

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

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

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor L Bridges,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor R Higgott,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor M Smith (until item 138/09-10),
Professor M Underwood
Professor M Whitby
Professor D Wilson
Mr A Bradley.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Finance Director, Director of Strategy, Communication and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance) Director of HR (for items 129/09-10 and 130/09-10), Director of Management Information and Planning (for item 132/09-10).

119/09-10 Minutes

RESOLVED:

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

120/09-10 HEFCE: Additional Student Numbers 2010/11 – Update (minute 97/09-10 refers)

RECEIVED:

An email from HEFCE updating institutions on the process for the allocation of Additional Student Numbers for 2010/11 (SC.82/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the University had submitted a bid for an increase of full-time undergraduate student numbers in the Department of Physics and the School of Engineering.

121/09-10 University Corporate Planning Statement (minute 106/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Corporate Planning Statement had been revised in line with comments raised at the previous meeting and would be submitted to the Council for consideration at its meeting to be held on 27 November 2009.
- (b) That the University's Annual Monitoring Statement would be considered at the next meeting of the Steering Committee prior to immediate submission to the HEFCE on 30 November 2009.

122/09-10 I/2009/114: UUK Response to HEFCE Review of Teaching Funding (minute 96/09-10 refers)

RECEIVED:

Universities UK (UUK) response to the HEFCE Review of Teaching Funding (SC.90/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the UUK response did not address to the concerns raised by the University in its response.

(By the Registrar)

- (b) That the tentative suggestion by UUK that those institutions which were able to secure alternative income should receive less government funding was, potentially, a cause for concern.
- (c) That the Vice-Chancellor had written to Sir Alan Langlands, Chief Executive of HEFCE, regarding several developments which had already adversely affected those institutions, including Warwick, which had been entrepreneurial and actively developed alternative income streams.

RESOLVED:

That the Registrar write to the Chief Executive of UUK, Nicola Dandridge, to raise the University's concerns regarding UUK's response to the HEFCE Review of Teaching Funding.

123/09-10 QAA Auditor Nominations (minute 67/09-10 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the nominations of Dr David Lamburn (Centre for Lifelong Learning) and Professor Jackie Labbe (Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies) as QAA auditors be approved for submission by the Vice-Chancellor to the QAA by the deadline of 27 November 2009.

124/09-10 School of Life Sciences (minute 107/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That, at the extraordinary meeting on 16 November 2009, the Senate approved the continuation of the implementation of the School of Life Sciences as set out in the paper S.7/09-10, as well as endorsing the concurrent development of the medium to longer term vision for Life Sciences at Warwick inclusive of the process and timetable for its progression.

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

- (b) That the Life Sciences Advisory Group had resolved that the groups tasked with the implementation of the School of Life Sciences and the development of the wider vision should be separate entities in order for the work to be progressed in parallel.
- (c) That the Search Committee for the Head of the School of Life Sciences should be established as a signal of commitment and progress to the departments involved.

RESOLVED:

That the Interim Chair of the School of Life Sciences, the Deputy Registrar and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine) bring forward proposals on the following for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee:

- (i) Memberships of groups and timetable to underpin and inform the implementation of the School of the Life Sciences; and
- (ii) Membership of the group tasked with the development of the wider vision of Life Sciences at Warwick, incorporating milestones and drawing on the extensive work previously undertaken by the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science as appropriate.

125/09-10 Independent Review of HEFCE – Institutional Meeting

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That a representative from Oakleigh Consulting had visited the University on 13 November 2009 to meet with senior administrative colleagues to hear their views on HEFCE and its systems and processes.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee be kept informed of any developments, noting that the report was expected to be published in March 2010.

126/09-10 Death of Professor John Buxton

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That it was with sadness that the University was informed of the recent death of Professor John Buxton, the founding Professor of the Department of Computer Science on 3 November 2009.

127/09-10 London Metropolitan University

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That, as reported in the Independent newspaper on 23 November 2009, HEFCE had approached the Board of Governors of London Metropolitan University requesting they consider their position following accusations of the misuse of public money.

128/09-10 Warwick Manufacturing Group Awarded Queen's Anniversary Prize

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its congratulations to Warwick Manufacturing Group on being awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education, it being noted that the awards were made every two years in recognition of world-class achievement in any aspect of an institution's work that demonstrated evidence of originality, innovation and benefit to the wider community.

129/09-10 HR and LDC Update

RECEIVED:

A report from the Director of HR updating on key activities within HR including the Learning and Development Centre, the HR strategy, structure, harmonization and a summary of key HR metrics (SC.99/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of HR)

- (a) That the revised HR structure as set out in the paper would be communicated to the University community shortly.
- (b) That an evaluation of feedback received on the first cycle of Annual Review conducted in 2009 would be considered initially by Senior Officers, noting that evidence suggested that the introduction of a standardized Annual Review process had been generally well received by academic departments but had raised some questions regarding difference in practice between areas of the University.

130/09-10 Equality and Diversity Update

RECEIVED:

A report from the Director of HR and the Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee informing the Committee of changes to the equality and diversity leads across the institution, training and the University's engagement with national equality and diversity recognition schemes (SC.96/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee)

That the good practice and action planning with regards to employment practice for women working in science by the Department of Physics should be commended and that the University should continue to work to spread good practice across the institution.

