

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 9 September 2013

- Present: Vice-Chancellor,  
Professor S Croft,  
Professor Christina Hughes,  
Professor Christopher Hughes,  
Professor T Jones,  
Professor J Palmowski,  
Mr B Sundell,  
Professor M Taylor,  
Professor P Thomas,  
Professor L Young.
- Apologies: Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, Professor A Caesar, Professor S Swain,  
Professor P Winstanley.
- In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Group Finance Director, Director of  
Development and External Affairs, Director of Human Resources, Executive Officer  
(Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Senior Assistant  
Registrar (Teaching Quality) (for item 432/12-13).

424/12-13 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2013 be approved.

425/12-13 Postgraduate Support Scheme (Arising from Minute 416/12-13)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the submission deadline for the bid for funding under the HEFCE Postgraduate Support Scheme was 16 September 2013, which fell before the next meeting of the Steering Committee.
- (b) That in order to ensure completion by the deadline, the establishment of a delegated group was requested to progress the bid.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a group comprising the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Registrar, Group Finance Director and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education (Innovation, Employability and Widening Participation) be established to review the bid.
- (b) That a draft submission would be circulated to the Committee by correspondence, with final approval to be given by the Vice-Chancellor via Chair's Action.

426/12-13 2013/14 Academic Year

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the 2013/14 academic year was anticipated to be very busy, with a substantial amount of high-level activity taking place in relation to the University Strategy, alongside numerous projects such as response to the National Student Survey results, the development of research income and expenditure and the review of the Graduate School, amongst others.

Undergraduate Admissions for 2013/14: Post - Confirmation and Clearing

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That following the completion of confirmation on Thursday 15 August 2013, the University made a strategic decision to enter Clearing and Adjustment in a number of subjects, in common with the majority of Russell Group institutions.
- (b) That following Adjustment and Clearing, the University had exceeded its target for home/EU students by approximately 200.
- (c) That based on trends in previous years, it was anticipated that by the time enrolment was complete, the overseas intake would be close to target.
- (d) That it was anticipated that the University would overshoot its SNC limit for 2013 entry once the Centre for Lifelong Learning 2+2 intake was factored in.
- (e) That the University had exceeded its widening participation targets both for applicants from state schools (2012 against a target of 1885) and Low Participation Neighbourhoods (172 against a target of 144).
- (f) That a full briefing note on the key headlines was currently being collated, and would be circulated to members of the Council prior to dissemination to the wider University, noting that intake figures were likely to remain fluid until after enrolment.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education)

- (g) That although a number of departments benefitted from Clearing this year, it would be important to focus on increasing applicant numbers and improving conversion rates in subsequent admissions cycles.
- (h) That there was a risk that the SNC target allocated by HEFCE for the University's 2014/15 intake may be reduced as a result of this year's overshoot, and that departments which recruited well for 2013/14 may have less flexibility in the next cycle.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (i) That whilst the University had recruited well overall, the position across departments varied, with some falling short of their targets and others significantly over-recruiting.
- (j) That the Accommodation Office had confirmed that it hoped to be able to offer campus accommodation to all first year students, although there may be need for some students to share rooms, pending attrition and movement freeing capacity later in the Autumn term.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (k) That staff across the University had collaborated well to achieve a successful outcome, and that a small reception had been held to thank colleagues for their contribution to the student recruitment cycle .

RESOLVED:

That the appreciation of the Committee be formally expressed to all staff who had been involved in Confirmation and Clearing activities.

428/12-13 Royal Society Research Merit Award

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Royal Society had announced the appointment of 22 new Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award holders, including Professor Gregory Challis from the Department of Chemistry for his research on discovery, biosynthesis and bioengineering of novel bioactive natural products.
- (b) That the scheme was jointly funded by the Wolfson Foundation and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and aimed to provide universities with additional support to enable them to attract science talent from overseas and retain respected UK scientists of outstanding achievement and potential.

RESOLVED:

That the congratulations of the Committee be extended to Professor Challis.

429/12-13 International Partnership Awards 2013/14

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the International Partnership awards for 2013/14 had been announced.
- (b) That this was the fifth round of awards to be made, with previous partnership funds having supported collaborations across the globe in key developed and emerging research economies including: Brazil, China, India, the USA, Singapore and South Africa.
- (c) That under the International Partnership Fund, which was open to applications for collaboration from any country, awards were made to support collaborations with two of South Africa's leading universities: the University of the Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch University; three of the USA's leading institutions: Boston University, NIST, and MIT; as well as building on existing collaborations with the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and Delhi University in India.
- (d) That two awards were made from the China Partnership Fund, both to support collaboration with Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and that a further four awards were made through the Brazil Partnership Fund.

