

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 14 December 2009

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor L Bridges,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor R Higgott
Professor C Hughes,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor M Smith,
Professor M Underwood
Professor M Whitby
Professor D Wilson.

Apologies: Mr A Bradley.

In Attendance: Registrar, Academic Registrar, Finance Director, Director of Estates, Director of Strategy, Communication and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Professor S B Palmer, Head of Stakeholder Relations and the Environment Manager (for item 169/09-10), Director and the Administrator of IAS (for item 170/09-10) and Director of Management Information and Planning (for item 171/09-10).

163/09-10 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2009 be approved.

164/09-10 Strategic Departmental Review Report: School of Engineering (minute 151/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That he would personally take forward discussions with the Dean of the School of Engineering and the Director of Warwick Manufacturing Group regarding the recommendations in the Strategic Departmental Review report.

165/09-10 Group of 13 (minute 98/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing))

- (a) That, at the meeting of the Group of 13 held on 26 November 2009, the Group sought to clarify its agenda, noting that its focus would be around fair access rather than widening participation.
- (b) That it was acknowledged that there was still significant work to be undertaken to design an extended module, which if completed would result in students receiving a reduced offer from members of the Group, but that institutions would agree to be part of this scheme only once the module had been designed and piloted.
- (c) That a revised draft of the Memorandum of Understanding would be circulated to the Group shortly.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing) report to the Committee any developments following the next meeting on 15 December 2009 which the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment would attend.
- (b) That the University would continue to engage with the project and consider the revised Memorandum of Understanding once received.

166/09-10 Retirement of Professor Simon Bright

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its appreciation to Professor Simon Bright, Director of Warwick HRI, for his contribution to the University over the last six years and wish him all the best for his forthcoming retirement.

167/09-10 Employer of Choice Awards

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the University had been awarded a certificate of commendation in the Corporate Employer category of the Coventry and Warwickshire Employer of Choice Awards.

168/09-10 Warwick Graduates' Association – Hong Kong

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That he had recently returned from a trip to Hong Kong and Singapore which incorporated a Warwick Graduates Association event in Hong Kong.
- (b) That the event had been a success and further donations and offers to fund PhD studentships might result.

169/09-10 Universities That Count

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Head of Stakeholder Relations and the Environment Manager setting out Warwick's involvement in the HEFCE-backed 'Universities That Count' (UtC) corporate benchmarking programme, including a summary of the University's results and opportunities for future participation (SC.117/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Head of Stakeholder Relations)

- (a) That the UtC was funded by HEFCE for three years as a means of measuring corporate responsibility across the sector.
- (b) That Warwick had performed above the sector average in most categories with a total Corporate Responsibility score of 73 percent compared to a sector average of 67 percent.

(By the Registrar)

- (c) That the UtC survey was resource intensive to complete but was beneficial in highlighting engagement with corporate responsibility at a senior management level.

(By the Head of Governance Support Services)

- (d) That, in order to improve scores in some areas, institutional change, operationally and culturally, would be required and that this should be considered against the overall benefit/best interest of the University and its activities.

(By the Environment Manager)

- (e) That the University had scored lower than anticipated in the Teaching, Learning and Research category because it did not centrally control curricular development
- (f) That it was widely recognised that the compilers did not understand the variety and nuances existent in the HE sector and work continued in this regard.

RESOLVED:

That the University register for the next iteration of the 'Universities that Count' survey, noting that the deadline for submissions was 26 February 2010 with a view to the Head of Stakeholder Relations and the Environment Manager monitoring the results and the resources involved and reporting to the Committee at a future meeting.

170/09-10

Institute of Advanced Study Update

RECEIVED:

A paper from the Director of the Institute of Advanced Study updating the Committee on developments and activities, including the Cryfield Grange refurbishment, the new Impact Awards programme and the Hippocrates Poetry Prize amongst others (SC.120/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of the Institute of Advanced Study)

- (a) That, together with retaining the four established programmes, the Institute had launched the new Impact Awards programme which sought to encourage Warwick-based impact activities, in terms of economic, social, cultural as well as academic significance.
- (b) That the Frontiers Meetings with European collaborators would begin slightly later than the mid-December launch set out in the paper in order to accommodate further consultation with the Chair of the Faculty of Science and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine).

RESOLVED:

That the Institute of Advanced Study be congratulated on the diverse range of activities being undertaken and their integration with University initiatives, such as REF preparation and the consideration of European funding opportunities.

