

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 8 September 2014

Present: Vice-Chancellor and President (Chair),  
Provost,  
Professor A Coats,  
Professor Christopher Hughes,  
Professor T Jones,  
Professor M Taylor,  
Professor P Thomas,  
Ms C Turhan,  
Professor P Winstanley.

Apologies: Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, Professor Christina Hughes, Professor M Freely, Professor J Palmowski, Professor S Swain, Professor L Young.

In Attendance: Deputy Registrar (Assistant Secretary), Academic Registrar, Director of Delivery Assurance (for items 320/13-14 and 321/13-14), Assistant Registrar (Governance).

Note: The Chair welcomed Ms Cat Turhan to her first meeting of the Steering Committee in her capacity as President of the Students' Union.

311/13-14 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the open and restricted minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2014 be approved.

312/13-14 The Fields Medal

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That Professor Martin Hairer, Regius Professor of Mathematics, had been awarded the Fields Medal, the world's most prestigious mathematics award, for his "Outstanding contributions to the theory of stochastic partial differential equations, and in particular for the creation of a theory of regularity structures for such equations."
- (b) That the Fields Medal was awarded once every four years to four recipients on the occasion of the International Congress of Mathematicians to recognize outstanding mathematical achievement for existing work and for the promise of future achievement.
- (c) That the Medal was internationally regarded as the world's most prestigious award in the field of mathematics, with only four awarded in 2014.
- (d) That Professor Hairer had been congratulated on his exceptional achievement by a range of public figures including Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP.

RESOLVED:

That the congratulations of the Steering Committee be extended to Professor Hairer for his achievement.

313/13-14 Mr John Hearth

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That the University was saddened to learn of the death of its former Treasurer, Mr John Hearth, who passed away on 1 September 2014.
- (b) That Mr John Hearth CBE, MA (Hon LLD) was a barrister at law and had served as a member of the University Council since 1985 and as Treasurer from 1989 to 1998.
- (c) That during Mr Hearth's nine years' service as Treasurer, the University strengthened its position financially, despite increasing constraints on the public funding of higher education.

RESOLVED:

That the sincere condolences of the University be conveyed to Mr Hearth's family.

314/13-14 National Student Survey 2014

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That overall student satisfaction rates for the University had risen to 89% in the 2014 National Student Survey (NSS), an increase of 2%.
- (b) That there had been notable increases in satisfaction in five of the six main category scores, including a seven per cent increase in satisfaction with Assessment and Feedback.
- (c) That there was a requirement for further activity to ensure improved results in future years; however the 2014 results demonstrated that initiatives undertaken since the 2013 NSS were achieving a positive impact.

RESOLVED:

That the thanks of the Committee be extended to colleagues across the University who had been instrumental in the achievement of the improved NSS scores.

315/13-14 Research Award Success

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That over the summer vacation period, the University had secured a number of research grants and awards.
- (b) That the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of science, had announced the appointment of 14 new Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award holders, including Professor Graham Cormode from Warwick's Department of Computer Science.

RESOLVED:

That Professor Cormode be congratulated on his achievement.

316/13-14 Research Income

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

That initial calculations indicated that the University's research income was likely to exceed previous years' results.

317/13-14 Monash-Warwick Alliance

(a) Award of First Joint Honorary Doctorate

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (i) That the Monash-Warwick Alliance had conferred its first joint honorary doctorate, to former Australian Governor-General the Honourable Quentin Bryce AD CVO, at a ceremony at Monash University on 27 August 2014.
- (ii) That the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa, recognised Ms Bryce's contribution to advancing human rights and equality, the rights of women and children, and the welfare of the family.

(b) Australian Laureate Fellowship

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (i) That Joint Monash-Warwick Professor Thomas Davis had been awarded an Australian Laureate fellowship.
- (ii) That the Australian Laureate Fellowship scheme was aimed at supporting outstanding Australian and international researchers and research leaders to build Australia's research capacity, undertake innovative research programs and mentor early-career researchers.
- (iii) That Professor Davis, who held a 20% appointment at Warwick in the Department of Chemistry, was appointed under the Monash Warwick Alliance as one of the first joint professors to lead the Monash-Warwick global research agenda.

