

Staff Forum Handbook

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Introduction to the Staff Forum

The Staff Forum was created in early 2014 to ensure there were opportunities for staff to hear about and discuss matters that affect their working experience.

Employee representatives are encouraged to bring ideas, questions and concerns to the meetings. We can challenge the management on staff related matters and take an active role in discussing and seeking practical solutions.

Employer representatives who attend the termly Staff Forum meetings (Professor Robert Van de Noort, PVC Resource and Planning and John Brady, Director of HR) update the Staff Forum members with matters that affect staff and reply or act upon any issues raised.

Who do Staff Forum members represent?

Staff Forum members will cover representation for the following staff groups:

- Employees at Grades 1 – 5 of the University's pay and grading structure
- Employees employed on Henley Management College terms and conditions who, if graded, would be at Grades 1 – 5 of the University's pay structure
- Employees at Grade 6 + of the University's pay and grading structure (on the basis of the role being one of information sharing/communication only).
- Employees employed on Henley Management College terms and conditions who, if graded, would be at Grades 6+ of the University's pay structure

What kind of Staff Forum representatives make up the membership of the Staff Forum?

The Staff Forum is made up of:

- At least 8 and not more than 16 employee representatives (G1-5) and 6 employee representatives (G6+).
- There should be the following number of employee representatives for each section of the University:

Constituency	No of Employee reps (G1-5)	No of Employee reps (G6+)
Functions (excluding those within AGS and Estates and Facilities)	5	1
Estates and Facilities	5	1
AGS	3	1
Schools	3	3

- In addition the Staff Forum will aim to have representation at all campuses and actively encourage diversity in its representatives so the group can be representative of the University community.
- Two of the representatives will be elected by the Staff Forum employee representatives to be Co-Chairs of the Forum (there should be a representatives from the representatives for staff G1-5 and one from the representatives for staff of any grade).

- Staff Forum representatives will normally hold office for 3 years from the date of election or appointment at which point their term of office will cease with immediate effect.
- Staff Forum representatives may stand for re-election but they shall not normally be permitted to serve for more than two consecutive periods of office (maximum 6 years).

Role of a Staff Forum representative

Staff Forum representatives G1-5 have a different remit to those who may be representing staff G6+. Definitions of roles are outlined below:

All employee representatives will bring ideas, questions and concerns to the Forum and take an active role in discussion, seeking practical ways forward and resolving such matters within the University.

The Staff Forum will enable the University to **inform** and **consult** with employees and seek their views through the employee representatives on the following matters relating to **staff at Grades 1-5**:

- Decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or contractual relations, including proposed redundancies involving more than 20 staff, and transfers of the business or part of the business, subject to clause 4.3 of the information and consultation agreement.
- Significant changes to HR policies and procedures or terms and conditions of employment common to employees covered by this agreement.
- Changes to the University's occupational pension scheme.
- Implications of any significant legislative initiatives which may affect the working environment, terms and conditions or workplace practices and policies of the University.
- Any other matters as may be deemed appropriate by the Chairs.

The Staff Forum will enable the University to **inform only** on the matters above in relation to staff who are Grade 6+ as collective bargaining agreements are in place with Reading University and College Union (RUCU). RUCU are recognised as the formal employee representative body (as outlined in the Trade Union Recognition and Procedure Agreement) by which the University is legally obliged to inform and consult regarding the above points for employees at Grade 6 and above.

All Staff Forum representatives are expected to:

- Attend a termly Staff Forum meeting at the Whiteknights campus (although there is an opportunity to Skype into these meetings if representatives are based at other campuses).
- Take a turn on the rota to monitor and respond to enquiries which come into the Staff Forum mailbox.
- Take turns on the rota to attend the Staff Induction to promote the Staff Forum to new members of staff who are joining the University.
- Provide support to staff who may be required to attend formal meetings relating to their employment e.g. formal consultation meetings in relation to potential redundancy, disciplinary hearings, formal meetings where a manager may be

discussing concerns in relation to an individual's performance or capability, formal grievance investigation meetings.

- Attend training organised for Staff Forum representatives to support them in their roles.
- Undertake tasks to support the communication of the work of the Staff Forum with members of staff you represent.
- Create and maintain your Staff Forum profile in the shared drive on "OneNote"
- Regularly review the information on "OneNote" to ensure you are aware of the activities your Staff Forum representative peers are involved with.

