

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 23 March 2009

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor S Bassnett,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor R Lindley,
Professor M Smith,
Professor H Thomas,
Mr S Thomson,
Professor M Underwood,
Professor M Whitby

Apologies: Professor L Bridges, Professor R Higgott

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Finance Director, Director of Estates, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director of Human Resources and Policy Advisor (Policy and Projects) (for item 442/08-09)

438/08-09 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2009 be approved.

439/08-09 HEFCE 2009/03: Recurrent Grants for 2009/10 (minute 425/08-09 refers)

RECEIVED:

A publication from HEFCE summarising the provisional allocations of recurrent funding to institutions for the academic year 2009/10 (SC.314/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the Times Higher Education in its edition published on 5 March 2009 had reported on the perceived lack of correlation between performance in the RAE and the level of HEFCE grant allocation.

440/08-09 EPSRC Knowledge Transfer Account

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the University had not been awarded an EPSRC Knowledge Transfer Account, noting that only two Russell Group institutions, Manchester and Sheffield, had been successful.
- (b) That the University would receive £500k as its application was commended by the EPSRC.

441/08-09 PULSE: Staff Survey Results 2009

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Human Resources updating the Committee on the results from the PULSE: Staff Survey conducted in January 2009 (SC.310/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Human Resources)

- (a) That the response rate to the Survey had increased from 50% in 2008 to 61% in 2009, noting that the response rate for manual staff had doubled from 25% in 2008 to 50% in 2009.
- (b) That the University's Engagement Index indicating employees' sense of engagement to the institution had improved with an overall engagement score of 81% which was well above the benchmark comparison of 69% provided by the Survey company, ORC International.
- (c) That heads of academic and administrative departments would receive individual reports, noting that existing action plans should be reviewed in the light of the 2009 survey data.

(By the Acting Dean of Warwick Medical School)

- (d) That it would be useful for departments to have a breakdown of responses by type of employee to inform the development of local action plans.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the PULSE: Staff Survey 2009 results be approved as set out in SC.310/08-09.

442/08-09

Quarter End Report: Warwick Business School

CONSIDERED:

A paper outlining the financial position of Warwick Business School (WBS) at the end of Quarter 2 (SC.290/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Dean of Warwick Business School)

- (a) That the Executive Programmes portfolio was being closely monitored due to the fall in demand attributable to the current economic downturn.
- (b) That research income was forecast to increase by 18% compared to last year.

(By the Director of Development, Communications and Strategy)

- (c) That development income for WBS was lower than its competitors, noting that a case for support was being launched on 14 May 2009.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Quarter 2 End report be approved as set out in SC.290/08-09.
- (b) That the Committee record its congratulations for the increase in research income in the last quarter.
- (c) That the Director of Development, Communications and Strategy and the Dean of WBS investigate the level of development income in competitor institutions, together with details of donations from WBS graduates for the consideration of the Committee at a future meeting.

443/08-09

Office for Fair Access: Monitoring Outcomes for 2007/08

CONSIDERED:

A letter from the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) notifying the University of the outcome of its 2007/08 monitoring return (SC.316/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the report and information included with the letter was under embargo until Thursday 26 March 2009 and had therefore been circulated for the attention of members and attendees of the Steering Committee only at this stage.
- (b) That the OFFA monitoring return reviewed how institutions charging above the national average tuition fees promoted and safeguarded fair access to higher education for under-represented groups through the provision of bursaries and outreach activities.
- (c) That the letter confirmed that OFFA had no concerns about Warwick and its approach to fair access.
- (d) That the University needed to consider the sustainability of the current level of bursaries which was above the national average of 90% in terms of up-take, noting that it was important to improve the modelling of forecasts for bursary levels of potential eligible applicants and the effects of overshoots on bursary forecasts whilst acknowledging that students did not have to declare eligibility prior to admission but could do this at any time including in light of change of circumstances.

RESOLVED:

That the Academic Registrar and the Finance Director undertake analysis on the level of bursaries in comparison to competitors for consideration by the Committee at a future meeting.

444/08-09

UUK Report: 'Changing Landscapes: Future Scenarios for Variable Tuition Fees'

CONSIDERED:

A report from Universities UK summarising the results of the construction of a model for future scenarios for variable tuition fees in England (SC.318/08-09) and a press release from the Students' Union issued on 17 March 2009 responding to the UUK projections (SC.319/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the report represented an attempt by Universities UK to begin discussions on tuition fees.
- (b) That modelling data had been provided with the reports for institutions to utilise in their own planning activities, noting that the Finance Office and the Academic Office were currently undertaking modelling in this regard.

(By the President of the Student's Union)

- (c) That while it might seem simple for universities to raise tuition fees, it would have political, social and economic implications for future generations of students.

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

- (d) That increased tuition fees could give rise to tighter quality assurance of the provision at institutions.

RESOLVED:

That once completed, the findings of the modelling being undertaken by the Finance Office and Academic Office be considered by the Committee, noting the interest of the Dean of Warwick Business School in being involved in the analysis.

445/08-09 National Student Survey 2009

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

- (a) That the University's overall response rate to the current National Student Survey was 53% and that the telephone campaign phase of the survey had commenced.
- (b) That a number of departments had achieved a response rate of around 50% and steps were being taken to attempt to get all departments over this threshold.

446/08-09 UUK I-Note I-2009-008: Matched Funding Scheme Leaflet

RECEIVED:

A leaflet from Universities UK summarising experiences from the UUK and Department of Innovations, Universities and Skills (DIUS) £7.5m pilot matched funding programme (SC.311/08-09).

447/08-09 EPSRC Connect Newsletter – March 2009

RECEIVED:

The March edition of the EPSRC Connect newsletter featuring the new measures introduced to improve its peer review process (SC.312/08-09)

448/08-09 HEFCE 2009/05: Supporting Higher Education in Further Education Colleges

RECEIVED:

A publication from HEFCE informing the Committee of the outcomes of HEFCE's review of its policy towards higher education in further education colleges (SC.317/08-09)

449/08-09 UUK I-Note I/09/010: Reform of the Admissions System – Delivery Partnership

RECEIVED:

A UUK I-Note alerting its members to the need to make decisions on the application deadline dates for art and design courses previously in Route B (SC.309/08-09).

450/08-09 UUK I-Note I/2009/011: Academic Health Science Centres

RECEIVED:

A UUK I-Note presenting the Academic Health Science Centres designation process, including the 5 institutions which were awarded AHSC status (SC.315/08-09), namely:

- (i) Cambridge University Health Partners
- (ii) Imperial College
- (iii) King's Health Partners
- (iv) Manchester AHSC
- (v) UCL Partners