

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 2 November 2009

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor L Bridges
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor M Smith,
Professor M Underwood
Professor M Whitby (until item 71(e)/09-10)
Professor D Wilson
Mr A Bradley.

Apologies: Professor R Higgott

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Finance Director, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy, Director of Estates, Head of Governance Support Services, Administrative Officer (Governance), Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Professor S B Palmer, Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment (for item 66/09-10), Acting Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) (for item 67/09-10), Deputy Academic Registrar (for items 68/09-10 and 69/09-10)

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Professor Wilson to his first meeting of the Steering Committee as Acting Dean of Warwick Business School.

60/09-10 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2009 be approved, subject to the following amendments (deletions ~~struck through~~ additions underlined):

54/09-10

(b) That a small number of poorer performing staff and research areas had been identified in preparation for the REF and that ~~preparation~~ attention to these was a current priority.

(...)

(f) That whilst the decision not to pursue the Phase 3B building was disappointing to WBS, it should not act as an inhibiting factor for actioning other recommendations, such as those designed to enhance the School's research and quality profile.

(...)

(g) That ~~there were significant implications for the REF if the University Probation procedures were not followed correctly and that the School should make every effort to ensure compliance~~ the University and all its departments, including the Business School, should ensure they follow the correct probation criteria and processes, noting that there were significant implications for the REF if procedures were not followed.

61/09-10 Meeting of Students' Union Council (minute 59/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That the motion calling, in part, for the immediate resignation of the University Chancellor had not been raised at the most recent meeting of the Students' Union Council held on 26 October 2009 but would be brought forward at the Annual General Meeting to be held on 16 November 2009.

62/09-10 Next Meeting of Heads of Departments' Forum

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the next meeting of the Heads of Departments' Forum would be held on 4 November 2009 in the Ramphal Building with items to include the Research Excellence Framework and an update on the establishment of a School of Life Sciences.

63/09-10 Consideration of a Revised Degree Structure

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That, contrary to a recent Times Higher Education article, he was not currently considering proposals by Professor Steve Fuller, Department of Sociology, for a new degree structure for Warwick.
- (b) That the structure of degree programmes across the University would require attention in the longer term to ensure that Warwick remained attractive to applicants and competitive within the sector.

64/09-10 Government Review of Higher Education

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Government would publish information on a new framework for higher education in the UK on 3 November 2009.
- (b) That it was anticipated that the framework would require universities to make more data available concerning its courses including number of contact hours with 'high-profile' academics, expectations regarding the amount of independent study students would undertake and general details on the subjects covered.

RESOLVED:

That the details of the framework be considered at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

65/09-10 Strategic Department Review Report: Department of Philosophy

CONSIDERED:

The final report and related action plan from the Strategic Departmental Review for the Department of Philosophy held between 7 and 10 June 2009 (SC.54/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Department had already undertaken a significant amount of work to begin to resolve a number of issues raised by the Strategic Departmental Review Panel.

(By the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Social Studies)

- (b) That the Faculty was engaged in supporting the Department and the new Head of Department once who was due to take up post in January 2010.

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

- (c) That there was a view within the Department that research underperformance had only occurred between the RAE 2001 and RAE 2008, which could be misleading and so mask significant underlying problems.
- (d) That in relation to the Teaching and Learning recommendations made by the Panel, the Department should take account of good practice in other areas of the University.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (e) That clarification on the use of PhD students as teaching assistants was required within the Departmental response to ensure it complied with University guidelines in this regard.
- (f) That the Panel's comments regarding the recruitment to the Department's new MPhil failed to acknowledge the short timeframe between the establishment of the course and the start of the first cohort, acknowledging, however, the recommendation that a pro-active approach to recruitment should be pursued.

(By the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science)

- (g) That the scale of the departmental deficit required to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Departmental Response to the Review Report and action plan be considered at a future meeting of the Committee to be arranged once the new Head of Department was in post.
- (b) That the Head of Governance Support Services contact the Chair of the Review Panel, Professor Peacocke, to seek evidence to support the statement in paragraph 6.2(f) regarding externally funded research projects potentially acting as a distraction from individual research.

66/09-10

Admissions and Recruitment Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment providing an overview of developments in admissions, recruitment and widening participation, together with proposed dates for undergraduate Open Days through to May 2014 (SC.51/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment)

- (a) That the undergraduate recruitment position for 2010/11 entry appeared to be at least level with or slightly down in comparison to this point in last year's cycle.
- (b) That data received to date suggested that the growth in postgraduate applications experienced last year might continue and that the developments implemented following the business process review had allowed for such an increase to be

managed efficiently, noting that some further refinements would be made during the current cycle.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (c) That some admissions issues remained under consideration by the Board of Graduate Studies but they acknowledged the improvements undertaken in the previous academic year.

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

- (d) That the prospectus redesign which was underway should be informed by the emerging data requirements proposed under the Government framework for HE discussed at the meeting to a) reduce burden on the University in producing the data required and b) to ensure consistency of information provision.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed dates for undergraduate Open Days for 2010 to 2014 be approved as set out in SC.51/09-10.

67/09-10

Teaching Quality Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing) and the Acting Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) providing an update on the King's-Warwick project, the national debate on quality and standards, undergraduate degree classification conventions and Warwick's Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (SC.44/09-10).

