

February 2015

PSR OVER? DARO RESTRUCTURES

On 12 December 2014 the Deputy Vice Chancellor told us that the 30 day consultation for the Professional Services Review (PSR) redundancy process “will close at the end of 2014”. We all thought that this meant the end of redundancies for a while. However, on 6 January 2015 we were presented with a further 30 day redundancy consultation of Professional Services staff in DARO which has just concluded with a total of 9 voluntary redundancies. This group was subject to the original PSR 1 process and now a year later further cuts are demanded. This is despite the fact that full data on DARO’s performance compared to other institutions will not be available until the later this year, and the Vice Chancellor’s assurance that “the new Service is working well” (VC Update number 56, 8 January 2015).

Reflection on REF results

We leafleted staff at the VC’s REF results presentation in December 2014 – read more at cityucu.wordpress.com. In February 2015, how can we reflect on the results?

Once again the effect of the REF is to produce rankings which underpin the channelling of research funding and resources into the big research universities. Despite considerable expenditure, City did not improve its ranking. The price we have paid for recruiting more research active staff is the loss of teaching staff with professional backgrounds, all crucial to our role as the university for business and the professions. Furthermore, as they have become more and more

overstretched, these staff have not had the opportunity to develop and use their research skills to investigate questions which may be highly relevant to their professional practice but less prestigious according to the REF criteria.

In addition, some of the increased percentages of staff with 3* and 4* publications result from smaller submissions. For example, in the 2008 RAE, the work of 193.4 FTE staff was submitted across all health sciences ([www.rae.ac.uk/results/qualityProfile.aspx?id=113 &type=hei](http://www.rae.ac.uk/results/qualityProfile.aspx?id=113&type=hei)), while in the 2014 REF the equivalent figure was 67.6 FTE staff (results.ref.ac.uk/Results/ByHei/113).

Visiting Lecturers’ policy update

Five years ago City approved a set of terms and conditions for this group of part time academic staff which were judged to be one of the fairest in the HE sector. There has been a continual struggle to get this University policy fully implemented in some Schools. There were 798 VLS at the last count and they broaden the range of teaching at City, stand in for staff on leave (maternity, sabbaticals, secondments etc.) and play a valuable role in freeing up time for research orientated academics. Recently the University seems to have moved backwards, again only in some Schools, by making petty savings at the expense of these staff. Following a meeting with VLS in November 2014, City UCU has established that an increasing number of staff are not receiving increments, are being paid on the wrong scales, are subject to cuts in hours without consultation and compensation, and some are not receiving redundancy pay. City UCU is in discussion with HR but neither they nor UCU know the scale of this abuse.

Please inform the Union of any problems you come across in this area. Contact details for members of the branch committee are overleaf.

Employment Tribunals and NDAs

Recent freedom of information requests reveal the amount spent by all universities on employment tribunal payouts, associated legal costs, and the extent of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs or “gagging clauses”). The full data is available at academicfoi.com/index.htm. Here are some of the data concerning City for the last 3 years:

- 8 current or former staff submitted claims to the employment tribunal service
- 5 of these claims resulted in settlements before the full hearing, all of which involved non-disclosure agreements
- The total of these settlements was £139,500
- Legal expenses for these settlements totalled £262,599
- 29 current or former staff signed NDAs for other reasons

Drop-in sessions for members:

Mondays 3-5pm, Union Office, C140

Wednesdays 11am-1pm, Cass

[@CityUCU](https://twitter.com/CityUCU)

cityucu.wordpress.com

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Member's letter: VSS, ZBR, PSR... What next?

Over the last few years staff have gone through unprecedented numbers of restructuring, cost saving and consultation processes (VSS, ZBR, PSR etc), culminating in PSR 2. At the same time, the organisation has rolled the dice in a big way: huge spending to achieve a university version of champions' league glory. So where have the years of turmoil got us? Many good colleagues have disappeared, been replaced, come back on bigger contracts - how much extra work have we all had to take on, and for what? To fulfil the VC's vision of becoming a top 2% university. We are still way off achieving that arbitrary target.

While academics have been through the wringer of the REF and new academic role profiles, the disaster that was PSR 1 lead to the embarrassment of PSR 2. It is little wonder that the staff survey results show such opposition

to the leadership. You would have thought that the VC might stop there, show some dignity and resign.

At least we have moved to a position of relative job security? However, due to the dire financial situation these decisions have put us in, we have now moved to a situation in which "service enhancements and cost reductions can now be pursued consistently as part of future University planning rounds" (Chief Financial Officer's All-Staff Briefing, December 2014). This means that they can choose who and what they target, whenever they want.

So what can we do to stop this continual onslaught against the workforce? We could all just keep our fingers crossed and hope it is not you next. Alternatively you can voice your objection, join the UCU and shout as loud as you can about the ridiculous policies we are facing.

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