



People and Operations Committee Meeting

Monday, 23 June 2025, 11.00 – 12.00
Room SC04, William Gates Building

MINUTES

In attendance:

Dr Fermin Moscoso del Prado Martin, Faculty Member (Chair)
Celia Burns, Faculty Administrator (Secretary)
Jo de Bono, Wellbeing Advocate (for Professional Services Staff)
Professor Thomas Sauerwald, Deputy Head of Department
Dr Sue Sentence, Wellbeing Advocate (for research staff and UTOs)
Dr Ajay Shankar, Research Staff Forum Rep
Caroline Stewart, Departmental Secretary
Alicja Zavros, HR Manager

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Eva Kalyvianaki.

2. Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The [minutes](#) of the meeting held on 19 May 2025 were approved.

4. Report on Actions from the Last Meeting

i) Recruitment suggestions (item 4(i), 19 May 2025)

Caroline reported that she has asked the Postgraduate Education Committee (PEC) to consider the recruitment suggestions discussed by this Committee, as well as a suggestion made by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee at its 9 June meeting for a 10-minute video to help students better address their research opportunities in interviews. These issues are currently with PEC.

ii) UTO membership on both the People and Operations Committee (POC) and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC) (item 4(iv), 19 May 2025)

The Committee noted that Dr Prakash Murali, a member of the EDIC, will be joining the POC from October 2025. This item will now be removed from the agenda.

iii) Athena Swan action plan and family leave policies (item 5, 19 May 2025)

Alicja reported that she has updated the department website to include direct links to the relevant University policy pages, and has added information about new

policies relating to neonatal care leave and emergency leave. There was concern that the links to University policy pages may break if the University changes its link structure, and the suggestion was made to ask the IT Strategy Committee if they could provide an automatic link update detector for this issue. It was agreed that Thomas (member of the IT Strategy Committee) would raise this at the next IT Strategy Committee meeting (later today).

Action: Thomas

iv) Mental health first aiders (MHFAs) (item 6(i), 19 May 2025)

Following an enquiry from the Health and Safety Committee, it was agreed at the last meeting that the department should have some MHFAs. Caroline reported that she had not yet had an opportunity to find out about Department interest and training in being a MHFA. The Committee discussed the issue further and agreed that Caroline would hold off on exploring interest in being an MHFA and, in the meantime, Alicja and Jo would explore training options. The issue will be discussed again at the Michaelmas meeting.

Action: Alicja and Jo

v) Wellbeing survey for research staff (item 6(ii), 19 May 2025)

At the last meeting, several issues arising from the survey were discussed. At this meeting, Sue highlighted the issue around socialising in the Department and reported that she had not yet had an opportunity to raise the issue at a Wednesday meeting. She suggested that she run the survey again in Michaelmas term, rephrasing it in order to get more information about this particular issue.

The committee discussed the issue, including

- the need for a space for Department socialising and perhaps areas on each floor for coffee/tea meetups
- potential existing good practice in this area
- diverting the money spent on Wednesday meeting cakes elsewhere (while keeping the teas and coffees), where more people could benefit
- providing biscuits rather than cakes as a cheaper option.

It was agreed that Sue would send out an amended survey and bring the socialising issue to a Wednesday meeting in Michaelmas, and Ajay would raise the socialising issue at the next Research Staff Forum meeting.

Action: Ajay and Sue

vi) Request for an outdoor table tennis table (item 6(iii), 19 May 2025)

The Committee had discussed a proposal for an outdoor table tennis table and agreed that Fermin would take the idea forward with the Head of Department. Fermin reported that he had not yet had an opportunity to take this forward but will do so.

Action: Fermin

vii) Weekly meeting-free day (item 6(iv), 19 May 2025)

At the last meeting, the Committee discussed the possibility of having as a soft rule a weekly department meeting-free day for all employees. Fermin reported that he had brought this up at a Wednesday meeting where he had not seen broad support for the idea and where several potential problems had been raised (such as the

impact on part-time staff, different categories of staff, and staff with parenting responsibilities). It was agreed that a question about this issue should be included in Sue's Michaelmas wellbeing survey for research staff, asking people whether they would be interested in this initiative and if so, what day they would prefer, and including an open text response for suggestions or comments. The Committee will discuss this issue further following the survey results.

Action: Sue

5. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I)

i) Athena Swan Action Plan

At the January 2025 meeting, the Committee discussed how it might contribute to the [Athena Swan Bronze Award action plan \(see page 26/30\)](#) in terms of HR and wellbeing matters and agreed to identify which actions are relevant to this Committee, to schedule those actions in, and to advise EDIC which items we are addressing.

Suggested example actions that this Committee could contribute to were career progression, the Awards Committee, surveys, pay gaps, and the issue of women being asked to increase representation. However, there was discussion around the responsibility of EDIC to ask this Committee for contributions to the action plan vs. this Committee taking the initiative to offer contributions in this very important area. This is obviously an issue that should have regular discussion, particularly since many of the action points span 3-5 years.

It was agreed that Fermin will set up a meeting for himself, the EDIC Chair, Sue (Academic Liaison for Women@CL), Alicja (HR), and Ajay (Research Staff Form Rep). The issue will then come back to this Committee in the Michaelmas term.

Action: Fermin

ii) Other ED&I issues

There were no other ED&I issues raised.

6. Wellbeing

There were no other wellbeing issues raised.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place from 11.00 – 12.00 on Monday, 13 October 2025.