

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 4 November 2013

Present: Vice-Chancellor and President,
Provost,
Professor Christina Hughes,
Professor Christopher Hughes,
Professor T Jones,
Professor J Palmowski,
Mr B Sundell,
Professor S Swain,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor P Thomas,
Professor P Winstanley,
Professor L Young.

Apologies: Professor A Caesar.

In Attendance: Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Group Finance Director, Director of Estates, Director of Human Resources, Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment (for item 42/13-14), Director of the International Office (for item 42/13-14).

35/13-14 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2013 be approved.

36/13-14 Warwick Business School

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That nine academics from Warwick Business School had recently been awarded Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Academic Fellowship status, meaning that with a total of ten such colleagues, the School had more Academic Fellows of the CIPD than any other business school in the UK.
- (b) That the Academic Fellow grade indicated that a colleague was renowned as an expert in at least two human resources sub-areas and would be a key contributor to policy or strategic decisions and initiatives.
- (c) That the school also had six members of staff who were Academic Members of the CIPD and two Academic Associate members.

37/13-14 Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That Professor Mohan Balasubramanian from Warwick Medical School had been granted a Wolfson Research Merit Award by the Royal Society.
- (b) That the scheme was for exceptional scientists, providing universities with additional support to enable them to recruit or retain respected scientists of outstanding achievement and potential to the UK.

RESOLVED:

That Professor Balasubramanian be congratulated on his award.

38/13-14

Warwick Scientific Services

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That the University had recently launched a new bespoke service designed to help technology businesses and academia.
- (b) That Warwick Scientific Services (WSS) offered access to a range of technical and scientific measurements facilities, training, and collaborative research.
- (c) That businesses could access University research and instrumentation to help solve problems, improve product and business performance and boost their technology capability, and that new contracting arrangements and processes had been specially designed for WSS that ensure responsiveness and ability to meet client deadlines and expectations.

39/13-14

Sprint Programme

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That the University had announced the launch of a pilot programme specifically designed to support the professional development of women undergraduates.
- (b) That the Sprint programme would be delivered in partnership with RBS and Microsoft and each participant would have the opportunity to work with a personal mentor from these two organisations.
- (c) That the programme would run over three days in November 2013 and a further day in January 2014, and would cover a range of key development topics to help participants use personal power and influence; identify values, attitudes and direction; and to manage time effectively.
- (d) That applicants were required to prepare and submit a 500 word summary of what they hoped to achieve from participating in the programme.

40/13-14

Giving to Warwick Prizes

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That over 60 high achieving Warwick students from departments across the University were awarded for efforts over the year at a special ceremony on Thursday 17 October 2013.
- (b) That awards included the Ann Barnes Prize for academic excellence and exceptional classroom proficiency, the William V Whitehead Prize for academic excellence in English and Comparative Literature, and the Rohin Modasia Prize for outstanding contribution in Engineering Sustainability.
- (c) That all awards were fully funded by donations from alumni and friends of the University.

RESOLVED:

That the congratulations of the Committee be extended to all students who were awarded prizes.

National Student Survey

CONSIDERED:

A paper proposing arrangements for the 2014 National Student Survey (NSS) exercise (SC.24/13-14), plus the University's response to the HEFCE survey on the effectiveness of the NSS (SC.25/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education (Innovation, Employability and Widening Participation))

- (a) That the 2014 NSS would be carried out over an eight-week period, the start date for which must commence between 13 January and 10 February 2014.
- (b) That in light of the range of actions currently in progress to respond to the 2013 NSS, it was proposed that the University should select the latest start date, noting that this had also been the case in the previous year, with no detrimental impact on response rates.
- (c) That the survey should not be accessible to respondents prior to the respective institution's selected start date.
- (d) That the University had drafted a response to a survey on the NSS, which had been commissioned by HEFCE as part of a wider review of the provision of information about higher education.

(by the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer)

- (e) That the proposed response indicated that the University was generally satisfied with the current format of the NSS, and that it was important for concerns to be expressed directly, noting that it was unlikely that there would be further opportunity for institutions to comment on the NSS.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (f) That it was probable that the format of the NSS would be changed in the future, and as such, institutions should take every opportunity to express their views on its content.