430/12-13 Warwick Prize for Writing

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the shortlist for the third Warwick Prize for Writing was announced at a special event on Friday 30 August 2013, as part of the Melbourne Writers' Festival, Australia, with the event being screened live at Warwick on the Big Screen in the Piazza.
- (b) That the judges' selection of six titles, from a long-list of twelve, encompassed works of fiction, science, history and poetry contending for the £25,000 biennial prize.
- (c) That the winner would be announced at a ceremony held at the Wallace Collection in London, on Tuesday 24 September 2013.

431/12-13 The Boar

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the students' newspaper, The Boar, had been voted Student Publication of the Year 2013 by Ones to Watch, following its success in being voted Student Publication of the Month in February 2013.
- (b) That judges from Ones to Watch, which is run by the Guardian newspaper's student section, chose the overall winner based on all the content produced by the top-rated student newspapers over the year.

RESOLVED:

That the congratulations of the Committee to all involved in The Boar's success be noted.

432/12-13 National Student Survey Results 2013

CONSIDERED:

A paper summarising the key outcomes of the National Student Survey 2013 for the University (SC.248/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality))

- (a) That the results of the 2013 National Student Survey (NSS) were published on 13 August 2013, and that overall satisfaction across the whole University remained at 87%, the same figure as in 2012.
- (b) That institutional level outcomes had either remained comparable with 2012 or had improved across all question categories.
- (c) That the score on Assessment and Feedback had improved by 4% overall, reflecting the work done to address this area following the 2012 NSS results.
- (d) That there was considerable variation in the subject scores and sector rankings of subjects across the institution, with six subjects appearing in the top ten and a number of others appearing in the lowest quartile.
- (e) That both improvements and declines in satisfaction had been experienced, with many small departments returning to high satisfaction levels following temporary falls in 2012; noting however that it was the results for larger departments which had the greatest impact on the institution's overall performance.
- (f) That the NSS was currently under review, and whilst it would run in its current format in 2014, a report due for publication in Spring 2014 was expected to set out recommendations for change.

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

- (g) That the sector average score for overall satisfaction had improved again this year, leading to the University declining relatively in the rankings.
- (h) That a series of actions building on the Enhancing Student Satisfaction programme initiated in 2102 were planned, which would incorporate short term measures and longer term developments to raise the standard of teaching and learning across the University, for students at all levels of study.

- (i) That a Heads of Departments' Forum was scheduled for 17 September 2013, at which the results of the NSS and the proposed action plans would be discussed in greater detail.

(by the Chair of the Faculty of Science)

- (j) That further analysis was required on the results of some departments such as Computer Science, which had received disappointing scores in the NSS yet had scored highly in all other performance metrics.

(by the Chair of the Faculty of Social Sciences)

- (k) That there was scope for increased communication of best practice between departments which had successfully enhanced their satisfaction scores and those which required further improvement.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (l) That the Department of Sociology offered a welcome talk for returning students which was very well received and impacted positively on student perception of the Department.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education)

- (m) That the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) would be released on the afternoon of 9 September 2013.
- (n) That the frequency of contact hours for MA students was likely to be identified as an issue across the sector, and that it was important for the University to urgently address this, noting that students progressing into postgraduate study from undergraduate programmes under the new tuition fees arrangements were likely to have high expectations concerning contact time.
- (o) That it was possible that the PRES and PTES surveys may become linked to the NSS in future years and hence their results would be made publicly available.

RESOLVED:

That the results of the PRES and PTES surveys be considered at a future meeting of the Steering Committee.

433/12-13

Annual Report from the Academic Resourcing Committee

RECEIVED:

A paper outlining the activity of the Academic Resourcing Committee (ARC) in the 2012/13 academic year (SC.252/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the strategic planning process for academic departments was revised for the 2012/13 academic year to include an enhanced focus on teaching and learning and widening participation, through use of data from the National Student Survey and the University Widening Participation dashboard.
- (b) That ARC had initiated a small number of reviews following identification of areas of concern with the financial performance of some departments.

