

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 01 October 2012

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor S Croft,
Professor Christina Hughes,
Professor Christopher Hughes,
Professor T Jones,
Professor J Labbe,
Professor S Swain,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor P Thomas,
Professor P Winstanley,
Mr N Swain (for items 4/12-13 to 9/12-13)

Apologies: Registrar.

In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Finance and Financial Strategy, Director of Human Resources, Director of Estates, Director of Development and External Affairs, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance/Academic Registrar's Office).

1/12-13 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2012 be approved.

2/12-13 Arrivals Weekend

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That positive feedback had been received regarding the 2012/13 Arrivals Weekend including comments regarding the newly opened hall of residence Sherbourne.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its thanks to those colleagues who were involved in Arrivals Weekend between 29 and 30 September 2012.

3/12-13 University League Tables

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the University had recently placed 10th in the Sunday Times 'Good University Guide' retaining its position as the top institution in the Midlands.

4/12-13 UCAS Contextual Data Statement

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the University is obligated to lodge a statement of usage with UCAS regarding contextual data released to the institution.

- (b) That the University wished to conduct a trial using contextual data within the admissions decisions of entry cohorts in a number of pilot departments the 2012/13 admissions cycle.
- (c) That in these instances, contextual data would only be used in consideration of whether to offer candidates interviews and that entry requirements would not be lowered.
- (d) That he would clarify the requirements from UCAS on the level of detail required concerning the operation and usage of the contextual data.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Christina Hughes))

- (e) That there was an appetite for the usage of contextual data from a larger number of departments than those included in the trial.

RESOLVED:

That a revised version of the UCAS contextual data statement would be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Steering Committee.

5/12-13

Release of Key Information Sets

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the Key Information Sets (KIS) had now been released into the public domain via the Unistats website.
- (b) That whilst there were some concerns regarding the usability of the Unistats website, it was believed that this would become a well-utilised resource for prospective applicants to aid in shortlisting courses and institutions.
- (c) That initial analysis by the Management Information and Planning Office had shown that the University's contact hours data was comparable to peer institutions in the Russell Group.

RESOLVED:

That the Management Information and Planning Office would circulate an analysis of the released data.

6/12-13

Major Research Proposal: Sensor Platforms for Effective Emergency Decisions (SPEED)

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Knowledge Transfer, Business Engagement and Research (Science & Medicine))

- (a) That the bid proposed was part of a £25m collaboration, led by Birmingham and also involving Queen Mary - University of London.
- (b) That it had not yet been clarified what the University's final proportion of the bid total would be, as the funding split would be negotiated by the bid's Management Team on an ongoing basis throughout the implementation of the proposal.
- (c) That the bid clearly aligns with the aims of the University's Global Research Priorities Programme.
- (d) That there was some uncertainty over the final number of postgraduate students that the partner institutions were committing to provide to support the proposal.

RESOLVED:

That the bid be approved subject to satisfactory clarification on the number and funding source of the postgraduate students within the University's contribution in the proposal (in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Group Finance Director), and the removal of mention of additional academic appointments.

7/12-13

Enhancing Student Satisfaction: Proposed plan of action

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience)

- (a) That overall the outcomes of this year's National Student Survey were disappointing and that there were some areas that were cause for concern.
- (b) That a positive correlation could be observed between increases in some feedback scores and departmental engagement with programmes and events designed to spread best practise following work in previous years.
- (c) That a new University-wide approach would be taken to address some of the key areas of concern.
- (d) That upcoming developments in a standardised feedback and assignment management system would provide a much better picture of the feedback return times across the University.
- (e) That data from the National Student Survey would be given to the Academic Resourcing Committee to be used in its consideration of a departments' performance portfolio.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (f) That the Students' Union was supportive of the University's moves to improve feedback provision for students.
- (g) That the Students' Union had received a satisfaction rating of 74% in the NSS, which was above average for institutions within the Russell Group.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (h) That there seemed to be some inconsistencies between departments regarding the quality of feedback that was provided to students.
- (i) That the required level for compliance with the University's new guidelines on feedbacks should be set considerably higher than 50% and that non-compliance with the policy should be escalated rapidly.
- (j) That the remits of the Academic Resourcing Committee and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee would need to be carefully defined with regard to the NSS data, however including this data within ARC resourcing considerations was a crucial step.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (k) That the Personal Tutoring facility within the Virtual Learning Environment was being prioritised to address issues in this area.

(by the Dean of the Warwick Medical School)

- (l) That whilst the actions being taken were extremely important in resolving disappointing satisfaction scores, it was imperative that the University's actions and results of these are properly conveyed to students and other stakeholders so that they know their concerns are being addressed.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (m) That a four-week maximum turnaround period for feedback for assessed work was entirely realistic and should be standard across the University - exceptions to this should only be allowed in truly extreme cases.
- (n) That ideally feedback should be returned as quickly as possible and the University may wish to give consideration to a three-week standard turnaround period.
- (o) That the average satisfaction ratings for peer institutions were likely to increase before the next iteration of the NSS, increasing the work the University had to do to regain its position.
- (p) That the University needed to ensure that the policy on feedback was universally understood and easily accessible on the website.

(by the Dean of the Warwick Business School)

- (q) That the Warwick Business School had introduced KPIs for academics relating to feedback turnaround times.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (r) That work was going to be undertaken communicating the outcome of the Institutional Review following further work this term and would likely be a suitable outlet for messages regarding changes to feedback and assessment as well.

8/12-13

OIA Annual Letter

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) had made changes to the reporting format of its annual statistics for this release of Annual Letters.
- (b) That whilst the University has had a higher number of cases taken before the OIA compared to its benchmark, the proportion of these which have been found to be Justified or Partially Justified has been much lower than at the comparator institutions.

(by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (c) That the high population of Postgraduate Taught students at Warwick (and subsequent appeals) may be having an inflationary effect on the figures.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (d) That the University should aim to reduce instances where the desired timescales for its internal complaints procedures have not been met.

9/12-13

RCUK Investment in Open Access

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Knowledge Transfer, Business Engagement and Research (Science & Medicine))

- (a) That in line with the results of the Finch Report, Research Councils UK was encouraging universities to pursue the open access agenda.
- (b) That it was expected that there would be a limited grant available in the upcoming year to help institutions with this transition.
- (c) That open access would be likely to be more costly to institutions than current publishing arrangements.
- (d) That work was being undertaken to produce a response to the RCUK letter, noting the short timescales.

NO/SS/steersshare/minutes/201213/Oct2012/01-10-2012