

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 18 May 2009

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor L Bridges,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor R Higgott,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor R Lindley,
Professor H Thomas,
Mr S Thomson,
Professor M Smith,
Professor M Underwood (until item 566/08-09),
Professor Whitby

Apologies: Professor S Bassnett,

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Estates, Finance Director, Director of Development, Communication and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Head of Department of Sociology (for item 565/08-09), Head of Student Finance (for item 566/08-09), Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) (for item 570/08-09), Director of Management Information & Planning and the Librarian (for item 571/08-09),

556/08-09 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May be approved, subject to including the Vice-Chancellor in those present at the meeting.

556/08-09 Letter from Secretary of State for DIUS and HEFCE's Response to Further Funding Changes (minute 540/08-09 refers)

RECEIVED:

The HEFCE response to the recent Secretary of State's letter announcing further changes to funding levels for 2010/11, together with a copy of the letter (SC.460/08-09).

557/08-09 Health Innovation and Education Clusters (HIECs) (minute 539/08-09 refers)

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Acting Dean of Warwick Medical School and the Associate Dean (Teaching) updating the Committee on the progress of the University's HIEC bid and UUK I-Note I/2009/039 detailing the application process (SC.461/08-09).

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

- (a) That the bid was progressing with potential collaboration with one of the recently established Academic Health Science Centres.

(By the Dean of Warwick Business School)

- (b) That Warwick Business School was interested in being involved in the management training aspect of postgraduate medical education which would be undertaken by the HIEC.

RESOLVED:

That the institution's continued engagement with the HIEC bid process be approved, noting that the Committee would be informed of any developments regarding the issues and risks identified in SC.461/08-09.

558/08-09 Professor Howard Thomas

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That Professor Thomas had announced his intention to step down as Dean of Warwick Business School with effect from January 2010.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its congratulations to Professor Thomas for his new appointment as Distinguished Professor of Strategic Management and Dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Business at Singapore Management University.

559/08-09 Ideas Café – Interpreting Translation

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the next Ideas Café would be held on 17 June 2009 at 5.30pm in EAT Restaurant on the topic of Interpreting Translation and that the event would bring together speakers from the Departments of English and Comparative Literary Studies, Politics and International Studies, the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies and Warwick Medical School.

560/08-09 Guardian League Table 2010

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That Warwick had retained 4th place in the Guardian League Table, noting that several errors in data presented within the subject tables had been identified.

RESOLVED:

That a full analysis of the Guardian League Table, together with the Independent and Times League Tables be considered at a future meeting of the Steering Committee.

561/08-09 University of Warwick's Case for Support

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the University had launched its Case for Support on 14 May 2009 in the BT Tower in London.
- (b) That the scheme showcased Warwick's interaction with the global community and detailed opportunities for philanthropic investment that would help the University develop and maintain its standing as an internationally recognised institution.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its thanks for the Director of Development, Strategy and Communication and his team for organising such a successful event.

562/08-09 Establishment of a Constitutional Advisory Group

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That at the Heads of Department Away Day held on 7 May 2009, there was discussion regarding the optimum organisational structure for Warwick to navigate the recession, benefit from future economic recovery, and to achieve its strategy.
- (b) That a Constitutional Advisory Group (CAG) would be established to be chaired by an experienced external and to involve academic membership.
- (c) That he would be secretary to the CAG.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (d) That notes from the Heads of Department Away Day would be circulated shortly and that further two such Away Days for Heads would be scheduled in due course.

563/08-09 Universities' Superannuation Scheme

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That he attended a meeting on 15 May 2009 to discuss the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).
- (b) That there was equal representation from the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) and UCEA in the discussions but that the groups were of opposing views regarding the current health and sustainability of the pension scheme.
- (c) That initial steps forward might include an increase in employer contributions to 16% to begin to reduce the Scheme's overall deficit, noting that an increase to 23% may be considered necessary by some calculations should amendments to the scheme not be made.

564/08-09 Royal Society of Arts Fulbright Commission Lecture

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That he had given the Fulbright Commission Lecture at the Royal Society of Arts on 13 May 2009 entitled 'We Can't Go On Like This': British Higher Education As It Is and As It Could Be'.

565/08-09 Strategic Departmental Review Response: Department of Sociology

CONSIDERED:

The departmental response to the Strategic Departmental Review for the Department of Sociology held on 7 to 9 January 2009 and the action plan, together with an oral report from the Head of the Department, Professor Christina Hughes (SC.462/08-09).