171/09-10

University Response to the REF Consultation

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to the HEFCE consultation on the proposed Research Excellence Framework (REF) (SC.130/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Management Information and Planning)

- (a) That the response had been compiled following considerable consultation with colleagues across the University community, highlighting the main areas of concern, namely:

- (i) The methodology and weighting proposed for assessing impact;
- (ii) The proposed staff eligibility definition;
- (iii) The proposed units of assessment/panel structure;
- (iv) The level of transparency in the design of the REF assessment methodology;
- and
- (v) The timing of the submission date.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience))

- (b) That assessing languages under a single unit of assessment would prove problematic and furthermore it remained unclear under which UoA some aspects of Linguistics research would be assessed.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing))

- (c) That the decision of whether an output should be 'double-weighted' should sit with the Panel, rather than the submitting institution, noting the inherent risk for HEIs of this approach.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the response be revised in light of the discussion at the meeting prior to submission by the Director of Management Information and Planning by the deadline of 16 December 2009.
- (b) That the Registrar contact the CBI to signal the University's concern regarding the CBI's proposed weightings.

172/09-10

Faculty of Arts Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Arts providing information on recent activities in the faculty, including research, space issues, the proposed Festival of Arts and the Stratford Education Initiative amongst others (SC.128/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Arts)

- (a) That Professor Maxine Berg (History) had been awarded a European Research Council Advanced Grant to the value of €1,546,668 to examine long-distance trade between Asia and Europe in material goods and culture.
- (b) That HEIF money had been secured to assist with the Festival of Arts planned for between 20 and 22 May 2010.

(By the Registrar)

- (c) That it was timely to consider the University's strategy with regards to the Stratford Education Initiative, including the need to have a single point of contact for this type of activity.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Arts and appropriate colleagues review the progress and opportunities surrounding the Stratford Education Initiative with a view to refreshing the University's engagement with the project if required.

173/09-10 Faculty of Social Sciences Update

RECEIVED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences updating the Committee on key areas of development within the Faculty (SC.119/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Acting Dean of Warwick Business School)

- (a) That it had been noted that the Warwick Business School had fallen to 22nd place in the recent Financial Times European Business School Rankings, acknowledging that discussions continued with the Financial Times in an effort to revise the measures used.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience))

- (b) That process of securing module approval and subsequent revisions to modules would be considered by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee at its next meeting.

174/09-10 Faculty of Science Update

RECEIVED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science informing the Committee of developments regarding postgraduate and postdoctoral training in transferable skills and the BBSRC – funded Life Sciences Doctoral Training Grant (SC.118/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science)

- (a) That the Postgraduate Certificate in Transferable Skills (PGCTS) was proving to be very successful.
- (b) That the Faculty of Science Research Committee had received a report regarding the potential risk of there being an insufficient number of WPRS students to meet the matched funding obligation of the BBSRC Doctoral Training Grant, acknowledging also that subsequent to the meeting an additional number of matching studentships had been identified by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (c) That departments should be reminded of the Warwick Collaborative Postgraduate Research Studentships (WCPRS) as a means of funding PhD students in partnership with external organisations.

175/09-10 Quarter 1 Report: Warwick Business School

RECEIVED:

A report setting out the Quarter 1 financial position for Warwick Business School (SC.134/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Acting Dean, Warwick Business School)

- (a) That the report highlighted the uncertainty around executive programmes, despite an overall buoyant general recruitment position.
- (b) That work was being undertaken to review the Specialist Masters portfolio to balance resources and activities across the portfolio.

(By the Finance Director)

- (c) That the Finance and General Purposes Committee would consider the potential budgetary revisions in due course.

176/09-10 Quarter 1 Report: Warwick Medical School

RECEIVED:

A report setting out the Quarter 1 financial position for Warwick Medical School (SC.135/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Acting Dean, Warwick Medical School)

- (a) That variations were visible with regards to student numbers, with recruitment above forecast, and research income with a small increase currently projected, noting that research income had already increased by 29% compared to 2008/09.
- (b) That the School was currently experiencing a shortfall against the savings target of £960k.

177/09-10 Quarter 1 Report: ARC Departments

RECEIVED:

A report setting out the Quarter 1 financial position for ARC departments (SC.136/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing))

- (a) That, as a result of the increased fee income of £5.8m set against budgetary shortfalls elsewhere, the increase of forecast gross surplus of 2009/10 was only £0.2m.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (b) That departments should be reminded of the constraints of the current financial climate and efforts made to reduce spend and increase surpluses where possible.

