

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 8 December 2008

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor L Bridges,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor K Lamberts
Professor R Lindley,
Professor R Higgott,
Professor M Smith,
Professor M Underwood,
Professor M Whitby

Apologies: Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor S Bassnett, Professor H Thomas, Mr S Thomson

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Finance, Director of Estates, Director of Communications and Strategy, Acting Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment (for item 212/08-09)

203/08-09 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2008 be approved.

204/08-09 Financial Sustainability Strategy Group Letter: TRAC Guidance (minute 186/08-09 refers)

RECEIVED:

A letter from the Financial Sustainability Group encouraging universities to carry out comprehensive validation and reasonableness checks prior to submission of TRAC returns to HEFCE, together with related updated guidance (SC.152/08-09).

205/08-09 Academic Health Science Centres (AHSCs) and Health Innovation and Education Clusters (HEICs) (minute 180/08-09 refers)

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

- (a) That it was still not clear how many AHSCs would be established under the Department of Health initiative.
- (b) That the University would prepare a bid for both schemes with a decision to be taken closer to the deadline of 20 January 2009 whether to submit a bid for an AHSC, noting that a HEIC bid was likely to be more successful.

206/08-09 Universities UK: The Queen's Speech

RECEIVED:

An email from Universities UK to Vice-Chancellors informing of Bills affecting Higher Education announced in the Queen's Speech of 2 December 2008 (SC.154/08-09).

207/08-09 HEFCE Circular 34/2008: Update on Research Excellence Framework

RECEIVED:

A letter from HEFCE updating the Committee on progress with developing the Research Excellence Framework (REF)(SC.145/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That, despite HEFCE appearing to delay implementation of the REF, the University would continue its internal preparations as part of the broad research strategy being taken forward.

208/08-09 HEFCE Circular 35/2008: Bringing Forward Capital Spending From 2010/11

CONSIDERED:

A circular letter from HEFCE requesting higher education institutions to review their capital investment plans for 2010/11 with a view to bringing forward proposals for projects for 2009/10 (SC.151/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Estates)

(a) That possible projects to bring forward had been identified, noting that these were refurbishments projects.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

(b) That there was a likelihood that no earmarked capital funding would be available from 2010/11.

RESOLVED:

That the Registrar contact Steve Egan, Deputy Chief Executive of HEFCE, to discuss the process for bringing forward capital spending with a view to submitting proposals by the deadline of 30 January 2009.

209/08-09 UUK I-Note I/08/100: Office of Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education Review

RECEIVED:

Information from Universities UK updating the Committee of the current review of the OIA scheme and requesting that institutions share their responses with UUK (SC.148/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That the University was preparing a response, noting that there was nervousness across the sector around the potential extension of the OIA's remit.

210/08-09 UUK I-Note I/08/108: Modernising Scientific Careers – The Next Steps

CONSIDERED:

Information on the Department of Health consultation on modernising scientific careers in the healthcare science workforce, together with a letter from HEFCE confirming that there would be no additional student numbers in these subject areas for 2008/09 (SC.155/08-09).

RESOLVED:

That, if deemed appropriate, the Acting Dean of Warwick Medical School co-ordinate a response to be considered by the Committee at a future meeting prior to submission by the deadline of 27 February 2009.

211/08-09 Membership of the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU)

RECEIVED:

A letter from the ECIU confirming that the University had withdrawn its membership with effect from 31 December 2008 (SC.150/08-09).

212/08-09

Policy Update: Admissions and Recruitment

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment updating the Committee on issues in undergraduate and postgraduate admissions and recruitment, including the latest applications data (SC.153/08-09).

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

- (a) That the overall undergraduate application position was healthy with an increase of 4.5% on the previous year, noting that it was difficult to deduce whether this represented a rise in early applications or a general increase in applications across the sector.
- (b) That the recent Postgraduate Open Day was a success with a 100% increase in attendance compared to the previous year.
- (c) That the Delivery Partnership Stakeholders conference which took place in November 2008 did not produce any significant new information but confirmed that there would be a 5-calendar day Adjustment Period for confirmation and clearing where applicants who performed better than expected could 'trade up' their confirmed offer to an institution with higher entry standards.
- (d) That discussions had taken place with other institutions and DIUS regarding a 'collaborative Compact scheme' to widen participation, noting that the dialogue had two dimensions:
 - (i) Promoting greater recognition and awareness of the schemes in operation at other HEIs
 - (ii) Creating genuinely collaborative schemes with shared aims and recruitment criteria.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs))

- (e) That the University would remain engaged with the Compact scheme discussions to assist in shaping the proposed scheme.

(By the Director of Finance)

- (f) That Warwick Business School should be encouraged to consider a second cohort of the MSc in Finance, given the significant increase in applications.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be approved as set out in SC.153/08-09.
- (b) That the Vice-Chancellor speak with the Dean of Warwick Business School to discuss the possibility of establishing a second cohort of the MSc in Finance.

213/08-09

Financial Performance of ARC Departments: Quarter 1 2008/09

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Academic Registrar providing details of the Quarter 1 outturn for ARC departments considered at the Academic Resourcing Committee at its meeting on 4 December 2008 (SC.156/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That at a meeting last week with representatives from US universities, it was clear that the US higher education sector was experiencing extraordinary financial difficulties.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (b) That the current variance at the end of Quarter 1 against plan could be largely attributed to two factors:
 - (i) The recent pay award being higher than budgeted
 - (ii) The forecast vacancy savings being lower than expected
- (c) That there was a mismatch in some departments with regards to forecast and actual spend against research income.
- (d) That meetings had been arranged with a number of departments in the coming weeks to address significant variances and downturn against plan, noting that the issues arising from Budget Steering Group were unable to be fully considered at the recent ARC meeting due to the lack of time between the two meetings.

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Arts)

- (e) That Heads of Department should be encouraged to consider interdisciplinary appointments to cover vacancies.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Academic Registrar and Director of Finance investigate methods for monitoring the ARC budget and that of its departments on a more frequent basis
- (b) That the Vice-Chancellor write to Heads of Departments to restate the need for careful budget management and cost control in the current financial climate, noting that cost savings noted by Departments would be revisited by the ARC.

214/08-09 HEFCE Council Briefing October 2008

RECEIVED:

The HEFCE Council Briefing for October 2008, outlining developments and activities undertaken by HEFCE (SC.146/08-09).

215/08-09 UUK I-Note I/08/107: 14-19 Curriculum Reform Update

RECEIVED:

An information note updating the Committee on recent developments in the government's 14-19 curriculum reform programme (SC.147/08-09).

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