

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 6 May 2014

- Present: Vice-Chancellor and President (Chair),  
Professor Christina Hughes,  
Professor T Jones,  
Professor J Palmowski,  
Mr B Sundell,  
Professor P Thomas,  
Professor P Winstanley,  
Professor L Young.
- Apologies: Provost, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, Professor A Caesar, Professor A Coats, Professor C Hughes, Professor S Swain, Professor M Taylor.
- In Attendance: Academic Registrar, Group Finance Director, Director of Human Resources, Director of Development and External Affairs, Director of Estates, Assistant Registrar (Governance), Director of IATL (for item 220/13-14).

214/13-14 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2014 be approved subject to the following amendments (deletions ~~struck through~~, additions underlined):

201/13-14 REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resources))

(...)

- (k) That, in response to comments relating to the proposed timing of the ~~Maths~~ Mathematical Sciences (Zeeman) extension in the paper, it was noted that the project schedule was unchanged from the timing presented to Council and that other options were being explored with the departments in the meantime to deal with additional space requirements.

(...)

215/13-14 Higher Education Financial Environment

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That a further two years of spending cuts were expected after 2013/14, which, along with the anticipated challenge of the outcome of the valuation of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and a statutory increase in National Insurance, was resulting in the higher education sector entering into a period of austerity.
- (b) That the 2015 General Election added further uncertainty to the higher education funding environment, noting that both Labour and the Liberal Democrats had pledged to decrease tuition fees to £6k per year, leaving a potential funding shortfall of £1.7bn across the sector.
- (c) That both academic and administrative departments would be required to make substantial economies, and that spend would be authorised only in cases where return on investment could be proven.

- (d) That the University's Financial Plan included the expectation of a generation of a surplus to enable the capital plan to progress, although the margin remained very tight.

216/13-14 Resolution of UCU Pay Dispute

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That the University and Colleges Union (UCU) had accepted the nationally offered pay award offer of 1% in 2013/14 and 2% in 2014/15, and that as such, the exam marking boycott due to commence on 6 May 2014 would not be implemented.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (b) That the resolution of the dispute would be welcomed by the student body.

217/13-14 National Student Drama Festival 2014

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That the Warwick University Drama Society had again collected a number of prestigious awards at the National Student Drama Festival, held in Scarborough from 12-18 April 2014.
- (b) That an impressive total of seven awards were collected, which included the Sunday Times Playwriting Award (Lucyna Raczka), the Buzz Goodbody Student Director Award (Ali Pidsley) and the Sunday Times Harold Hobson Student Drama Critic (Billy Barrett).

218/13-14 Memorandum of Understanding with SSGKG

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been signed between the University and Sino-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City Investment and Development Co. Ltd.
- (b) That both parties would collaborate to develop a ground-breaking international education platform and an Education Hub.

219/13-14 Launch of the International Student Barometer

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That all students had been encouraged to participate in the Student Barometer, the global survey of student experience run by the independent research organisation, i-graduate, which launched on Monday 28 April 2014.
- (b) That the deadline for completing the survey was Friday 27 June 2014, and responses would be used to continue to shape the student experience at Warwick.
- (c) That over 3000 Warwick students had responded to the Autumn 2013 wave of the survey, reflecting on their satisfaction with aspects of student experience such as learning, living, support and arrival, and that 91.2% of all students surveyed had stated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience at Warwick.
- (d) That in response to previous survey findings, which had shown students were more dissatisfied with University-provided eating places than students across the UK, Warwick Retail had made some significant changes to its offering over the past 12 months, including extended opening hours of all the outlets on campus.

- (e) That the University was also working to improve the arrivals period for postgraduate taught students, with the Graduate School, PG Hub, Induction Team and the International Office working collaboratively with colleagues across campus to improve the experience for all.