(by the Provost)

- (g) That the proposed answers to question 12 and question 13b were ambiguous, noting that these questions particularly gave scope for the University to note its concerns.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education)

- (h) That it would be helpful for the NSS to include more detailed questions on assessment and feedback, noting that many Russell Group institutions performed poorly in this area, often due to the NSS inadequately capturing the range of assessment and feedback mechanisms offered by such universities.

(by the Dean, Warwick Medical School)

- (i) That as a provider of postgraduate education only, WMS was disadvantaged by the current NSS methodology, as many medical schools did not publish their graduate results, affecting the average ranking of WMS nationally.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the 2014 NSS should be opened to Warwick students on 10 February 2014.
- (b) That the University's response to the HEFCE survey on the NSS be approved subject to the amendments recommended by the Committee.

42/13-14

Admissions, Recruitment, Outreach and Widening Participation Update

CONSIDERED:

A paper providing an overview of the undergraduate and postgraduate outturn from the admissions cycle for 2013/14 entry; the early indicators on the 2014/15 undergraduate admissions round; and developments within recruitment, outreach and widening participation (SC.12/13-14).

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

- (a) That the Student Recruitment and Admissions Office and Strategic Planning and Analytics were still in the process of reconciling enrolment data following the 31 October census point, however, analysis completed to date indicated a high conversion rate from acceptance to enrolment for home/EU undergraduate students.
- (b) That the aggregate attrition rate for overseas students was lower than the forecasted attrition rate.
- (c) That as anticipated, the University had exceeded its Student Number Control (SNC) limit for 2013 entry by a modest amount; reflecting the high conversion rate for clearing applicants, the significant number of applicants with qualifications which fell outside the SNC, and the inclusion of applicants on 2+2 programmes.
- (d) That the most recent data on postgraduate taught (PGT) admissions indicated a decline in home/EU acceptances, and an increase in overseas acceptances; and that anecdotal evidence from peer institutions suggested a similarly challenging position with home/EU PGT recruitment.
- (e) That the number of applications and offers for postgraduate research (PGR) students had risen for both home/EU and overseas.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education (Innovation, Employability and Widening Participation))

- (f) That the Higher Education Foundation Programme (HEFP) had recruited extremely well, with enrolments in 2013 exceeding the 2012 level.
- (g) That the HEFP represented an excellent method of recruiting overseas students, with 39% of those completing the programme progressing on to a Warwick degree in 2013; and that the re-naming to the Warwick International Foundation Programme and a guaranteed progression offer from all Warwick departments for 2014 entry onwards was likely to result in a further increase in enrolments.
- (h) That the School of Law, the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies and the Department of Chemistry had operated pilot contextual data schemes in the 2013 admissions cycle, and that a Widening Participation Strategy meeting scheduled for Monday 4 November 2013 would consider the outcomes with a view to proposing future University policy.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education)

- (i) That given that approximately half of the University's new entrants were postgraduate students, it was important to address shortfalls in recruitment.
- (j) That in order to encourage conversion in unpredictable market conditions, the Board of Graduate Studies had resolved that the University would commit to a maximum turnaround time of 20 days for postgraduate taught applications.

(by the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer)

- (k) That careful consideration should be given to the timing of the proposed additional open day for Autumn 2014, noting that there may be contracts already in place for conferences during that period to which the University would be committed.

(by the Group Finance Director)

- (l) That the campus atmosphere on open days held during term time was noticeably more vibrant.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Steering Committee supported the introduction of a fourth open day in Autumn 2014, and that SARO should give further consideration to the scheduling of this date, taking into account the comments made by members.
- (b) That future admissions update reports would include data on recruitment to Warwick Medical School.

43/13-14

Medical School Strategy

CONSIDERED:

The strategic plan for Warwick Medical School (WMS) to 2020 (SC.20/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Dean, Warwick Medical School)

- (a) That an exercise to refresh the Medical School Strategy was undertaken in 2013 following major biomedical investment, the move of staff from the School of Health and Social Studies, the establishment of joint posts with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and major changes in education.
- (b) That while formally a matter for the School, WMS was keen to engage with a wider audience in developing the strategy and this engagement with Steering Committee was a part of that.
- (c) That WMS had a strong track record for research in areas such as Discovery Science and Delivery Science, but there was potential for further development of its expertise in Translational Medicine, which would be addressed through the rationalisation of the current divisional structure.
- (d) That whilst the MBChB was performing well, there was scope for improvement of its National Student Survey scores, through measures such as the enhancement of the culture of collegiality with medical students as fellow members of the medical professions, and the evolution of the Academic Workload Model and development of performance measures for teaching.
- (e) That the exploitation of cross-campus and external collaborations in research and education could allow WMS to compete with more established Russell Group medical schools.

