

History Department – motion on Statute 24 passed at staff meeting

The University Council has commissioned a review to “simplify and modernise” the Statutes and have decided to remove all of the detailed procedures (regarding grievance, discipline, redundancy, incapacity and appeals) contained within Statute 24 and the related Ordinances.

We believe that this represents a severe curtailment of our academic freedom. Statements about academic freedom carry very little weight unless academic staff (meaning those engaged in teaching, the provision of learning and/or research) are afforded the additional protections currently contained within Statute 24. We are not opposed in principle to some simplification of Statute 24, but what is currently being proposed by Warwick management is far more drastic than that – other Russell Group universities have updated their employment Statute by revising some of the procedural detail, rather than removing it entirely.

Management’s proposed removal of the employment protections currently contained in Statute 24 is being justified on the grounds that they do not apply to non-academic staff and that equality is needed. We believe this to be a disingenuous argument. Applying the same policies to all staff represents a “levelling down” that is neither necessary nor fair, given the distinctive nature of academic work which requires extra protections due to the fact that our research may lead us to “unpopular” conclusions and findings that might challenge the status quo and the views of our university management and/or government. Moreover, there are many areas of the University in which different policies and procedures have applied to different staff groups, most notably in relation to probation, which is five years for academic staff but only six-months for other staff.

We also have significant concerns about the proposed changes to the redundancy process. We believe that removing the existing Redundancy Committee and giving oversight of redundancy to the relevant Head of Department will undermine the equity and impartiality of the process across the University.

As a department, we therefore request our representatives on, Senate and Council to oppose the changes to Statute 24 on the above grounds, and to request a longer period of discussion, bearing in mind the magnitude of what is being proposed.