

# HSS Restructure Update

22nd May 2024

# Management plans

- Management propose to merge SED and SLLF into a new “School of the Arts”.
- No business case presented.
- No market research conducted.
- The School will come into existence for the new academic year 2024/5.
- The PS teams in SED and SLLF will be restructured into one.
- Internal reviews of programmes will lead to new joint programmes and academic structures (yet to be determined).
- An academic staffing review arising from the above will take place in “Spring 2025”. This may lead to redundancies.

# Lack of consultation

- Staff report widespread frustration at lack of consultation so far. This is acknowledged in management papers.
- Proposals have not changed meaningfully despite feedback since they were first discussed informally with School management in November 2023.
- There have already been breaches of the [Reorganisation Policy](#), as [outlined by the branch](#).
- Management have now confirmed **they do not intend to formally consult the trade unions** on the decision to restructure the two Schools.
- Instead, unions will only be consulted about the restructure of the PS teams, as if this could be separated from the decision to merge the Schools.

# What do management say about the need to consult?

“Whilst the creation of the new school is not subject to formal collective consultation, as it will not result in significant changes to terms and conditions of employment for our staff, the Faculty is engaging informally with JCF colleagues and has offered an opportunity to meet to discuss the various elements of the proposals.”

VP-HSS, HR Director, and COO claim not to have seen or read the PS restructure proposals, but say they are nevertheless confident that the PS restructure can be done separately from the decision to restructure the two Schools and within the Reorganisation policy.

# What does the Reorganisation policy say?

Section 5.1 on “Managing Significant Change”:

“The following stages will be followed where it is considered necessary to restructure a Faculty/School/Institute/ Department/Team/Section, or where proposed changes are likely to impact substantially on the roles or jobs of groups of staff, or where staff may be at risk of redundancy.”

Those stages include: a consultation paper, an assessment of the benefits/risks, a full equality impact assessment, disclosure of financial implications, one week notice to unions before publication of a proposal, presentation at JCF sub-committee, 30-day timeline for consultation.

Management are telling us that none of this will happen.

## Further problems with the current timeline

- On the current timeline, Senate will consider the proposal on **13th June**.
- SET will make a recommendation to merge the Schools in late June.
- Council will consider and approve the recommendation on **11th July**.
- But formal consultation on the PS proposals will run from **10th June to 10th July**.
- So: SET will recommend whether to merge the Schools **before** the consultation on merging the PS teams has concluded.
- And Council will decide whether to merge the Schools **the day after** the consultation on merging the PS teams closes. Council papers are circulated in advance of meetings.

# How has the branch tried to avoid a dispute?

- Members have engaged in the open forums and school discussions, with line management, faculty management and university governance
- Members and the branch committee have written to management, and Council, outlining breaches, requesting a pause to the process and meaningful consultation, and a commitment to no compulsory redundancies.
- QMUCU reps have tabled discussion at the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF)
- On Tuesday 21st May QMUCU reps met with VP-HSS, COO, and Director of HR to discuss the breaches, and suggest possible alternative timelines that would follow the Reorganisation policy.

# One possible alternative timeline

Use the summer and the next academic year to:

- Allow staff to formulate and comment on plans for the future organisation of their teaching and research.
- Commit to no compulsory redundancies.
- Conduct market research and compile a full business case.
- Open the books to allow financial transparency.
- Design a proposal that works and that will fit the future teaching and research needs of staff and students.
- Formally consult with trade unions and staff in Spring 2025. Implement any changes over Summer 2025. Any new structure in place by September 2025.

# Discussing alternative timelines

Management have given no reason as to why an alternative timeline could not be followed. In response to our questions about why the rush, they have said: 'there is disagreement about how change happens'.

They added, 'Can we just be real about the way the world works?'

# Why do we need an indicative ballot?

- Failure to follow policy - Management have confirmed they do not intend to consult staff on the proposed restructure and confirmed there is a disagreement with staff
- Failure to follow law - Up to 60 people have already left their jobs as part of a VSS targeted to support the restructure; these 60 people may still need to be counted when determining whether the thresholds for collective redundancy rules have been met.
  - In a report presented to JCF in April, management noted: 'We have opened a voluntary severance scheme in HSS which closed on the 8th April. Within the Faculty, we have provided additional incentives to staff in the School of English and Drama and the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film, where **staff turnover is low and we currently have too many staff** based on the number of students and research activity/income in this area'.
- Failure to consult - Workload models are being designed for a 37.5 hour week, without consultation.

# Why do we need an indicative ballot?

- We need leverage - To develop political leverage alongside the forthcoming sham consultation to try to secure concessions.
- Timing (1) - To set ourselves up for a formal ballot later in the year to allow industrial leverage during the next academic year when redundancies might be proposed.
- Timing (2) - If we wait until redundancies are proposed in 2025, it could take too long to get a industrial action mandate. Other branches have faced this problem.
- Secure our rights - Our collective rights are not a given. To secure our rights, we need to follow the options available to us; to recognise the formal disagreement with management, dispute their actions, and build our leverage.