(c) Joint PhD Scholarship

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (i) That Mr Goffredo Polizzi was one of the first students to receive a Monash-Warwick Joint PhD scholarship, for his project examining how gender, race, sexuality and class contributed to Italian identity formation.
- (ii) That Mr Polizzi would spend 2015 at Monash and then return to Warwick to complete his PhD in late 2016.

CONSIDERED:

An oral update from the Academic Registrar on the latest admissions position following confirmation and Clearing.

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the University had successfully met its undergraduate recruitment targets for 2014/15 entry.
- (b) That the confirmation and Clearing period had operated successfully, with the central admissions hub based in Rootes facilitating improved liaison with departments and enabling quick decision-making.
- (c) That the allocation of accommodation was being carefully managed to ensure that as many PGT students as possible could be housed on campus from the start of term, noting however that it would not be possible to house the total population, as was consistently the case.
- (d) That the increase in student numbers over the past five years had resulted in accommodation allocation becoming more complex, noting that whilst projections of required numbers allowed for headroom, final numbers were often uncertain until close to the start of the academic year.
- (e) That recruitment and conversion activity was becoming increasingly key to ensuring that selections could be made from a wide pool of high-quality applicants.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (f) That there had been a noticeable improvement in the management of accommodation allocation this year, although it appeared likely that approximately 180 PGT students would be without campus accommodation at the start of term.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (g) That the preparatory data work undertaken by a number of teams across the administration during the academic year had made the confirmation and Clearing processes markedly more efficient than in previous years.
- (h) That the scale of the confirmation and Clearing operation was impressive and that all staff involved in the process should be congratulated for their hard work.

(by the Provost)

- (i) That he echoed the comments made by the Deputy Registrar, noting also that academic departments had engaged well with the central admissions function, allowing for quick decision-making and an improved applicant experience.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (j) That the 2014/15 UG admissions round had been successful, noting however that there remained issues to be addressed in the forthcoming cycle to enable

continued improvement in the application process and to ensure that the University attracted and admitted students of the highest calibre.

RESOLVED:

That all colleagues involved in the confirmation and Clearing activities be congratulated for their contribution to the successful outcome.

319/13-14 Annual Report from the Academic Resourcing Committee

RECEIVED:

The Annual Report from the Academic Resourcing Committee (ARC) (SC.187/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the majority of ARC departments had performed favourably against budget, noting that some departments, including the Department of Chemistry and the School of Engineering, had managed their budgets particularly well despite not having a high turnover.
- (b) That the planning round was currently highly resource-intensive, and as such, a review of the planning process had been identified as a priority for ARC in 2014/15.
- (c) That in 2014/15 ARC would be increasing the level of review and monitoring of departmental performance against plan to enable rapid intervention where significant adverse variances across a range of metrics appeared likely.
- (d) That in addition to the review of the planning process, priorities for ARC in 2014/15 included:
  - (i) Working with departments to ensure that ARC financial targets for 2014/15 were achieved;
  - (ii) The identification of appropriate long term target surplus levels for disciplines in order to generate headroom for investment;
  - (iii) The development of revised guidance for departmental workload models based on the outcome of the Internal Audit review;
  - (iv) Consideration of the optimal level of student recruitment for disciplines and the University overall.

(by the Provost)

- (e) That whilst the gross surplus achieved in 2013/14 was commendable, there remained issues relating to the nature of academic infrastructure, which would be discussed and clarified at the meeting of ARC scheduled for 11 September 2014.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Science, Engineering and Medicine))

- (f) That it was important for ARC to maintain oversight of the future requirement for REF activities to ensure that such developments were achieving the desired impact.