- (f) That WMS was dependent on the NHS, and that rationalisation of the divisional model would ensure that relationships with local NHS trusts could be managed effectively.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Science and Engineering), Knowledge Transfer and Business Engagement)

- (g) That as the strategy refresh was occurring during the 2014 Research Excellence Framework assessment period, it was crucial for communications relayed to external bodies to be carefully managed.
- (h) That consideration should be given regarding the development of the Francis Crick Institute and its implications or opportunities for WMS.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Life Sciences and Medicine))

- (i) That it was important for the risks inherent in the proposed rationalisation of the Divisional structure to be given careful consideration.
- (j) That he remained concerned that the proposed new division might dilute the positive impact of the recent new appointments to WMS.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (k) That the opportunity for the Steering Committee to be consulted on the WMS Strategy was welcome, and that it should be noted that the strategy refresh was underpinned by a period of emerging success.

RESOLVED:

That WMS be encouraged to proceed with finalising its strategy refresh, but that the Dean be encouraged to reflect on the comments made by members when completing the strategy and its implementation plans.

44/13-14

University of Warwick Response to the HEFCE Consultation on the Proposed New Financial Memorandum with Institutions

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to HEFCE's consultation of proposed revisions to the financial memorandum between HEFCE and higher education institutions (SC.22/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer)

- (a) That the consultation did not refer explicitly to key areas such as the research integrity concordat, noting that it was currently unclear how HEFCE intended to monitor compliance and respond to perceived breaches of this aspect of the financial memorandum.

(by the Group Finance Director)

- (b) That it was also unclear as to why regulation of borrowing consent would apply to all of the University Group companies, including areas outside of charity regulation such as the University's subsidiary operations.
- (c) That the higher education sector had raised concerns over the potential adverse impact on student recruitment of the proposal to identify issues for prospective and current students in the register of providers, noting that HEFCE had not clarified the circumstances in which issues would be flagged on the register.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (d) That the financial memorandum was one of the key ways in which the University was regulated, and that given the severe implications of breaching the memorandum, it was crucial that the consultation response captured all concerns, including in areas not specifically addressed by the consultation questions.

RESOLVED:

That the comments raised by members be incorporated in to the draft consultation response prior to its consideration by the Audit Committee, the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Council.

45/13-14

Proposal for Academic Dress for New Degrees: Master of Fine Arts and Master of Advanced Studies

CONSIDERED:

The academic dress for the Master of Fine Arts and the Master of Advanced Studies (SC.26/13-14).

RESOLVED:

That the academic dress for the Master of Fine Arts and the Master of Advanced Studies be approved as outlined in paper SC.26/13-14.

46/13-14

Membership of Senate Committees

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the extension of the membership of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee to include the Learning and Development Manager (Academic) of the Learning and Development Centre, and the Service Owner (Academic Technology), IT Services, be approved.
- (b) That the extension of the membership of the Graduate Studies Committee of the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences to include a representative of the new Centre for Professional Education (CPE), and the nomination of Dr Adam Boddison to represent CPE on this committee in 2013/14, be noted.
- (c) That the extension of the membership of the Faculty of Social Sciences IT Committee to include a representative of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM) and a representative of the Centre for Professional Education (CPE) be noted.
- (d) That the appointments of Ms Nataliya Tkachenko and Mr Stuart Stanley to represent the CIM and the CPE respectively on the Faculty of Social Sciences IT Committee in 2013/14, be noted.
- (e) That the appointment of Professor Peter Burnell to serve on the Graduate Studies Committee of the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences as the representative from the Department of Politics and International Studies, be noted.
- (f) That the extension of the membership of the Academic Activities Sub-Committee to include the Director of University Marketing and the Director of the International Office, be noted.