REPORTED: (by Head of the Department of Sociology)

- (a) That the departmental response aimed to communicate the robust procedures and plans put in place with regards to research and the preparation for the Research Excellence Framework, as well as teaching and learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- (b) That, although not specifically referenced in the departmental response, the Department was committed to developing interdisciplinary work in the area of global economy and global order with the Departments of Politics and International Studies, Economics, and Warwick Business School, noting that the Department's Forward Look 2009 outlined a proposed post in this field.

- (c) That the Department planned to meet the University strategic objective of doubling postgraduate research student numbers by 2015 by:
 - (i) implementing a 1+3 fast-track PhD model to ensure the quality of MA students continuing to PhD and to increase possible recruitment from MA cohorts; and
 - (ii) linking recruitment to paid work within the Department

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Social Studies)

- (d) That the Department might wish to consider including PhD studentships in research grant proposals to increase recruitment potential, particularly in collaborative projects.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the departmental response and action plan be approved as set out in SC.462/08-09.
- (b) That the Head of the Department of Sociology be invited to provide the Steering Committee with a progress report in the Spring Term 2010.

566/08-09

Access Agreement Comparison for Competitor Institutions and Report on Performance 2008/09

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Head of Student Finance comparing the University to other Russell Group institutions for 2007/08 in terms of estimated and actual spend on bursaries, outreach activities and overall expenditure under their Access Agreements (SC.450/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Head of Student Finance)

- (a) That the University had renegotiated its position with OFFA and reduced the level of committed spend for bursaries to 25% of additional full-time Home/EU undergraduate fee income, acknowledging that 2011 was the last year under the current Access Agreement and it was not yet clear how institutions could or would renegotiate for the following period.
- (b) That the University had spent 101% of the allocated funds under the Access Agreement for bursaries and would spend the full £500k outreach commitment during the remainder of 2008/09.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (c) That the economic downturn might put pressure on the University and its ability to allocate funds to students as the proportion of eligible students could increase.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (d) That the provision of financial assistance for students in need was of crucial importance and that it would be detrimental to reduce available funds to less than 25% of additional full-time Home/EU undergraduate fee income.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved as set out in SC.450/08-09.

567/08-09 University Response to White Paper on Informal Adult Learning

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft response to a call from UUK for information on members' current activities in the area of Informal Adult Learning following the publication of a DIUS White Paper (SC.465/08-09).

RESOLVED:

That the response be approved for submission to UUK by 25 May 2009, noting that the response was compiled by the Director of the Centre of Lifelong Learning.

568/08-09 UUK I-Note I/2009/034: UKRIO Draft Code of Practice for Research

CONSIDERED:

An I-Note from UUK encouraging members to respond to the consultation on the UK Research Integrity Office's draft Code of Practice for Research (SC.452/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Arts and Social Studies))

- (a) That the draft Code of Practice had been considered by the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Research) and the Director of Research Support Services.
- (b) That the document was clear and that it would be considered at the next meeting of the University Research Ethics Committee and Research Committee, noting that the University's current practice complied with the draft code.

RESOLVED:

That the University response to the consultation on the UK Research Integrity Office's draft Code of Practice for Research be prepared and approved by Chair's action for submission by 31 May 2009.

569/08-09 Advantage West Midlands – Corporate Plan Review

CONSIDERED:

A letter from Advantage West Midlands (AWM) updating the Committee on the review of the AWM Corporate Plan for 2008-11, together with a current status of projects undertaken with the University (SC.457/08-09).

RESOLVED:

That the Finance Director and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine) contact AWM to clarify the incorrect status reported against some of the projects as discussed at the meeting.

570/08-09 Policy Update: Teaching Quality

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs) outlining strategic developments in matters relating to Teaching Quality including national concerns about standards and quality in higher education and an update on the University's response rates in the National Student Survey (SC.463/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs))

- (a) That the Senior Assistant Registrar was preparing a response to the QAA following the publication of its report on academic quality and standards in higher education, noting that the University had serious concerns about the significant scope of the QAA's proposed areas of investigation and the implications for some activities at Warwick.
- (b) That the changing scope and delivery of E-Learning at the University following the IT Services 5 Year Plan had prompted debate and that the Director of IT Services had written to Heads of Department outlining proposals which sought to retain the benefits of a central team whilst reducing costs by focusing on core activities.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (c) That it was likely that the QAA would attempt to implement sector-wide solutions which would not be appropriate for all institutions.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (d) That the area of language requirements in admissions for international students referenced in the QAA report had come to his attention at Warwick recently.