320/13-14 OIA Annual Letter

RECEIVED:

A summary of the work of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for 2013, together with an update on the University's performance in terms of complaints reported to and handled by the OIA (SC.188/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Delivery Assurance)

- (a) That in reaching determinations on cases escalated to it, judgements made by the OIA were increasingly taking into account the nature of institutions' handling of complaints and the impact that this may have had on the complainant.
- (b) That the OIA Annual Report for 2013 highlighted that, overall, international students were proportionately more likely to submit complaints than home/EU students, and that PGT students were more likely to do so than UG.
- (c) That Warwick had issued a relatively high proportion of Completion of Procedures (COP) letters in 2013 compared to other Russell Group institutions, noting however that the University closely adhered to the guidelines issued by the OIA regarding when a COP must be issued.
- (d) That there had been a slight rise in in the number of Warwick cases closed in 2013 which had an OIA case outcome of 'justified' or 'partially justified', noting that the University was exploring the lessons learned from these on a case-by-case basis.
- (e) That the new Student Complaints Resolution Procedure would be presented to the Steering Committee at its meeting on 22 September 2014, noting that the ~~piloting~~ use of the new Student Feedback and Complaints Resolution Framework was aimed at facilitating the liaison of staff across the University to reduce the number of complaints requiring escalation.
- (f) That the University was investing in mediation training for staff to enable student complaints to be addressed at an early stage, it being noted that approximately 12 colleagues would have received full training by the start of the 2014/15 academic year, with awareness of the mediation process also being raised amongst other key colleagues such as personal tutors.

321/13-14 Senior Official Ceremonial Robing

CONSIDERED:

A paper outlining proposals for new ceremonial robes for Senior Officers (SC.189/13-14).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Delivery Assurance)

- (a) That the current robes for senior officials used in degree congregations and other ceremonial events were in need of replacing given their age, and that the University's forthcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015 presented an opportune moment to give consideration to a refreshed design.

- (b) That the proposed new design scheme was in keeping with the history of the institution, with some alterations to future-proof the robes; tying them more closely to the University crest and lending them greater parity with comparable UK and international institutions.
- (c) That Ede and Ravenscroft, the company currently contracted to supply academic and graduand robes, had offered to provide new ceremonial robes at no immediate cost, noting however that should the University eventually cease to use Ede and Ravenscroft, the new robes would need to be purchased from or returned to the company.
- (d) That it was proposed that the current green robes be changed to blue to align them more closely with the colours in the University crest, and that should the current fabric be replicated, a longer lead time would be required given that the fabric would need to be specially manufactured.
- (e) That the current design of the ceremonial robes was not commensurate with those of comparable institutions.

(by the Dean, Warwick Business School)

- (f) That whilst the green robes were not aligned with the colours in the crest, they were representative of University tradition.
- (g) That it was by no means certain that the proposed degree of embellishment was necessary and that further consideration should be given to the extent of the redesign to avoid a risk of over ostentation.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (h) That the student body welcomed the ceremony of graduation and that the ceremonial robes celebrated this.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (i) That it was important to ensure that any redesign of the ceremonial robes was aligned with the University's re-branding project.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (j) That there was a clear need to replace the current robes given their age, and that it would be beneficial for the replacements to be made from a more lightweight material; however more consideration was required as to the finer details of the design.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals be brought to a meeting of the Steering Committee later in the Autumn term to be given further consideration.

322/13-14 Higher Education Statistics for the UK 2012/13

RECEIVED:

The annual National Statistics publication from HESA, providing a statistical overview of higher education in the 2012/13 academic year (SC.190/13-14, online only).

323/13-14 Investing for Future Success of Students: HEFCE Response to OFFA report on 2015/16 Access Agreements

RECEIVED:

HEFCE's response to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) report on 2015/16 Access Agreements (SC.191/13-14, online only).

324/13-14 UUK Survey on Teacher Education

RECEIVED:

The Centre for Professional Education's response to a Universities UK (UUK) survey on the impact of Government policy on the delivery of teacher education within universities (SC.192/13-14, online only).