

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 1 February 2010

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 (from item 282/09-10),
Professor M Whitby,
Professor D Wilson,
Mr A Bradley.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Finance Director, Director of Estates, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Professor S B Palmer, Deputy Academic Registrar (for item 282/09-10).

275/09-10 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2010 be approved.

276/09-10 University of Warwick/University of Birmingham Bid for HEFCE -Graduate Internship Funding
(minute 264/09-10 refers)

RECEIVED:

A letter from HEFCE confirming the allocation of 60 graduate internships and £96k to support the graduate internship activities outlined in the joint University of Warwick/Birmingham application submitted in December 2009 (SC.191/09-10).

277/09-10 I/2010/002: Survey on Global Health Collaborations (minute 257/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the University had reported one project under the UUK survey, namely the Wellcome Trust funded research project in Kenya led by David Nokes in the Department of Biological Sciences - "The Potential Impact of Vaccination on RSV and Other Respiratory Virus Pneumonia in the Developing Country setting" by the submission date of 29 January 2010.

278/09-10 Strategic Departmental Review of the Department of Chemistry

RESOLVED:

That members were invited to submit, to the Head of Governance Support Services, specific areas for the consideration of the Review Panel during the forthcoming Strategic Departmental Review of the Department of Chemistry to be held between 16 and 18 February 2010.

279/09-10 Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence 2009/10

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That nominations were now open for the 2009/10 Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence (WATE), noting that all staff who taught or supported student learning at Warwick were eligible to be nominated for an award and that the deadline for nominations was 19 February 2010.

280/09-10 Lecture by David Willetts, MP

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That David Willetts MP, Shadow Minister for Universities and Skills, would give a lecture entitled: "The Pinch: how the baby boomers took their children's future - and why they should give it back" to be held on 17 February in the Zeeman Building from 5.30pm.

281/09-10 Next Meeting of the Steering Committee

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Steering Committee would be held on 15 February 2010 at 10am in the Council Chamber, University House.

282/09-10 Report on Postgraduate Issues

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar updating members on developments relating to postgraduate students, including the establishment of a PGR Funding Working Group, the University's application for ESRC Doctoral Training Centre accreditation, postgraduate research scholarships and a proposal to transition to a standard four year period for doctoral candidates (SC.195/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the draft University application for Doctoral Training Centre accreditation under the new ESRC postgraduate research funding scheme would be considered at a future meeting of the Committee prior to submission.
- (b) That the Graduate School was currently considering the desirability and potential impacts of a move from a three year to a four year standard period of registration for PhD students to alleviate issues facing students, including amongst others, liability for Council Tax in the current extension period and, for international students, related immigration issues.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (c) That the University should be aware of the potential financial implications of establishing an extended period of registration for Warwick Postgraduate Research Scholarship (WPRS) award-holders.
- (d) That consideration was also being given to introducing appropriate incentives to ensure that students completed their PhD wherever possible within the standard registration period.

- (e) That, in addition to the 23 WPRS awards made in the recent round, a specific scholarship with funding matched by Santander would be made to a student from one of the designated countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela.

RESOLVED:

That proposals regarding a standard four year period of registration for PhD candidates be prepared by the Deputy Academic Registrar and Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies for consideration at a future meeting.

283/09-10

Future of UK Accounting and Reporting Standards in the HE Sector

RECEIVED:

A paper from the Head of Group Accounting detailing a consultation by the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) on the future of UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (UK GAAP) in relation to Public Benefits entities, including HE, and the related response from the British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG) (SC.190/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Finance Director)

- (a) That full implementation of the proposed changes could impact on the production of the University accounts and accrue additional audit costs, noting that a specific Universities Statement of Recommended Practice would be helpful in reducing this burden.
- (b) That future changes to accounting standards could also require the USS deficit to be included on Universities' balance sheets which might affect institutions borrowing rates in the future.

284/09-10

Institute of Employment Studies Report on the Role of Finance in HE Applicant/Student Decision-Making

RECEIVED:

A summary of a recently published report by the Institute of Employment Studies on the role finance played in the decision-making of applicants to, and students in, higher education (SC.189/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the report had been commissioned by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and would feed into the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance.
- (b) That the report, as well as other pieces of evidence for the Review submitted by UUK and others, resolved that tuition fees were not in themselves acting as a deterrent for applicants and students from disadvantaged backgrounds, noting that rather, the perceived additional cost related to a leading university was deterring some of these applicants.

285/09-10 Policy Review Articles by the Higher Education Minister and the Shadow Universities Secretary

RECEIVED:

Articles by David Lammy, the Higher Education Minister and David Willetts, the Shadow Universities Secretary published in the Policy Review magazine (www.policyreview.co.uk) (SC.188/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That significant attention was being given in the media to the forthcoming HEFCE funding letter expected to be sent out, broadly, the level of university funding for 2010/11 in advance of the notification of individual allocations in early March 2010.

(By the Finance Director)

- (b) That the position on Capital Investment Funding (CIF) remained unclear, particularly whether the expected reduction would be against CIF in entirety or solely against CIF allocations for Teaching.
- (c) That the University was planning for an overall reduction in HEFCE funding of circa 20 percent, acknowledging that there might be further cuts pre- and/or post- general election.

286/09-10 Shadow Arrangements for Skills Funding Agency and Young People's Learning Agency in the West Midlands

RECEIVED:

A letter from the Learning and Skills Council confirming arrangements for funding 16-18 education and adults skills programmes following its closure at the end of March 2010 and the transfer of responsibility to the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), noting that responsibility for commissioning 16-18 education and training would transfer to Local Authorities (SC.196/09-10).