

KU Leuven Community

After four years I can still put my hand on my heart and say that I am all for a staff policy in which **TRUST** occupies a central position. It is essential, as I see it, that the university offer its staff, room for creativity and self-development in a genial and positive environment.

1. ROOM FOR CREATIVITY AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

People are our most important asset. Only through their hard work and creativity can we achieve quality education, research and innovation. The academic staff - from doctoral students through post-doctoral researchers and research fellows to independent academics and teaching staff - are the hub in all of this, in partnership with the administrative and technical staff. This is why a humane and stimulating climate is an absolute necessity for all divisions of our university community. People deserve trust and recognition for who they are and what they do. A sustainable staff policy means: offering every person a context in which they can develop to the full. Autonomy, responsibility and connectedness are of crucial importance in this. It engenders people who work with passion and creativity and take delight in what they do. I will continue to work for this kind of appreciative and stimulating policy. And for nothing less.

2. WELFARE AND TRUST

I stand for a policy which aims for maximum staff satisfaction with their contribution to the organisation and which is linked to quality care throughout their career. Though the staff survey (satisfaction survey) of 2015 showed a high general level of satisfaction, we cannot rest until we have tackled the remaining problems.

Psychosocial welfare in the workplace is, and will always be, a core objective. We have worked with the HSE Service to develop and implement a university-wide and innovative framework for psychosocial welfare. Training courses and information sessions show people how to deal with pressure and stress, and give information on the prevention of burn-out. Supervisors are trained in staff guidance and coaching and in giving adequate, motivating feedback. We also focus a great deal of attention on negotiation techniques (*contracting* and clarifying expectations on recruitment) and feedback discussions following decisions.

We organised a network of confidential advisers, who serve as the first point of contact - when a solution cannot be found locally - in all questions and issues of a psychosocial nature, such as stress, conflict, unfair treatment, unacceptable behaviour, personal matters, and harassment in the workplace. And this applies to all staff.

In an atmosphere of transparency and trust, all policy decisions are communicated to staff through regular policy messages. Anyone may speak to me directly on these matters. And many have already availed themselves of the opportunity. You will, of course, be welcome in the years to come. A good university policy involves immediate recourse to the Rector and direct dialogue with all members of the university community.

3. WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SIMPLIFICATION

One important consideration for the coming period is management of the workload and finding the right work/life balance. And this applies to everyone. In this way we have proactively sought to prevent burn-out. Welfare in the workplace is the top priority. We are enlarging and optimising the range of training courses available to our staff. We are also doing more to assure the physical and mental health of our staff and students, through a variety of actions and programmes.

We will look at how we can increase university support and the efficiency of the activities. The increasing number of students and growth in research have made this necessary. We must also cast a critical eye over the job specifications, and aim to simplify them where possible. Non-essential tasks should be phased out, others automated. A good example here is the electronic wage slip, available through KU Loket, which saves tens of thousands of paper slips every year. Another illustration is the abolition of requests for missions in Europe. Existing forms of paper processing should be dispensed with, or computerised. Where mechanisms creep in which lead to inconvenience, by law or at the university's own initiative, they should be identified. We will shortly be introducing the electronic signature or approval on a more general basis.

4. STUDENTS

A university exists by virtue of its students. They are its life and soul. We educate them to become masters of their subject and to take control of their own lives. At the same time, they bring constant renewal. They are undeterred by the unexpected. They beat a path of their own. We see them as much-loved partners on their way towards the future, as essential co-governors of our university. And if they experience difficulties, we do not abandon them.

The university is not just for and about people. The university is people.