



STAFF FORUM DISCUSSION SESSION SUMMARY

Topic: Pay freeze and one other option. What would you choose?

Date/ Time: Tuesday 28th July 2020 at 1pm & Thursday 30th July 2020 at 1pm

The Staff Forum representatives welcomed attendees to the discussion sessions and explained that the Staff Forum were hosting discussion sessions during the current consultation period to give colleagues the opportunity to give their views, ask questions and have a discussion about how the options being considered as part of the response to the Covid-19 situation. Colleagues were also invited to send through any other questions, comments or suggestions to staff-forum@reading.ac.uk. It was also noted that staff could access the summaries from the discussion sessions via the Staff Forum website.

The Staff Forum Representatives introduced the topic and explained that based on the Staff Forum Consultation Survey results and the discussions of the Consultation Group that a pay freeze was the most agreeable option to staff. It was noted that this option wouldn't save all the estimated deficit and the focus of these discussion sessions was to find out if staff would take on additional measure and if so, what measure would be preferred? (The other options for consideration are a tiered pay cut, 4 day week and a 9 day fortnight).

Staff in the discussion sessions agreed that a pay freeze would be preferred as the first choice, but if a second option was required there was preference toward a tiered pay cut. The Staff Forum representatives asked colleagues in the discussion sessions if they would prefer a larger pay cut over a shorter period of time or a smaller pay cut over a longer period of time. A definitive preference wasn't established by the colleagues in the discussion sessions. Some colleagues noted that they would prefer to take a larger pay cut over a shorter period of time due to retirement, employee retention/ attraction and other financial impacts that could occur in a longer time period. Some colleagues noted that they would prefer a smaller cut for a longer period of time so that there would less impact on monthly budgets.

The discussion sessions covered the following themes:

Pay freeze: Colleagues in the discussion sessions asked how much the pay freeze would deliver in cost savings (if it was only wages being looked at) and whether the recruitment freeze would continue. Staff Forum representatives noted that the latest deficit figure is £104 million and £46 million of this would come from the University's assets. The remaining £58 million would come from salary sacrifice. The Staff Forum representatives explained that the pay freeze would provide £27 million of savings. A second salary sacrifice option would be required to reduce the number of residual redundancies and confirmed that the recruitment freeze would continue as part of these measures.

Consultation Process: Colleagues in the discussion sessions sought clarification on what would happen if the University, Staff Forum and UCU can't agree on a universal solution by the end of the consultation period. Colleagues in the discussion session asked if staff could end up on different terms and conditions following this consultation.

The Staff Forum representatives explained that the Staff Forum is not a Union and so the University has to come to individual agreements with staff in grades 1 – 5. It is possible that

these agreements could be different but that not the intention of all those concerned. The Staff Forum representatives noted that they could not comment on UCU's position and advised colleagues to contact UCU directly if they wanted more information. The Staff Forum representatives explained that no decisions have been made by the Consultation Group yet but it highlighted that the three parties genuinely want a fair, collective agreement. If an agreement wasn't reached that there would not be an automatic move to dismissing and rehiring staff and that would be viewed as a last resort. Staff Forum representatives reiterated that the current consultation phase is focused on reaching a collective agreement. If a collective agreement is not reached (by all parties in the Consultation Group) this does not mean that the measures will be implemented on some groups of staff and not others.

Timeline: Colleagues in the discussion sessions asked when staff will be informed of the decisions and the timing of implementation of measures. The Staff Forum representatives noted that they did not know the answer to this question but mentioned that all staff would be notified in advance in accordance with the notice periods in their contracts. The Staff Forum representatives added that UCU have negotiation rights for staff on grade 6+ contracts and those on grades 1 – 5 contracts would be written to individually regarding any changes. Staff Forum representatives explained that implementation will be easier to map out once the measure(s) have been agreed and reassured colleagues in the discussion sessions that staff would be notified as soon as possible. It was also mentioned that the Staff Forum held a recorded question and answer session with the VC and Parveen Yaqoob on the 27th July which may help colleagues with some of their questions.

Redundancies: Colleagues in the discussion sessions asked whether there would still be redundancies even if salary saving methods are implemented. The Staff Forum representatives explained that the Phase 2 consultation was focused on securing the future of the University and that some restructuring could take place as a result of phase 2 consultation discussions. The Staff Forum representatives noted that the aim of Phase 1 was to reduce job losses as much as possible in the first instance but other factors may need to be considered.

What colleagues in the discussion sessions have asked for:

- Staff Forum Survey results – the results were published on the Staff Forum website (Consultation page) on the 29th July 2020.
- Clarification on when measures will be decided & a clear timeframe of implementation