



STAFF FORUM DISCUSSION SESSION SUMMARY

Topic: Pay Cuts: Pros and Cons

Date/ Time: Tuesday 23rd June 2020 at 1pm

The Staff Forum welcomed attendees to the first ever virtual Staff Forum discussion session. Usually, the Staff Forum hold discussion sessions in person, on campus, once a month to give colleagues the opportunity to voice their opinions and to have a healthy discussion about topics relating to working at the University of Reading (UoR). The Staff Forum have decided to host weekly discussion sessions during the current consultation period and are really pleased to see that so many colleagues are interested and keen to engage with us. The Staff Forum have also introduced a new [distribution list](#).

Colleagues in attendance raised questions regarding the role of the Staff Forum in the Consultation so far, including what meetings have taken place and who they are able to represent. Steve Guest, Chair of the Staff Forum explained that the Staff Forum is a group of volunteers who can consult on behalf of colleagues grade 1-5 and who can inform colleagues grade 6+. The Staff Forum have attended all of the meetings in the consultation so far since the first meeting was held on Thursday 18th June 2020. It was noted that not all attendees in the discussion session were aware that the consultation period had already begun. Some concerns were raised regarding the capacity limits for participation in the Staff Forum discussion sessions. Siân Walsh, one of the Deputy Chairs of the Staff Forum explained that the Staff Forum were not expecting such high demand for the discussion sessions (usually the discussions on campus have around 30 participants) so the Staff Forum had based the numbers on those sessions. The Staff Forum representatives explained to the group that this was the first of many discussion sessions and highlighted other methods for staff to **Get Heard** including drop-in sessions, joining the distribution list and emailing staff-forum@reading.ac.uk.

Colleagues in attendance raised many comments and questions about the potential options on the table. It was apparent that colleagues could understand why the University were thinking about these options in order to reduce the number of potential redundancies but there was a lot of uncertainty regarding how these options would affect individuals. The group discussed what 'collective response' means and hoped that everyone would be impacted in a similar way and that some teams/staff would not be isolated or become vulnerable.

The discussion covered three main themes:

- **Pay cuts:** how they will affect individuals differently according to their personal circumstances. There are concerns over the short notice any changes to this may have for personal finances.

The group raised questions about pay cuts and what would happen if a pay cut caused individuals to no longer be able to afford to live (pay mortgages etc.), which then resulted in them having to leave UoR and then due to the recruitment freeze, other staff would be required to pick up the extra work. Staff would not be happy to work more for less money and this does not even consider the intrinsic extra costs in hiring if people leaving due to the cuts need to be replaced.

- **Pay freeze:** might be better in the short term but could be more negative in the long term. Would pay return to what it should be or will it be forever 3 years (or however long these measures last) behind?

The group raised questions regarding the length of potential pay freezes when it is not clear how student recruitment will be affected. The University will need to respond to the situation as it evolves.

- **4 day week:** the university will need to ensure that workloads decrease. They will need to look at ensuring staff only do four days-worth of work for four days pay.

The group raised questions about the 4 day week option and what this would mean. Is it as clear cut as closing the university for an extra day or would staff have flexibility over the hours they chose to work and how would this affect flexible working arrangements that have already been agreed. There were also comments made regarding strains on resources and teaching spaces if the working week was reduced.

Concerns were also raised about workload; a reduction in student numbers would not necessarily equal a reduction in the work administration teams, teaching staff, etc. have to do as a lot of these roles include processes that remain the same regardless of the number students.

It was clear that many members of staff are concerned that some may be disproportionately affected by any measures put in place. Colleagues raised concerns about the impact on:

- Part time staff
- Staff who are close to retirement
- Staff on maternity/paternity leave (or close to it)
- Pension contributions
- Holiday allowances

What colleagues in the discussion have asked for:

- Colleagues in this discussion asked if some kind of visual resource or calculation could be provided to assist with assessing the impact on them individually.
- More clarity on what the options are and what is included/excluded from
- Colleagues in this discussion agreed that a timescale for reviewing any measures should be put in place and this should be made clear to all staff. Any pay cuts should have a definite end date and be reviewed regularly to minimize the impact on staff.
- Would those who need to recoup money to cover existing financial commitments be able to have the opportunity to seek alternative appointment or would they be restricted to working just for the University?
- If a 4 day week is introduced, will there be a commitment to it being for a temporary amount of time? If the university finds it works well, would there be a risk that they would decide to keep it?