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

- (a) That the University was continuing to progress the development of a statement on undergraduate contact hours within the context of the ongoing national debate on standards and quality in the higher education sector.
- (b) That responses from departments on the draft statement on undergraduate contact hours had highlighted a greater divergence in practice within some departments.
- (c) That the Academic Quality and Standards Committee Assessment Conventions Working Group would meet again on the afternoon of 2 November to discuss a number of issues related to the Honours degree classification convention for students joining the University from Autumn 2008 with any resulting proposals being brought forward for consideration by the Senate at its meeting to be held in January 2010.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (d) That the consideration of undergraduate contact hours should not be disconnected from discussions on the potential reform of the external examiner system.

(By the Registrar)

- (e) That it was important to consider the findings and recommendations of the HEFCE Sub-Committee for Teaching, Quality and Student Experience set out in Annex 2 of paper SC.44/09-10, but the University may wish to await the outcomes of further discussions in the sector prior to taking steps to implement all the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the University's degree classification conventions must be robust and should be comparable with other similar institutions and broadly in line with QAA expectations.
- (b) That the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) bring forward recommendations for QAA auditors from the University for consideration at a future meeting, noting that the deadline for submission of nominations to the QAA was 27 November 2009.

68/09-10

Report on Postgraduate Issues

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar updating the Committee in relation to developments concerning postgraduate students, including strategic priorities for the Board of Graduate Studies 2009/10, strategy project progress, postgraduate student feedback mechanisms and the National Association of Fellowship Advisors conference (SC.45/09-10).

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

- (a) That a review and enhancement of financial support provision for postgraduate research students was a key strategic priority in the context of increasing postgraduate research student numbers as part of the University strategy.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (b) That the University should, where appropriate, encourage themed research in order to be in a position to attract large-scale scholarship funders, such as the Gates Foundation and the National Institute of Health who currently appeared to send their award holders exclusively to Oxford or Cambridge.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine))

- (c) That the work being undertaken to regularise collaborative and split-site degree programmes was essential in the light of the University's international strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the Vice-Chancellor write to Tadataka Yamada, President, Global Health Program in the Gates Foundation and Honorary Graduate of Warwick, to explore the possibility of future award holders being hosted by Warwick.

69/09-10

Fee Structure for Visiting Students

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar outlining proposals for the fee structure for visiting students and the number of visiting students to be hosted by any department in any one academic year (SC.46/09-10).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed fee structure for visiting students be approved as set out in SC.46/09-10, subject to the inclusion of a further appropriate exemption relating to students visiting from the University's chosen international partner institutions.

- (b) That the Fees Working Group consider initially the level at which departmental bursaries for visiting student fees should be capped; noting that resulting proposals could be approved by the Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of the Steering Committee, if required.

70/09-10

Financial Performance of ARC Departments: Quarter 4 2008/09

CONSIDERED:

A report setting out the 2008/09 year-end financial position for ARC departments (SC.55/09-10).

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

- (a) That those ARC departments who had experienced a fall against adjusted budget at gross surplus level would be contacted to explore how the variance had occurred.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (b) That a pattern had been noted around the fluctuation of research margin at year-end and that this was being investigated with the Finance Office to identify the factors involved and to allow for more accurate research planning with departments.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the 2008/09 year-end financial position for ARC departments be approved as set out in SC.55/09-10.

71/09-10

Financial Performance of Warwick Business School: Quarter 4 2008/09

CONSIDERED:

A report setting out the 2008/09 year-end financial position for Warwick Business School (SC.47/09-10).

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

- (a) That the Public Sector programmes within the School had exceeded target with a gross surplus of £524k but in the current financial climate, the longevity of the Public Sector financing for the portfolio was unclear.
- (b) That the School would be considering a more pro-active approach to recruiting to its Doctoral Programme to reverse the recent fall against target by developing and promoting research themes for the programme.
- (c) That the School's financial position should be considered alongside the academic strategy to be ranked in the top three business schools in the forthcoming REF, noting that investment would be required to support this aim.

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

- (d) That the increase in research income secured by the School was welcome but care should be taken to ensure that the corresponding increase in costs did not continue.

(By the Director of Development, Communication and Strategy)

- (e) That, as highlighted in the recent Strategic Departmental Review, the Development and Alumni Office was working closely with its counterparts in the School to raise the level of gifts and pledges received, noting that the School's development income

target for 2009/10 was £200k but acknowledging also that this figure should, ideally, be closer to £1m for a business school and university of Warwick's standing.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the 2008/09 year-end financial position for Warwick Business School be approved as set out in SC.47/09-10.

72/09-10

Financial Performance of Warwick Medical School: Quarter 4 2008/09

CONSIDERED:

A report setting out the 2008/09 year-end financial position for Warwick Medical School (SC.48/09-10).

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

That the current academic year presented challenges for the School with regards to cost saving targets and potential future investment needs relating to the recruitment of staff in preparation for the REF.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the 2008/09 year-end financial position for Warwick Medical School be approved as set out in SC.48/09-10.

73/09-10

UUK I/2009/0: UKBA Consultation on Charging for Immigration and Visa Applications

CONSIDERED:

An I –Note from Universities UK (UUK) informing members of a UK Border Agency (UKBA) consultation on future charges for immigration and visa applications (SC.49/09-10).

RESOLVED:

That the Committee was supportive of the initial UUK commentary set out in SC.49/09-10 and that no separate response was necessary.

74/09-10

OFFA Guidance for HEIs: How to Complete Your Monitoring Statement 2009/10

RECEIVED:

The executive summary, glossary and background information from OFFA guidance on how institutions should complete their monitoring statement for 2009/10 (SC.50/09-10)

JFB/jf/steersshare/minutes2009-10/Nov09/02Nov09