

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 11 May 2009

- Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor S Bassnett,
Professor L Bridges,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor R Higgott,
Professor K Lamberts (until item 547/08-09)
Professor R Lindley,
Professor H Thomas,
Mr S Thomson,
Professor M Smith,
Professor M Underwood
- Apologies: Professor M Whitby,
- In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Estates, Finance Director, Director of Development, Communication and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Head and Departmental Administrator of the Department of History of Art, Professor M Hatt (for item 543/08-09), Director of Research Support Services (for item 544/08-09), Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (for item 545/08-09), Deputy Academic Registrar (for items 546/08-09 and 547/08-09)
- 532/08-09 Minutes
- RESOLVED:
- That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 May be approved.
- 533/08-09 Membership of the Steering Committee
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- That Professor Martin Underwood would be attending meetings of the Committee as Acting Dean of Warwick Medical School until further notice.
- 534/08-09 Strategic Departmental Reviews of Engineering and Warwick Business School (minute 509/08-09 refers)
- RESOLVED:
- That it be noted that the Steering Committee did not suggest any additional issues to be considered within the Strategic Departmental Reviews of the School of Engineering and Warwick Business School to be held in the Summer Term 2009.
- 535/08-09 Employment Policies (minute 524/08-09 refers)
- REPORTED: (by the Registrar)
- (a) That, following discussion at the previous meeting of the Committee and the Heads of Department Away Day held on 7 May 2009, a letter outlining the additional HR policies designed to support the current financial challenge would be circulated to the University community this week, noting that an appropriate advice system was being established by HR to advise colleagues on the new policies.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (b) That there had been discussion around the coverage of the policy with regard to staff on Warwick HRI legacy conditions and colleagues funded from external sources in recent departmental meetings with the Academic Resourcing Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Registrar and the Finance Director verify the position of legacy and externally funded staff under the new policies and revise the policies as necessary prior to circulation to the University community.

536/08-09

Death of Carl Blakey

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That Carl Blakey, a student in the MOAC Doctoral Training Centre, had died last week and that the family and students were being supported by the Director of MOAC and the Director of Student Support.

537/08-09

University Open Day

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its thanks to all those colleagues involved in the successful Open Day on 9 May 2009.

538/08-09

Life Sciences

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That an announcement regarding the establishment of the School of Life Sciences would be published on the University intranet tomorrow.

539/08-09

Health Innovation and Education Clusters

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the prospectus detailing the application process for Health Innovation and Education Clusters had been published on 7 May 2009 by the Department of Health, noting that the publication would be considered at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

540/08-09

University Financial Position

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the recent letter from the Secretary of State for DIUS to HEFCE announced a further cut of £180m for the HE sector in 2009/10 in addition to the £400m of efficiency savings from DIUS in 2010/11.
- (b) That whilst the University aimed for a consultative process in regards to cost efficiencies, the need to move swiftly in the changing context was important if the University was to successfully navigate the economic conditions.

RESOLVED:

That the latest DIUS letter be considered at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

541/08-09 Additional Student Numbers 2010/11

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That 10,000 Additional Student Numbers had been allocated by HEFCE for 2010/11.

542/08-09 Committee on the Appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That an interview date had been finalised for the advertised Pro-Vice-Chancellor vacancy.
- (b) That Professor Seville (School of Engineering) was unavailable to attend and Professor Easton (Biological Sciences) had been nominated as a replacement representative of the Senate on the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Professor Easton as a representative of the Senate on the Committee on the Appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors be approved on behalf of the Senate.

543/08-09 Strategic Departmental Response: History of Art (minute 462/08-09 refers)

CONSIDERED:

The departmental response to the Strategic Departmental Review of the Department of History of Art held on 2 to 4 February 2009 and the action plan, together with an oral report from the outgoing and incoming Heads of the Department, Professor Smith and Professor Hatt respectively (SC.438/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the departmental response contained a high level of detail and positively addressed the comments of the Review Panel.

(By the Head of the Department of History of Art)

- (b) That the Department regarded the Review Report as an opportunity to implement efficiencies with regards to staff workload models, including the Venice programmes, and to review administrative allocations at the end of the first year of the new undergraduate course.

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Arts)

- (c) That alternative delivery methods for teaching in the department should be considered as contingency measures in the case that proposed Contemporary Art post was not approved by the Academic Resourcing Committee.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (d) That work share or collaboration by departmental administrators located in Millburn House should be explored and exploited where possible.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee record its thanks to the Professor Smith for his contribution to the department during his term as Head.

- (b) That the departmental response and action plan be approved as set out in SC.438/08-09.
- (c) That the Head of the Department of History of Art be invited to provide the Steering Committee with a progress report in the Spring Term 2010.

544/08-09

Policy Update: Research Strategy

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Research Support Services updating the Committee on developments in the Science City and AWM projects, the Low Carbon and Security Strategy initiatives, the Research Development Fund, the reorganisation of Research Support Services Management Structures and research income (SC.439/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Research Support Services)

- (a) That the year-end projection for research income as at the end of April was £90m but that the figure was dependant on the success of smaller applications.
- (b) That the strategy initiatives were ongoing, noting that the recent visit to Boston University had raised some opportunities for partnership.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Arts and Social Studies))

- (c) That the Low Carbon initiative had not been as productive as initially anticipated, noting that the success of Global Energy MBA in Warwick Business School could be drawn into the project to enhance its competitive strength.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (d) That the monitoring of outputs for the ongoing AWM projects would be considered by Budget Steering Group in the first instance with relevant comments reported or recommendations being made to the Steering Committee.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (e) That other institutions had teams dedicated to the development of large proposals and that the University might wish to consider the feasibility and benefit of this in light of recent unsuccessful applications.

