

Bristol UCU Briefing Document - Strategy Update

General Meeting, Wednesday, 9th November, 13:00-14:00, LT3, Arts Complex

Tracey, Jamie and James met with senior management in October to discuss the “Our Staff” Action Plan of the new University Strategy.

We have asked for sight of the other action plans – not yet received – but expect that the UCU and the trade union focus will be on the “Our Staff” strand of the Strategy Implementation.

We focussed the meeting on our 3 branch priorities:

- *Workloads*
 - *Progression and Promotion*
 - *Gender Equality*
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- *Workloads*

In keeping with this high priority for members, branch officers stressed the urgent need for action on workloads and our disappointment that it does not feature in the Vision and Strategy nor in the action plan. The workload model project (involving the use of Simitive software) has stalled.

We reminded them that workloads for our members are running dangerously and unacceptably high and that this is our members’ top priority to be dealt with.

See our paper outlining the Branch’s strategy: Bristol UCU ‘Workload Strategy for 2016/17’

- *Progression and Promotion*

Regarding our pathway 2 (P2) and 3 (P3) priorities, the feedback was that P3 was now being looked at (at the Strategy Implementation Board level) with a view to tying it into the VC’s increased focus on teaching (as opposed to ‘just’ research)

A sticking point with P3 was that there was some uncertainty as to how to measure satisfactory and acceptable performance - in terms of research it was clear (grant monies)

Worryingly, P2, according to the PVC, had not come up as an issue, for example, at the September Strategy Planning Conference.

From a Bristol UCU perspective, this is very odd given we have mentioned our concerns regarding the dysfunctionality of P2 progression and promotion and the University's risk adverse attitude to research staff. We are also aware of lobbying by the Research Staff Reps Group, and (as many can testify to) of a People feedback session of the Vision and Strategy all-staff meetings at which it was discussed at length.

One other issue came up: re-looking at progression from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, profile level c to profile level d.

While this was presented as being at the 'considering' stage, based on the experience of the 'considering' of the external appointments to senior academic roles, one might consider this a fairly firm objective. From a Bristol UCU perspective, we need to organise if we are going to prevent it.

The raising of the threshold of L to SL progression, and the return of promotional attitude towards progression, would represent a significant step back in terms of the National Framework Agreement and its incorporation at Bristol. The evidence for this suggested reform seems very shaky. Apparently some Heads of School consider the PI progression process too opaque.

- *Gender Equality*

There are several strands related to gender equality in the "people" action plan - these are very lacking in detail and not clear what grass roots involvement there will be.

In terms of gender pay they seemed to be back tracking somewhat stating that the recent increased promotion of women to professorial level has made the gender pay gap worse (“worse” in that there are more recently promoted women so the pay gap between them and the “long-standing” male professors is greater) and that the will to deal with this doesn’t seem as strong. We obviously need to challenge this.

James raised the cases of LSE and Exeter. James agreed to find out who did the research for LSE to see if we could piggy-back.

They said that we had to have external recruitment of HoSs in order to deal with gender inequality. We suggested that automatic external advertising continued to discourage and disadvantage female staff.

We are setting up a group to look the gender strands of the people strategy. This group will comprise all the female members of Exec plus other interested parties.

Anyone interested in joining the group should email ucu-office@bristol.ac.uk

- *Other Issues Arising From Vision & Strategy*

We also highlighted the lack of involvement of Early Career Staff in the Implementation Process.

We also inquired about governance and the possibilities of a more ‘streamlined’ Senate. No firm plans as of yet from SIB.

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James Thompson