

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 12 October 2009

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor M Smith,
Professor M Underwood,
Professor M Whitby
Mr A Bradley

Apologies: Professor R Higgott, Professor H Thomas

In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Estates, Finance Director, Director of Development, Communication and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Administrative Officer (Governance), Professor S B Palmer, Director of Management Information and Planning (for items 6/09-10 and 7/09-10), Senior Assistant Registrar (Deputy Registrar's Office) (for item 10/09-10)

1/09-10 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2009 be approved.

2/09-10 CBI Higher Education Taskforce Report: Stronger Together (minute 894/08-09 refers)

RECEIVED:

A Universities UK I-Note summarising the findings and its response to the CBI Higher Education Taskforce report, noting that the report was received at the previous meeting of the Committee.

3/09-10 University Response to HEFCE Review of Teaching Funding (minute 892/08-09 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That, as resolved at the previous meeting, he had contacted the Chair and Director General of the Russell Group to raise the University's concerns over the Group's draft response and that the Russell Group had agreed to strengthen the response, particularly related to the proposed cut in Postgraduate Taught Band D funding.

4/09-10 Times Higher Education – QS: World Rankings

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

(a) That the University had risen in the 2009 Times Higher Education – QS World Rankings from 69 to 58 as published on 8 October 2009.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (b) That the University's scores had increased in the following criteria within the World Rankings:

Peer Review, Staff/Student Ratio, Citations, International Students

5/09-10 Joint Supper for the Senate and the Council and Gala Concert

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That he wished to extend his thanks to colleagues who had organised the joint supper for members of the Senate and the Council held on 7 October 2009 and the Gala Concert to mark the opening of the refurbished Butterworth Hall, and to those colleagues who had attended the events.

6/09-10 Research Excellence Framework Consultation

CONSIDERED:

A paper presenting the HEFCE consultation on the proposals for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and requesting the Committee to approve the membership of a University Working Group (SC.01/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine))

- (a) That the HEFCE consultation documents had been circulated to departments for their consideration, noting that the REF would be included in agendas for the Faculty Lunches to be held in the Autumn Term 2009.
- (b) That further consideration should be given as to how to best communicate the REF proposals and the specific issues regarding impact to the University community more generally.

(By the Director of Management Information and Planning)

- (c) That the proposals raised concerns regarding staff eligibility and the changes to how impact would be measured.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (d) That colleagues should be clear that quality and impact would be separate measures with regards to research outputs.
- (e) That the University should consider ways to publicise more visibly the impact of its research.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed membership of a Working Group to consider the University's response to the REF consultation be approved as set out in SC.01/09-10.
- (b) That the University would input into the UUK response, noting that the deadlines for submissions was 4 December 2009.
- (c) That the Director of Development, Communication and Strategy consider the effectiveness of new methods for publicising the impact of University research.

7/09-10

REF Impact Assessment Pilot

CONSIDERED:

A letter from HEFCE confirming that the University had been selected to participate in the REF impact assessment pilot (SC.18/09-10)

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

- (a) That the University had been selected to submit under the Physics and Clinical Medicine units of assessment with submissions being due by early March 2009.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Research (Science and Medicine))

- (b) That the University acknowledged the burden the pilot would place on those departments included in the units of assessment but that their contribution would be of real benefit to the greater university.
- (c) That the impact assessment pilot would report after the general consultation on the REF proposals had been completed and that the University should highlight this concern to HEFCE in its response to the consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its thanks to the departments participating in the pilot.

8/09-10

Strategic Departmental Review Report: Warwick Business School

CONSIDERED:

The final report and related action plan from the Strategic Departmental Review for the Warwick Business School (WBS) held between 3 to 5 June 2009 (SC.02/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing))

- (a) That the report had presented several issues regarding teaching and learning which the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) should address as a priority.
- (b) That the proposal within the report to move towards a Teaching Fellow model with potentially 25 per cent of academic staff taking on Teaching Fellow status should be considered as an option rather than a solution to the research management issues within the School, noting that this approach had been avoided elsewhere as it would risk the creation of a 'split academy'.
- (c) That WBS should be encouraged to ensure that the research outputs had a more visible impact.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (d) That the use of postgraduate research students for teaching duties adopted by WBS was a cause for concern and that it appeared from the report that WBS was acting outside University guidelines in this regard.