RESOLVED:

That the Research Strategy update be approved as set out in SC.439/08-09.

545/08-09

Policy Update: Admissions and Recruitment

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment detailing the current position of undergraduate and postgraduate student recruitment, and widening participation developments (SC.441/08-09).

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

- (a) That the number of Home/EU undergraduate acceptances had increased from 17% in the previous year to 22% in the current cycle.
- (b) That, despite a prudent conversion strategy, there was potential for an overshoot due to the large expected volume of automatic acceptances, noting that this could further complicate the University's position regarding the HEFCE contract range.

- (c) That the increase in postgraduate applications had caused some delays with regards to processing offers, noting an increase of 20% in offers made and 13% in terms of acceptances from the previous year.
- (d) That the government's Widening Participation strategy was focused on access to the leading HEIs and the potential for discounted offers should applicants successfully complete a 'commonly' recognised additional piece of work.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (e) That departments would need to be clear in the very near future if changes were being made to the conversion process to ensure that the University's recruitment was brought back inline with the HEFCE contract, acknowledging that to optimise the University's position, some departments might have to operate at a sub-optimal level in terms of student numbers.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be approved as set out in SC.441/08-09.
- (b) That the University enter into Clearing on a differential basis for overseas undergraduate students for selected courses to be confirmed.

546/08-09

Policy Update: Postgraduate Issues

CONSIDERED:

A report on developments concerning postgraduate students by the Deputy Academic Registrar and Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies, including Warwick Postgraduate Research Scholarships, progress in strategy projects, student feedback mechanisms and the Erasmus Mundus scheme (SC.440/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (a) That, in the selection process for 2008/09 Warwick Postgraduate Research Scholarships (WPRS), it had been possible to provide matched awards for all the AHRC Block Grant Partnership awards without departing from the principle of making awards strictly on merit.
- (b) That WPRS awards had been made to overseas students on the basis of a Home/EU fee plus maintenance only and that no attempt had been made to replace the funding from the recently discontinued government Overseas Research Student Assistance Scheme (ORSAS).
- (c) That potential options for future funding levels for postgraduate research scholarships would be considered initially by the Financial Plan Sub-committee (FPSC) rather than the Financial and General Purposes Committee (FGPC) as incorrectly reported in the paper SC.440/08-09.

(By the Deputy Academic Registrar)

- (d) That there had been a greater than expected response to the call for applications to the European Commission to establish Erasmus Mundus at taught Masters and Doctoral levels, noting that the proposals had been formally submitted to the Commission.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the paper updating on Postgraduate Issues be approved as set out in SC.440/08-09.

- (b) That the Committee be notified of the outcome of the Erasmus Mundus proposals when information became available.
- (c) That a paper from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar on potential future funding levels for postgraduate research scholarships be considered at a future meeting of the Steering Committee.

547/08-09

Points Based Immigration System – Enhancements to the University's Monitoring Arrangements of Students' Academic Progression

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Deputy Registrar and the Academic Registrar outlining the proposed approach to manage the implementation of the new Points Based System legislation within the University (SC.442/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the higher education sector had successfully negotiated with the UK Border Agency to establish greater clarity and flexibility in the reporting requirements regarding students' academic progression.
- (b) That the University needed to consider carefully the message that any approach might send to overseas students, noting that the monitoring system could enhance the student experience in the longer term.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (c) That it should be explicit in the revised Regulation 13 on Student Registration, Attendance and Progress and the related Good Practice Guide that students failing to comply with the monitoring standards would not be reported to the UK Border Agency until the University's internal investigation procedures had been completed including the opportunity for students to present their case within the appropriate appeals process.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (d) That the process detailed in SC.442/08-09 was a sensible and fair approach building on current practices.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed approach be approved as set out in SC.442/08-09, subject to revisions as discussed in the meeting to be made prior to consideration by the Boards of the Faculties.

548/08-09

UUK I-Note I/2009/030 – Update on Quality Issues

CONSIDERED:

An Information Note from Universities UK (UUK) updating the Committee on UUK priorities and actions with reference to quality assurance issues (SC.447/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the UUK paper presented some points of concern, namely the proposal to merge UniStats into the DirectGov site and the QAA Quality Forum's discussion of level of student contact hours.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (b) That the Academic Registrars' Council had made a request to meet with the QAA to discuss their position on overseas students' recruitment and language testing but had yet to receive a response.

RESOLVED:

That further consideration be given as to how best to respond to the QAA's intended areas of investigation given the serious concern expressed at the meeting.

549/08-09 UUK I-Note I/2009/032- Evaluation of HEFCE/OSI Third Stream Funding

RECEIVED:

An Information Note from UUK summarising the main findings of a report '*Evaluation of the effectiveness and role of HEFCE/ OSI Third Stream funding: Culture change and embedding capacity in the higher education sector toward greater economic impact*' produced by Public and Corporate Economic Consultants and the Centre for Business Research, University of Cambridge, for HEFCE/OSI on 1 April 2009 (SC.446/08-09).

550/08-09 UUK I-Note I/2009/029 - Postgraduate Taught: Market Trends and Opportunities

RECEIVED:

An Information Note from UUK advising members of the recently published UUK report regarding UK HE market trends for postgraduate taught students and arising opportunities in this area (SC.448/08-09).

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