Other things you may get involved with as a Staff Forum representative:

- **Act as Staff Forum representative for a change project** – for example, a large re-structure, introduction of a new system such as the Electronic Management of Assessment Programme (EMA) Project.
- **Working Groups** - working groups are convened to oversee projects that are in progress. They generally concern matters that affect staff at the University. The working group will usually include people who are instigating and driving the project together with those who can contribute or need to be kept informed. By being involved in a working group we can keep our fingers on the pulse and contribute if the interests of the staff we support are likely to be affected. Our comments and input will be heard before the new policy or course of action is finalised and this is where we have the opportunity to make a big difference. Working groups Staff Forum representatives have been/are involved with include: Staff Survey Working group and the Faces at Reading Working Group.

When you attend working groups you are there as a Staff Forum representative so speak out if necessary. Should something trouble you get us all together to discuss, we can then raise meetings with the people concerned to ensure the Staff Forum voice is heard.

- Take on responsibilities for helping to promote and communicate the activities of the Staff Forum e.g. ensuring regular updates to the Staff Forum webpages are completed, working with support from colleagues in the MCE function.

Role of Staff Forum Chairs

The key responsibilities of Staff Forum Chairs are as follows:

- Chair Staff Forum meetings, agreeing the agenda and dates/times of meetings with Rachel Thorns, HR Partner acting in her capacity as Staff Forum Secretary.
- Ensure actions are followed up from meetings (where actions lie with Staff Forum representatives) and facilitate / organise project working groups as required.
- Arrange for representatives from the Working Groups to update the wider Staff Forum on progress of activities and projects.
- Liaise with Staff Forum representatives to ensure the rota for covering monitoring the Staff Forum mailbox and rota for covering Staff Inductions is working.
- Manage a training and facilities budget.

Staff Forum Meetings

Staff Forum meetings will be held at least once a term or more frequently (if considered appropriate by the Chairs).

Where it is identified that there are particular issues Staff Forum representatives wish to discuss which are only relevant to a particular staff Group (i.e. G1-5 or G6+) the Staff Forum may set up sub-groups to discuss and consider particular issues.

This may include statutory information and consultation regarding a particular constituency of the Forum (for staff G1-5). The decision to set up such a sub-group will be made following discussion and consultation with the Forum.

The Sub-groups will also be required to report back to the main Staff Forum meetings progress with resolving issues they are identifying and discussing.

At each meeting a Head of Function (or his or her delegate – which would normally be their Deputy) will be invited to attend the meeting to inform the group about key activities happening in that Function area, receive questions from Staff Forum representatives and enable there to be an opportunity for discussion and/or consultation on any longer term plans or projects where the Head of Function may feel it would be helpful to get some input from the Staff Forum before plans are finalised.

The Pro Vice Chancellor, Resource and Planning and the Director of HR will attend all Staff Forum meetings to provide input in relation to issues which are pertinent for the Staff Forum to be aware of. Equally to respond to any issues/queries Staff Forum representatives may wish to raise with them.

Information provided to the Staff Forum

The following minutes of formal University meetings will be shared with the Staff Forum as a matter of course:

- Staffing Committee
- Joint UCU/University Committee
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee

Induction of Staff Forum representatives

We want to support and develop Staff Forum representatives in their roles so that they feel confident to undertake their responsibilities.

When you become a Staff Forum representative you will receive the following support:

- A "buddy" – a fellow Staff Forum representative who has a keen interest in helping you settle into your role. Within the first month of you becoming a representative, they will talk you through some key things you need to know about being a representative and will introduce you to the Skills Matrix so you can see what you need to familiarise yourself with (in terms of information on the shared drive the Staff

Forum representatives can access) and of training and development opportunities which are available to help you develop in your role.

- Termly informal meetings with an HR Partner – each HR Partner meets on a termly basis with a group of Staff Forum representatives to help with advising on HR policies and procedures and to provide coaching in relation to any issues or queries representatives may have and wish to discuss in confidence. Dedicated training from external providers and a range of internal development opportunities to ensure representatives are informed about their responsibilities and can develop key skills to help them grow in their roles and can use these transferable skills in their substantive roles.

Training and Development Opportunities

We would encourage Staff Forum representatives to have a PDR objective running whilst they are undertaking the Staff Forum representative role. This will then encourage you to discuss and record how this experience is aiding your own personal development with your line manager and how what you are learning through being a Staff Forum representative is having a positive impact on your substantive role and department at the University.

Key training which is provided for Staff Forum representatives is as follows:

- ACAS Training - half day's training for representatives covering the following topics: an overview of Information and Consultation and the benefits, the role and responsibilities of employee reps, legal aspects – e.g. – TUPE, Collective Redundancies, Health & Safety (timings & employer obligations), consultation in practice – what effective consultation involves and the pitfalls
- Mental health first aid training (3 hours course delivered by external supplier)
- Reward and benefits
- Occupational Pension schemes
- HR policies and procedures – namely disciplinary, attendance/sickness, performance, restructuring and grievance