131/09-10 Report on Health and Safety Issues for the Period May 2009 to October 2009

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Health and Safety updating on a number of activities including, the level of injuries and incidents in the period May to October 2009, current interaction with enforcement agencies and strategic developments in high hazard environments (SC.94/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the University Health and Safety Executive Committee had noted that the reduction in incidents requiring report under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).
- (b) That some departments within the Faculty of Science, notably Chemistry, had developed strong safety management systems in laboratories and the good practice developed would be shared.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Health and Safety provide further information to clarify why the University's total for RIDDOR incidents remained significantly above the norm for the sector.

132/09-10 Academic Statistics Yearbook 2009/10

CONSIDERED:

The University Academic Statistics Yearbook for 2009/10 (SC.101/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Management Information and Planning)

- (a) That the 2009/10 Yearbook contained a greater focus on benchmarking data (where available and appropriate) as requested by the Council and the Steering Committee following consideration of the inaugural Yearbook in 2008/09.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (b) That consideration should be given to the methodology for compiling data on postgraduate research students, including aspects such as non-completion and in-year recruitment.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Management Information and Planning investigate the perceived inaccuracy in the reporting of the total number of postgraduate research students within the Yearbook.

133/09-10

National Student Survey 2010

CONSIDERED:

Guidance from Ipsos Mori, the agency responsible for conducting the National Student Survey, on the process for the 2010 exercise (SC.88/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That student contact details for the 2010 survey had been provided to Ipsos in accordance with the NSS guidance, and that the Teaching Quality section would be liaising with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience), the Students' Union Education Officer, the Communications Office and the Deputy Registrar's Office on the proposed survey period at Warwick, publicity and incentive campaigns, and optional survey questions, which would be confirmed to Ipsos before the deadline of 27 November 2009.
- (b) That all eligible students would be encouraged to respond to the 2010 survey and that departments would be provided with information and publicity materials to support them in encouraging students to respond.

RESOLVED:

That the Deputy Registrar provide details of incentive schemes used in previous years to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) for consideration in advance of confirming details of the University approach with Ipsos by 27 November 2009.

134/09-10

National Student Forum Annual Report

RECEIVED:

A summary report of the National Student Forum Annual Report 2008/09 by the Assistant Registrar (Deputy Registrar's Office) including the Forum's recommendations for institutions and for Government with regards to the student experience (SC.95/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That the report would be disseminated to relevant colleagues within the institution following consideration by the Steering Committee.

- (b) That it should be noted that Warwick performed reasonably well in the context of the recommendations for institutions contained in the Annual Report.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (c) That it was questionable whether the National Student Forum was truly representative of the body of students within higher education in England with only 18 members, the majority of which were undergraduates.
- (d) That, at least at Warwick, there was a low level of awareness of the National Student Forum and that the Forum appeared not to consult with the student population.

135/09-10

UKBA Tier 4 Review

CONSIDERED:

Details of a UK Border Agency (UKBA) Review of Tier 4 (students) of the points-based immigration system (SC.100/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the short turnaround time on the review highlighted the importance of immigration on the current political agenda.
- (b) That the potential restrictions on eligibility of international students on sub-degree programmes would have significant implications for Warwick's Higher Education Foundation Programmes, as would the proposed changes to the minimum English Language requirement for international students.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the University response to the UKBA Review of Tier 4 be received at the next meeting of the Steering Committee subsequent to being submitted to UUK by the deadline of 26 November 2009.
- (b) That the Academic Registrar and the President of the Students' Union investigate the issues around students delayed or unable to attend due to visa problems and the impact on their accommodation charges.

136/09-10

QAA Audit of HE Programmes in Singapore

CONSIDERED:

Notification from the QAA of a forthcoming audit of HE programmes in Singapore (SC.98/09-10), including a summary of Warwick collaborative programmes to be audited.

RESOLVED:

That the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing) review the details of the University's provision in Singapore as presented by the QAA and advise the QAA of any additional details or corrections by the deadline of 11 December 2009.

137/09-10

I/2009/113: New UK 'Researcher Development Framework' Consultation by Vitae

CONSIDERED:

Information from Universities UK regarding a Vitae consultation on a new 'researcher development framework' for the UK (SC.89/09-10).

RESOLVED:

That a response be compiled by the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Research) and colleagues in the Learning and Development Centre for consideration by the Steering Committee prior to submission by the deadline of 11 December 2009.

138/09-10

HEFCE: Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey (HESES) 2009/10

CONSIDERED:

Information from HEFCE advising the University on the process for completing the 2009/10 HESES data return, noting the submission and verification dates of 10 December 2009 and 13 January 2010 respectively (SC.97/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the Academic Registrar and himself had been in contract with HEFCE regarding the forthcoming HESES submission and audit.
- (b) That 66 per cent of institutions audited to date were found to be deficient in the context of the level of non-completions generally, noting that the methodology employed by HEFCE was recognized to be extremely problematic in terms of definition and operation within institutions.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (c) That it was likely that Warwick would be found to be deficient in the coming audit as it did not collect module marks with the granularity required to adequately complete the data return.
- (d) That it was difficult to anticipate what HEFCE would do in cases of non-compliance given the higher percentage of institutions affected and the resulting implications for HEFCE's own reputation and for that of the sector generally.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the Academic Registrar and the Management Information and Planning Office in their preparations for the HESES return by 1 December 2009, noting that every effort would be made to ensure the data was as accurate as possible acknowledging the technical issues discussed at the meeting.

139/09-10

HEFCE: Annual Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) Returns for 2008-09

RECEIVED:

A letter from HEFCE requesting institutions to submit their TRAC return for 2008/09 by the deadline of 29 January 2009 (SC.87/09-10).