

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 8 November 2010

Present: Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor T Jones,
Professor J Labbe,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor P Winstanley,
Mr D Stevens.

Apologies: Vice-Chancellor, Professor R Higgott.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Finance Director, Director of HR, Director of Estates, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Assistant Registrar (Deputy Registrar's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Head of Business Relations (for item 101/10-11), University Librarian (for items 102/10-11 and 103/10-11), Director of the International Office and Acting Director of the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office (for items 108/10-11 and 109/10-11), Director of Management Information & Planning (for item 111/10-11), Pro Dean (Education), Warwick Medical School (for item 112/10-11).

98/10-11 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2010 be approved, subject to the following amendments (deletions ~~struck through~~):

81/10-11 (...)

- (a) That the University was compiling its annual monitoring return for Access Agreements and Widening Participation Strategic Assessments, to be submitted to HEFCE by 14 January ~~2010~~ 2011.

(...)

RESOLVED:

That the University's annual monitoring return for Access Agreements and Widening Participation Strategic Assessments be considered by the Steering Committee prior to its submission to HEFCE by 14 January ~~2010~~ 2011, noting that the Committee would be kept up to date with any actions arising from the HEFCE letter (SC.53/10-11).

(...)

99/10-11 The Browne Review – Statement by David Willetts (minute 57/10-11 refers)

RECEIVED:

The Government's response to the Browne Review, made in a statement by David Willetts in the House of Commons on 3 November 2010 (SC.76/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That the Higher Education White Paper expected to cover the wide range of long-term issues arising from Lord Browne's report and the Government's response, was expected in February 2011.

100/10-11 Comprehensive Spending Review – Further Analysis (minute 58/10-11 refers)

RECEIVED:

A report from Universities UK containing further analysis of the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review (SC.75/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the chart illustrating the difference between subjects in terms of the balance between QR and Research Council grant income was of particular interest.
- (b) That it was clear from the analysis that the University would potentially face a short term drop in income as teaching funding would be cut before any increase in fee levels was implemented.

101/10-11 Local Enterprise Partnerships (minute 77/10-11 refers)

RECEIVED:

- (a) A briefing note on the Government's white paper "Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential" and the Regional Growth Fund (SC.85/10-11).
- (b) Correspondence from BIS approving the proposal for the Coventry & Warwickshire LEP (SC.80/10-11).

REPORTED: (by Head of Business Relations)

- (a) That the University should carefully monitor opportunities arising from Local Enterprise Partnerships and associated funding streams, noting that the Regional Growth Fund and Regional Growth Hubs had particular potential
- (b) That he was meeting with representatives from the Science Park that afternoon to discuss the potential for collaboration on a Regional Growth Hub bid.

(by Director of Estates)

- (c) That legacy projects considered and rejected for Science City could be reviewed for potential submission in this context.

102/10-11 HEFCE Review of JISC (minute 38/10-11 refers)

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to the HEFCE consultation on JISC from the University Librarian, together with an oral report (SC.79/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the University Librarian)

- (a) That the response to Question 4 regarding potential areas for subscription services has been carefully worded given the current financial climate, noting that the University was keen in particular to protect national licensing of digital resources and the provision of a national network infrastructure.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (b) That given the overall decline in HEFCE funding, there was a need to establish whether the “top-slice” JISC funding would therefore be proportionately lower, and if not so, appropriate caveats should be added to the response

RESOLVED:

That the University response to the survey be approved, subject to minor amendments as discussed at the meeting, for submission to HEFCE prior to the deadline of 10 November 2010.

103/10-11

Modern Records Centre Physical Redevelopment Project

CONSIDERED:

A report from the University Librarian concerning progress on fundraising to support the physical redevelopment of the Modern Records Centre (MRC), together with an oral report (SC.66/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the University Librarian)

- (a) That the income from pledges already made would be received over a longer time period than outgoing costs on the MRC Physical Redevelopment project.
- (b) That additional shelving in the External Store was now a lower priority, given that there was currently sufficient capacity in the External Store until the end of the lease in 2014.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the University underwrite the current funding gap of £130,384 to allow the MRC Physical Redevelopment project to commence while fundraising continues.
- (b) That up to £360,000 already within the Library’s capital plan (for shelving in the External Store) be vired to the MRC Physical Redevelopment project.

104/10-11

Roberts Funding

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

That money provided by Research Councils to support the development of training opportunities for PhD and postdoctoral researchers in all subjects was likely to decline.

RESOLVED:

That given the uncertainty around future funding in this area the University should continue to monitor the situation, noting that any future correspondence to the Research Councils in this regard would first be considered by the Steering Committee.

105/10-11

University Financial Plan

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That HEFCE had written to all institutions stating that the deadline for submission of institutional Financial Plans beyond 2010/11 had been extended from 1 December 2010 until April 2011, noting that it still required Plans for 2009/10 and 2010/11 to be submitted by the original deadline.

- (b) That despite the late change in HEFCE's position, the University still intended to submit its Financial Plan by the original deadline of 1 December 2010.

106/10-11

Pensions

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the University had recently held a successful open information session for staff regarding the USS Pensions Consultation, noting that the session had been recorded and that this may be posted online instead of holding a second session.
- (b) That representatives from USS would be visiting the University to hold an information session for staff on 14 December 2010.
- (c) That the University had received a request for evidence for Phase 2 of the Hutton Public Sector Pensions Review.

RESOLVED:

That the University's response to the request for evidence for Phase 2 of the Hutton Review be determined once the Employers' Pension Forum response became clear.

