

Institute for Employment Research Statute 24 Motion

We in the Institute for Employment Research (IER) wish to engage in debate around the university's proposed reform of Statute 24. We are an institute which deviates from the usual model of an academic department. IER staff currently covered by statute are predominantly on research only contracts which rely on the support of external funding and hence, as a group which is already in a more precarious employment position compared with other colleagues, we believe that we have a particular interest in the proposed changes.

We welcome the lengthening of the consultation period, and highlight the following broad concerns about the most recent proposals dated 11 April 2017:

- We believe that the introduction of common policies across all staff groups would fail to recognise the specific role which those currently covered by statute 24 fulfil in the university and would undermine the protections such staff are currently afforded*
- Treating every member of staff fairly is not the same as treating every member of staff in the same way. The situation of Administrative and Professional Staff is not improved by removing protections for Academic Staff. The reverse is true; such a move increases the insecurity for all.*
- The university's intention to move procedural detail from statute in order to be more responsive to future employment law changes will mean that at any future point policies can be changed or amended by university management without the current levels of scrutiny. We believe that keeping such detail under statute is the best insurance against any future management's attempts to make unilateral changes to the substantive areas of discipline, grievance, redundancy and sickness.*
- The proposed redundancy policy reduces council oversight in redundancy situations and places greater powers in the hands of HoDs. In practice, this will result in a curtailment of academic freedom and is likely to lead to short term thinking and groupthink. Ability to challenge prevailing wisdom will be reduced.*
- Similarly, council oversight is removed from the disciplinary process. In the most serious cases, where the potential outcome is dismissal, council has no role in the process. We question the wisdom of allowing council oversight only at the appeal stage, and only when the defence of academic freedom is invoked. Coupled with a disciplinary process which is more extensive in its detail of misconduct than defined under statute, including it is noted 'conduct which does damage the reputation of the university', we are concerned about the message which this sends to staff.*

We should also note that the above is not an argument for the current statutes to remain in place; we believe that there are areas in statute which may be improved and/or clarified. However, noting our point about possible unilateral changes in the future, we see this as a case for rewriting what is in statute, not for removing substantive issues from statute.