

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

COUNCIL

Notes of the informal meeting of the Council held on 1 February 2006

Present: Mr J P Leighfield (in the Chair), Professor S Bassnett, Professor L Bridges, Professor A Caesar, Mr C Foy, Miss V Gooding, Mr J Higgins, Professor J Jones, Mr T Monnington, Professor S B Palmer, Mr L Parks, Mr N Sanders, Professor M Smith, Professor Sir John Temple, Professor D VandeLinde, Mr T E H Walker, Professor M Whitby.

Apologies: Mr M Angle, Professor Y Carter, Sir George Cox, Mr M Greenlees, Professor A Harris, Professor R Lindley, Professor A McFarlane, Ms K Stark, Miss R Thorne, Mr P Varney, Mr B Woods-Scawen, Academic Registrar, Director of Estates, Director of Personnel.

In Attendance: Acting Director of Finance, Registrar, University Secretary, Ms Y Salter Wright, Ms N Snodgrass.

University Strategic Development

CONSIDERED:

- (a) The University's Mission Statement and Corporate Plan for the period 2004 to 2007 together with presentations from the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) on the following topics:
- (i) The national and international HE context;
 - (ii) New developments and initiatives;
 - (iii) RAE 2008;
 - (iv) Development of the University's research base;
 - (v) The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- (b) A copy of an article published in the *Times Higher Educational Supplement* on 27 January 2006 on the importance of improvement and innovation in learning and teaching in UK and US universities.

Mission Statement and Corporate Plan

Members of the Council considered a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor on the University's stated mission in the context of regional, national and international developments; issues relating to the continuing decline in HEFCE funding for the UK HE sector and the consequent need for HEIs to increase the level of funding accrued through alternative sources; the University's evolving international strategy; new developments and initiatives coming 'on stream' at Warwick; and the new Campus Development Plan.

It was acknowledged that the delivery of world-class teaching and research was the University's primary mission and that all other objectives identified in the University Mission Statement functioned as enabling factors for the successful achievement of this primary objective. Members of the Council also recognised the importance of finding ways in which Warwick might differentiate itself from its key competitors through the cultivation of a distinctive and recognisable brand identity, by which its primary mission might be realised.

RAE 2008

Members of the Council received an oral report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the University's ongoing preparations for the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise and the recent publication of RAE 2008 criteria and working methods for all RAE 2008 subject panels, noting that the RAE 2008 would utilise a system of quality profiles, based on departmental outputs, environment and esteem, which would replace the seven-point grading scale used in previous Research Assessment Exercises.

In the course of subsequent discussion the following issues were noted:

- (a) The increasing internationalisation of staff profiles and the impact of this internationalisation on the 'transfer market' for research staff existing in the run-up to the census date of 31 October 2007.
- (b) The need for universities to manage sensitively any potential issues that might arise in relation to staff morale in the context of tactical omission of researchers from universities' RAE 2008 submissions.

Research Strategy

Members of the Council considered a presentation from Professor Jones, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) on the University's research strategy, recent successes in the acquisition of research grants and contracts and the ongoing development of new research initiatives within the University, including the Warwick Digital Laboratory, the Midlands Physics Consortium (in collaboration with the Universities of Birmingham and Nottingham) and the Diasporas, Migration and Identities programme launched by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Professor Jones highlighted the need for the University to establish and support distinctive strengths in its research and to maximise its research impact in terms of scale as well as quality, noting that the effective management of resource implications would be crucial in ensuring the long-term sustainability of research initiatives.

In the course of subsequent discussion it was noted that the University was taking steps to ensure that all bids for research funding were considered within the wider context of the University's overall research strategy and the envelope of available resources and that the twin issues of physical capacity within the University and the availability of capital funding would continue to be monitored.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Members of the Council received an oral report from Professor Whitby, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) on the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy for the period 2006-09 and the commitment of the University to the continual enhancement of its learning and teaching provision, noting in particular the following:

- (a) The establishment of two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs), the Centre for Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning (CAPITAL Centre) and the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research;
- (b) The establishment of the Learning Grid in University House and the Bio-Med Grid on the Gibbet Hill campus, as well as the planned construction of a Teaching Grid as part of the Library refurbishment project;
- (c) The Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence;
- (d) The success of the first round of funding allocations made available through the Vice-Chancellor's Education Innovation Fund;
- (e) The University's selection by the Higher Education Academy to participate in a benchmarking exercise on e-learning.

Subsequent discussion focused on the importance of establishing a set of initial key performance indicators (KPIs) by which the University's performance might be independently analysed and which could be reviewed and refined in the longer term.

It was agreed that e-learning and KPIs be scheduled as topics for discussion at the next two pre-Council presentation sessions to be held on 5 July and 5 October 2006.