178/09-10 UUK, GuildHE, HEFCE and DEL NI Consultation: Future Arrangements for Quality Assurance in England and Northern Ireland

CONSIDERED:

Information regarding a UUK, GuildHE, HEFCE and DEL NI consultation on the future arrangements for quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland (SC.121/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the consultation was a precursor to further consultation on matters relating to public information, external examiners and the academic infrastructure.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (b) That the response to the consultation would require careful consideration, it being noted that the documentation appeared to be concerned with public, rather than institutional, engagement with the quality assurance process.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Academic Registrar co-ordinate a response for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee prior to submission by the deadline of 5 March 2009.
- (b) That any nominations for Pro-Vice-Chancellors to be submitted as potential members of the Quality Assurance System Group be forwarded to the Registrar by 16 December 2009.

179/09-10

Implications for Higher Education of the Pre-Budget Report

CONSIDERED:

An overview of the Pre-Budget Report, together with a BBC article setting out the resulting implications for higher education (SC.131/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Finance Director)

- (a) That the increase of 0.5 per cent on National Insurance contributions was additional to the 0.5 per cent increase already factored into the budget and would cost approximately £1m per annum.
- (b) That the increased VAT levels would be particularly problematic for the University.

(By the Registrar)

- (c) That the initial call for evidence in the review of student fee levels had been announced with a response date of 31 January 2010
- (d) That, as a result of the cuts in the higher education, science and research budgets of £600m set out in the Pre-Budget Report, it was possible that the ringfenced STEM funding might be withdrawn and cuts would be seen in both the Teaching and Research grants.

RESOLVED:

That the implications of the employer/employee-related changes within the Pre-Budget Report be communicated to colleagues.

180/09-10

Review of Delivering Financial Support to Students

RECEIVED:

The Executive Summary of the Review of Delivery of Financial Support to Students commissioned by the Minister of State for Higher Education and the Chair of the Student Loans Company and undertaken by Professor Sir Deian Hopkin (SC.132/09-10).

- 181/09-10 University of Warwick/University of Birmingham Bid for HEFCE Graduate Internship Funding
- RECEIVED:
- Details of a joint bid by Warwick and the University of Birmingham for graduate internship funding submitted by the deadline of 7 December 2009, together with information on the HEFCE scheme (SC.110/09-10).
- 182/09-10 HEFCE WPSA: Annual Reporting Requirements
- RECEIVED:
- Information from HEFCE setting out how it would develop its approach to the evaluation of Widening Participation Strategic Assessments, together with details of what would be required of institutions, noting that institutions were not required to submit a progress report against its Widening Participation Strategic Assessments in February 2010 as initially announced (SC.129/09-10).
- 183/09-10 UUK Briefing on the IUSS Selection Committee Report, " Students and Universities"
- RECEIVED:
- The UUK briefing for the House of Commons debate on the students and universities report from the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills (IUSS) Select Committee held on 10 December 2009 (SC.124/09-10).
- 184/09-10 OIA 2010 Subscriptions and Publication of Pathway Report
- RECEIVED:
- Letter from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator setting out subscription rates for 2010 and updating on the Pathway initiative, noting that the actual report would be published on 11 February 2011 (SC.133/09-10).
- 185/09-10 I/2009/115: Universities UK-HEFCE report - Securing World-Class Research in UK Universities
- RECEIVED:
- An Information note advising members of the publication of a new report, produced jointly by Universities UK and the UK HE Funding Bodies, *Securing World-Class Research in UK universities*, demonstrating the impact of Quality-Related (QR) funding (SC.122/09-10).
- 186/09-10 I/2009/119: Final Report of the Social Work Task Force
- RECEIVED:
- A UUK I-Note informing members of the publication of the final report by the Social Work Task Force on 1 December 2009, together with the executive summary and recommendations of the report (SC.127/09-10).

187/09-10

Science and Technology Committee Call for Views: The Treatment of Independent Scientific Advice for Government

RECEIVED:

An email from the Science and Technology Committee seeking views on the principles that should apply to the treatment of independent scientific advice provided to government (SC.123/09-10).

JFB/jf/steersshare/minutes2009-10/Dec09/14Dec09