- (c) That the Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) and the Institute of Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) had been brought into the ARC accountability framework, to ensure an appropriate institutional-level scrutiny of their activity, and to ensure that investment decisions would be taken in the context of the overall academic resourcing budget.
- (d) That priorities for 2013/14 included improving the surplus of all departments within ARC's remit; to improve the link between ARC revenue planning processes and capital planning and space allocation; review of student number targets in light of recruitment in 2013; and consideration of incentives linked to teaching and research performance.
- (e) That ARC would be conducting a review of workload planning arrangements to determine the consistency and effectiveness of workload planning across departments.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (f) That the inclusion of research activity and NSS rankings in the ARC planning process could provide incentive to departments to improve and maintain performance in these areas.

(by the Group Finance Director)

- (g) That it was important for any outstanding departmental reviews to be finalised as soon as possible, noting however, that some remaining issues were outside of ARC's remit.

434/12-13

Centre for Quantitative Methods (Warwick Q-Step)

CONSIDERED:

The revised budget for the establishment of a Centre for Quantitative Methods in Social Sciences (SC.254/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Chair of the Faculty of Social Sciences)

- (a) That at its meeting on 28 February 2013, the Steering Committee considered a draft bid to the Nuffield Foundation, ESRC and HEFCE to establish a Centre for Quantitative Methods in Social Sciences (paper SC.153/12-13), and resolved that the bid for £1,494,000 requested from the funders be approved and that the University would commit to support the establishment of the Centre and new degree programmes with the additional amount of £1,231,000 in the first five years.
- (b) That the University had been offered a conditional award of £1,344,600 from the Nuffield Foundation, ESRC and HEFCE to establish the Centre, to be known as Warwick Q-Step, which represented a shortfall of almost £150,000.
- (c) That the sum awarded also had to cover inflation on all costs, which had been disallowed in the bid submission in February 2013, and which amounted to an additional £115,000, inflating at the 3% cap imposed by the funders.
- (d) That the terms of the award stated that the University's revised budget for the establishment of the Centre should not involve significant change to the original planned programme of activities.
- (e) That the development of Warwick Q-Step was of significant strategic importance, as it would allow the University to remain at the forefront of social science teaching and research in the UK and internationally.

- (f) That the success in achieving the conditional offer had placed Warwick in a unique position regionally and nationally, noting that many institutions anticipated to be successful based on their methodological reputations had not received offers.
- (g) That the successful bid would be beneficial for the renewal of funding for the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC), given the strength of its collaborative and international focus.
- (h) That following revision of the budget according to the new Award Terms and Conditions, and following reductions in costs where possible, an increase in the University's commitment of £577,000 over five years between October 2013 to October 2018 was requested.

(by the Group Finance Director)

- (i) That based on the revised figures of a £10.6m cumulative surplus over ten years, there was a strong case for the University to support the amended commitment.

RESOLVED:

That the request for the University to commit to the extra cost of the establishment of Warwick Q-Step be approved as outlined in paper SC.254/12-13 and as reported by the Group Finance Director.

435/12-13

Compliance with the HEFCE Concordat to Support Research Integrity

CONSIDERED:

A letter from HEFCE outlining the requirement for institutions to comply with the Concordat to support research integrity (SC.255/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the University was already addressing the required areas of compliance, but should ensure that it could clearly demonstrate this compliance when subjected to external scrutiny.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (b) That it would be beneficial for a compliance report to be presented to the Audit Committee on an annual basis.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (c) That the University also needed to be able to demonstrate that it was effectively disseminating the requirements of the Concordat to all research practitioners.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Research Governance and Ethics Committee would lead on ensuring that the requirements of the Concordat were communicated to research practitioners across the University.
- (b) That an annual report be prepared by the Research Governance and Ethics Committee for consideration by the Audit Committee.

436/12-13 Membership of Senate Committees

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the appointment of Professor Nigel Stocks from the School of Engineering to sit on the Senate, as a member of the academic staff appointed by the Board of the Faculty of Science, be approved.
- (b) That the appointment of Professor Celia Lury from the Faculty of Social Sciences to serve on the Academic Staff Committee, as one of fourteen professors appointed by the Senate, be approved.
- (c) That the appointment of Professor Graeme Currie from the Faculty of Social Sciences to serve on the Academic Staff Committee, as one of fourteen professors appointed by the Senate, be approved.
- (d) That the appointment of Professor Deborah Steinberg from the Department of Sociology, to the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences be noted.

437/12-13 Response to BIS Consultation: Government Review of the Balance of Competences between the UK and the EU: Research and Development

RECEIVED:

The University's response to a consultation on the Government Review of the Balance of Competences between the UK and the EU: Research and Development, as approved by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Arts and Social Sciences) for submission on 31 July 2013 (SC.256/12-13).

JH/CS/Steering/Minutes/2012-2013/09-09-2013