executive Dean) eg for excellence in teaching
- Concern about financial implications of having to fund exceptional performance as well as promotion

4. Long service leave – excess accumulated leave and how to manage?
Barbara Fergusson introduced this matter:
- the University is carrying a significant unfunded liability for long service leave (LSL)
- provisions have been introduced over the last few years to make the taking of LSL more flexible – eg can take at 7 years’ entitlement (rather than waiting for 10 years); can take it at half time; or in days over a long period
- there are still a number of academics with excess accruals (ie more than 65 days)
- the University, as part of EB negotiations, is considering a provision to cash out excess LSL linked to also taking leave, to reduce the balance
- Suggestions about how to encourage the taking of LSL were invited. Discussion included:
  - Suggestion – offer an incentive eg add LSL on to OSP
  - Queries
    - could the cash be put into superannuation? (Answer: may be tax difficulties. Perhaps could take as cash and make an additional contribution)
    - why is LSL liability “unfunded”? (Answer: Flinders does not include in oncosts; some universities are building up a fund – but their oncosts are typically much higher - @ 35%+)
  - Impediments to taking LSL
    - difficult to manage in a small work area due to workload impact on colleagues
    - teaching and higher degree student supervision commitments can make being absent difficult

5. AWAs
Query – when will information be available about what matters are open for negotiation?
Answer – those on the University web site give some indication. More information will be available closer to the time.