

Branch Meeting 21 October 2020 (on-line)

Chair: Dai Moon

44 members in attendance

1) Welcome and updates

Chair welcomed new members and gave a verbal update on the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases on campus. Chair confirmed that there appeared to be some recognition within the Senior Management Team that attendance at IPT was not as expected and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) would encourage Departments to monitor student attendance at these classes. Chair was hopeful that, given the extensive use of recorded material, staff rights in terms of copyright would clearly be outlined soon.

Chair reported on the evolving situation at the various Institutions within the region.

2) Membership feedback on In Person Teaching & Control Measures

The meeting continued into six breakout rooms to seek member's views the issues associated with In Person Teaching and Control Measures. Each room reported back to the plenary session via a spokesperson. The main issues raised from this exercise were:

a) Increased workload

Every breakout room reported a significant increase in workload associated with the current working arrangements. This was the principal issue both for members in teaching and non-teaching roles. The issue of increased digitalisation featured rather prominently, while colleagues recognised that things might settle in the long term, the launch of many platforms at a very late date caused a significant increase in workload across the board: ranging from those supporting the new digital tools all the way down to the users. Many members reported feeling overwhelmed and the general view was that there was a lack of awareness from Senior Management of the situation at the coalface. To some the thankyou's offered at Town Hall and similar events sounded rather hollow.

b) In person teaching and working on campus

Some colleagues in non-teaching roles had been pressurised to work on Campus where there was no need to do so. Members reported significant discrepancies on how individual managers were interpreting Government advice. Some members felt unsafe in their working environment and this applied especially to colleagues in non-teaching roles. Colleagues involved in IPT reported that by and large they felt safe with a few exceptions. Members reported disappointment at the half-hearted way in which the University had applied Control, the result was

a lack of clarity on the procedures to follow in case of breaches and members felt the University's should have issued much stronger guidance with regards to this.

c) Fractional contracts

Members on fractional contracts reported having exceeded the contracted hours to carry out jobs and not having been paid for the additional work.

d) Bath blend

The pedagogical rationale underpinning the Bath Blend, especially the IPT arrangements, was questioned by members. Colleagues reported that students were also rather skeptical of the University's motives for such approach and that some directly linked the contact hours offered as an effort to justify the high tuition fees.

e) Contact tracing

Members reported dismay at the University relying on National Contact Tracing to notify colleagues and students of potential exposure to COVID-19. Members reported that this resulted in significant lack of trust in the employer with a general sense that the University was using GDPR as an excuse to be less than open over the extent of transmission on campus. The net result was that colleagues and students were contact tracing for themselves. Members reported discrepancies between the number of cases reported by the University via the Covid dashboard and the actual number of cases in particular Departments. It was not clear whether GTAs involved in face to face teaching and subsequently testing positive for CoVID-19 would be reported alongside staff or student numbers.

3) AoB

Members reported their disappointment that the proposals for improving parental leave, which had already been agreed by the University, had not been progressed at all so far.