(By the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality))

- (e) That the University's response rate to the 2009 National Student Survey was in line with the overall national response rate at 62% when the data collection stage closed on 4 May 2009, noting that the Warwick response rate was 5% lower than in 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee record its thanks to the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) for his contribution to University's teaching and learning agenda and wish him every success for the future given his appointment to a new post at the University of Liverpool.
- (b) That the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs) prepare a paper on the University's approach to the QAA report for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

571/08-09 Providing the Warwick Publications Service

CONSIDERED:

A report considering the development of a Publications Database service to record and enable analysis of Warwick publications in order to support Vision 2015 and external research reporting requirements (SC.451/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Arts and Social Studies))

- (a) That the project was an excellent example of collaboration between the Library, Research Support Services and Management Information and Planning, resulting in a set of recommendations for a Publications Database, the development of which was essential to the University Strategy and vital to the preparation for the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

(By the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (b) While the benefits of such a service were clear, the exact criteria for the REF were still unclear including the role if any that citations data would play.

(By the Librarian)

- (c) That the volume of University publications produced annually was not clear, noting that the JISC proposal to establish the Warwick Research Archive Project included an estimate of 3000 articles based on data from Research Support Services.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations set out in SC.451/08-09 be submitted to the Financial Plan Sub-Committee for consideration.

572/08-09

Academic Continuity Planning: Potential Impact of Industrial Action

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Academic Registrar detailing the planning underway within the institution to secure academic continuity during the examination period by mitigating the potential impact of any industrial action taken, together with potential next steps for the consideration of the Committee (SC.466/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That there were a range of mitigating circumstances and the identified level of risk of each of these would be considered with reference to sensitivities to local conditions within departments.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (b) That Warwick must continue to plan effectively for possible industrial action to minimise the impact on students.

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Social Studies)

- (c) That the proposed actions listed within the paper should explicitly state in which cases the Head of Department or their designated nominee may act and in which cases a nominee would not be appropriate to ensure clarity of responsibilities for nominees.

RESOLVED:

That the report and proposed actions be approved as set out in SC.466/08-09, noting that references within the paper to the 'SMT' should read 'the Steering Committee' and that the proposed amendments to regulations would be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

573/08-09

Warwick's Response to Universities UK Survey on Points-Based Immigration: Institutional Approaches to Tier 4

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to the UUK survey on the operation of the Points-Based Immigration system and the changes institutions had made in response to the Tier 4 (Students) requirements (SC.464/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (a) That the response was informative with regards to the monitoring processes for all students and that this could be of benefit to departments but required to be communicated clearly to colleagues.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (b) That a paper regarding proposed amendments to the University governing instruments and progression monitoring principles would be considered by the Boards of the Faculties at their next meetings with a briefing meeting for Faculty Board Chairs and Secretariats to clarify the specific issues for each Faculty.

RESOLVED:

That the response be approved for submission to UUK by 18 May 2009 and that the response be formally submitted by the Registrar.

574/08-09 UUK I-Note I/2009/037 – New Industry, New Jobs

RECEIVED:

An Information Note from UUK alerting members to the publication of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform report 'New industry, new jobs' on 20 April 2009 which detailed the Government's policy of 'industrial activism' intervening in a variety of ways to support the development of areas of likely competitive advantage in the economy for the future (SC.454/08-09).

575/08-09 UUK I-Note UUK I-Note I/2009/038 – Final Report of Full Economic Costing (fEC) Review

RECEIVED:

An Information Note from UUK summarising the recommendations of the final report of the Full Economic Costing (fEC) Review (SC.455/08-09).

576/08-09 UUK I-Note I/2009/035 – Academies and Trust Schools Report

RECEIVED:

An Information Note from UUK announcing the publication of a UUK report providing information on the opportunities and challenges for universities engaging with academies and trusts (SC.453/08-09).

577/08-09 UUK I-Note I/2009/033 – HE Engagement with Schools and Colleges

RECEIVED:

An Information Note from UUK announcing the publication of a report by Universities UK mapping out the scale, range and depth of the links universities have established with schools and colleges (SC.456/08-09).