220/13-14

Annual Report from IATL

CONSIDERED:

A paper providing an update of IATL's activities in the 2013/14 academic year (SC.124/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Director of IATL)

- (a) That IATL's strategy and aims, collectively forming the concept of 'Adventures in Pedagogy', were designed to create opportunities for staff and students to experiment and innovate in order to achieve an outstanding student experience.
- (b) That the strategy identified four thematic areas as outlined in the paper, noting that the primary focus was on driving interdisciplinarity across the University.
- (c) That he was pleased to be chairing the AQSC sub-group on interdisciplinarity, which was overseeing a range of developments to promote interdisciplinary teaching and learning.
- (d) That IATL had close engagement with the pedagogies of the Liberal Arts degree and the Globalisation and Sustainability Bachelors, as well as being home to the Global Shakespeare initiative, where it was envisaged that IATL's international and interdisciplinary focus would boost the success of the project.
- (e) That in response to IATL's Strategic Plan, the Deputy Chief Executive (Academic Practice) at the Higher Education Academy, Professor Philippa Levy, had praised the University's decisive strategy on and commitment to interdisciplinarity at a local, national and international level, noting the opportunities this could present if IATL was able to progress its strategy rapidly.
- (f) That whilst such feedback provided a valuable insight into how Warwick's work on interdisciplinarity was progressing in relation to other institutions, there was scope for formal benchmarking exercises to be carried out, particularly in the area of student engagement with interdisciplinary opportunities, and that such work could potentially form the basis of a project for a student researcher.
- (g) That lack of clarity on the governance of interdisciplinarity initiatives, and the challenges to the provision of interdisciplinary modules presented by current administrative processes had been identified as risk areas which could potentially slow down the development of IATL's strategy.
- (h) That previous projects such as the Kings/Warwick collaboration in 2010 had shown that students wanted opportunities to undertake interdisciplinary study; however, IATL recognised that more work needed to be done to raise awareness of the availability of interdisciplinary modules to students across the University.
- (i) That approximately half of the students who had signed up for an interdisciplinary module in the 2012/13 academic year had withdrawn as a result of issues such as timetable clashes.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning))

- (j) That the issue of departments' varying methods of CATS weighting preventing take-up of interdisciplinary modules had been considered by the Senior Management Team, and that it was intended that work be done to collate a series of case studies with the aim of highlighting the problem to departments and encouraging a collaborative approach to resolution.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resources))

- (k) That it would be useful for the Timetable Working Group to hold further talks with IATL as part of the academic timetable remodelling project, as recommendations made by the Group were likely to impact on IATL's activities.

(by the Dean, Warwick Medical School)

- (l) That WMS students were showing a growing interest in intercalation, and that he would facilitate liaison between the Director of IATL and the new Pro-Dean (Education) of WMS to discuss potential opportunities.

RESOLVED:

That future update reports from IATL would include progress against key performance indicators.

221/13-14

Supporting Public Accountability: Presenting Income and Expenditure Information to Current Students

RECEIVED:

A letter from HEFCE regarding work it had undertaken to explore the presentation of information on institutional income and expenditure (SC.127/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Group Finance Director)

- (a) That the University provided much of the data referred to by HEFCE as part of its Annual Accounts, however, in liaison with the Students' Union, key points would be extracted and published in an accessible format.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning))

- (b) That the accessibility of financial information was also being given consideration in relation to the National Student Survey, and as such, there was opportunity for both strands of work to join up.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resources))

- (c) That the proportion of tuition fee income from each category of student should be clearly displayed.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (d) That students were becoming increasingly interested in the nature of institutional income and expenditure, and that a proactive approach to providing such information would be welcomed.

222/13-14 Campus Developments

REPORTED: (by the Director of Estates)

- (a) That sections of Gibbet Hill Road would be closed from 23 June to 3 October 2014, to allow for major roadworks to improve traffic flow and road safety on campus.
- (b) That the project was likely to have a significant impact on the University, noting however that a number of plans had been put in place to mitigate this as much as possible.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (c) That a useful information document on the plans and mitigating actions had been provided for local residents and businesses, and that this should be circulated to the Steering Committee prior to being published for the University community, noting that many staff and students were not fully aware of the extent of the likely impact of the works.

223/13-14 UCAS Review of International Admissions

RECEIVED:

A consultation on proposals from UCAS to revise the undergraduate admissions model for international applicants (SC.131/13-14).

CS/Steering/Minutes/2013-2014/06-05-2014 Open