107/10-11

Blueprint for Technology

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

That the Government had published a blueprint for technology, spelling out how it planned to support high-tech innovation, and including a new Entrepreneur Visa for individuals who wished to come to the UK to start a new business.

108/10-11

Admissions and Recruitment Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Acting Director of the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office providing an overview of developments in admissions, recruitment and widening participation, together with an oral report (SC.73/10-11).

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

- (a) That undergraduate Home/EU applications were down 2.6%, noting that increased offer levels in English and Maths had particularly contributed to the fall.
- (b) That postgraduate applications currently appeared to have increased significantly, noting that it remained early in the cycle.
- (c) That a full analysis of the impact of increased offer levels by department would be undertaken in January 2011.
- (d) That the current text of the University prospectus had been sent to departments with a request for revisions.

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

- (e) That she had discussed with the Communications Team the possibility of the inclusion of additional content in the prospectus focused on the student experience.

- (f) That, following the University of Bristol's adoption of differential offers for students from Widening Participation backgrounds, only Warwick and King's College London remained outside of this practice among the institutions in the Realising Opportunities programme.

109/10-11

International Issues

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of the International Office providing an update on international issues, together with an oral report (SC.74/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Director of the International Office)

- (a) That a joint review of the Warwick-Monash partnership was held in September 2010, and would be published shortly.
- (b) That a year-on-year comparative analysis of international intake by department, level of study and country of origin would be presented at a Windows on Warwick session to be held on Monday 22 November 2010.
- (c) That at a recent meeting with Jeremy Oppenheim, National Lead for Temporary Migration at the UK Border Agency, it had been implied that there may be changes to the Post Study Work route which could impact on the attractiveness of the UK as a study destination.
- (d) That constraints to international students studying in the UK prior to Higher Education level may also have an impact on Higher Education recruitment.
- (e) That the University had performed broadly well in the International Student Barometer, but that significant dissatisfaction with transport links in particular was again evident.

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

- (f) That the quality of the bus services to and from campus remained an issue, noting that conversations between the University, Students' Union and local bus companies continued.

(by the President of the Student's Union)

- (g) That he wished to extend his thanks to the Registrar and the International Office for their ongoing work and support with respect to student visa issues.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of International Office liaise with colleagues in WMG to establish if issues persisted with student visa rejections.

110/10-11

Financial Performance of Warwick Business School: Quarter 4 2009/10

CONSIDERED:

A report setting out the 2009/10 year-end financial position for Warwick Business School, together with an oral report (SC.81/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Dean of Warwick Business School)

- (a) That an accredited report from the Association of Business Schools and the 2009 Warwick Business School's Strategic Departmental Review had both been of the opinion that the financial success of the School may have impacted on its research excellence.
- (b) That he felt Warwick Business School was capable of excellence in research, teaching and income generation, but further discussion with the University about strategic investment to enable and support this was required.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the 2009/10 year-end financial position for Warwick Business School be approved as set out in SC.81/10-11.

111/10-11

International League Tables

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Management Information and Planning, outlining the results and detailed analysis of the University's performance in international league tables, together with an oral report (SC.72/10-11).

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

- (a) That performance in the various league tables was affected in part by the size of the University's student population, which put pressure on staff/student ratios, and additionally, DLHE data on employability.
- (b) That there were also significant issues with the methodology that had impacted on the University's performance in the THE and Sunday Times league tables.
- (c) That he and the Director of Development, Communications and Strategy would shortly be meeting with Jonathan Adams, Director of Research Evaluation at Thomson Reuters, with a view to establishing a greater understanding of the methodology used in the THE ranking and influencing its future development.

(by the President of the Student's Union)

- (d) That an increase in focus on employability by some academic departments would help to support the work undertaken by Student Careers and Skills.

112/10-11

Health Innovation and Education Cluster Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Pro Dean (Education), Warwick Medical School, summarising the current position of the West Midlands (South) HEIC, together with an oral report (SC.84/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Pro Dean (Education), Warwick Medical School)

- (a) That over the next twelve months it may become necessary to review the organisational form and hosting of the HIEC beyond 2012.
- (b) That the long-term sustainability of HIECs remained uncertain, with the associated potential reputational risks.
- (c) That a number of key gains for the University from membership of the HEIC had already been substantially (or totally) realised.

- (d) That it was not currently anticipated that any forthcoming pressure to change the organisational form or hosting of the HIEC should be perceived as a threat to the University, but that the situation should continue to be monitored.

113/10-11 West Midlands Regional Observatory

CONSIDERED:

Correspondence from Advantage West Midlands, informing the University of the likely ceasing of operation of the West Midlands Regional Observatory from March 2011 and inviting proposals for acquisition of its assets (SC.78/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That, with interest from other institutions in the region in acquiring the West Midlands Regional Observatory assets and given the regional profile, there were pros and cons to expressing interest although, following discussion, there appeared to be no strong incentive.

RESOLVED:

That further consideration be given to the possibility of acquiring assets of the West Midlands Regional Observatory, prior to the deadline of submission of initial proposals of 19 November 2010.

114/10-11 HEFCE Collaborations, alliances, and mergers in higher education project

RECEIVED:

A letter from the HEFCE, informing the University of a new project to consider collaborations, alliances and mergers in higher education (SC.77/10-11).

115/10-11 Appointments to Committees of the Senate

RESOLVED:

That, on the recommendation of the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science on behalf of the Board, the appointment of Professor David Mond of the Warwick Mathematics Institute to the Undergraduate Appeals Committee for the Faculty of Science be approved on behalf of the Senate.