(By the Finance Director)

- (e) That the WBS data presented within the report relating to 'off-matrix' teaching was lower than the analysis carried out centrally and that this should be explored further.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (f) That further and significant attention was needed to enhance the performance of the WBS development and fundraising activities.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report of the Strategic Departmental Review of WBS and related action plan be approved as set out in SC.02/09-10.
- (b) That any areas to be further considered by the Dean of WBS in the drafting of the Departmental Response, as determined by the Committee, be sent to the Head of Governance Support Services.
- (c) That Professors Thomas (Dean of WBS) and Wilson (Incoming Acting Dean, WBS) be invited to present the departmental response to the report and its recommendations at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 26 October 2009.

9/09-10

Development and Alumni Relations Policy Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Development, Communication and Strategy updating the Committee on fundraising success, planning and strategic opportunities (SC.17/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Development, Communication and Strategy)

- (a) That the Modern Records Centre redevelopment was a significant strategic project for the University.
- (b) That to resolve the current funding shortfall for this project arising from partial funding by the Wolfson Foundation, a targeted fundraising appeal had begun and the project would be eligible for as yet unallocated HEFCE matched funding.
- (c) That the renaming opportunity presented by the Centre of Caribbean Studies was unique in Warwick's history which should be explored further, particularly with regards to the terms of the gift payment schedule.

(By the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Arts)

- (d) That the Centre for Caribbean Studies had in the past been problematic but that the potentially high-profile renaming could provide motivation for it to refresh its role in the University, Faculty and discipline.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (e) That lay-members of the Council and the Chancellor might be engaged more in corporate engagement activities, such as the potential GE Healthcare partnership.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (f) That, whilst the student community acknowledged that alumni giving was at the heart of Warwick's agenda, a different approach at Graduation Ceremonies to engaging students in donating to the University might be advisable as it was felt that at least one of the alumni speakers had been too forceful in their address.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the request to allocate £150k from available unallocated Matched Funding to progress the Modern Records Centre redevelopment be approved as set out in SC.9/09-10.
- (b) That the Committee approve in principle the renaming opportunity presented for the Centre for Caribbean Studies, subject to the funding period being clarified and the relevant constitutional and governing instrument changes being presented to the Senate in due course.

10/09-10

University Risk Register Summary

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Deputy Registrar's Office) updating the Steering Committee on the risk management procedure and policy for 2009/10 and the University Strategic Risk Status Summary and Register (SC.19/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Audit Committee and the Council had approved the revised University Risk Management Policy including the abolition of the Risk Management Group and the transfer of its responsibilities to the Steering Committee.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (b) That there had been very little change in the Risk Status Summary since it was previously considered by the Committee in the Summer Term 2009.
- (c) That the inclusion of key future plans in the Summary table allowed for easy cross-reference against individual risks.
- (d) That further work would be undertaken to include provisional timescales against risks to indicate how long an action might need to be in place before the risk level would change.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine))

- (e) That, although significant improvement was visible with regards to the University's risk management procedures, there were still different practices existing in different areas of the University and that it would be advantageous to have a standard system working across the institution.

RESOLVED:

That the risks assigned to the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor be re-allocated given the vacancy in this role for 2009/10.

11/09-10

HEFCE 27/2009: Carbon Targets – University Response

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to the HEFCE consultation on the development of a carbon reduction target and strategy for the higher education sector in England, together with a report outlining the implications for Warwick (SC.11/09-10)

REPORTED: (by the Director of Estates)

- (a) That the proposals as written had significant implications for the University and that generally it was felt that universities would struggle to meet the targets proposed by HEFCE which were seen as a response to government pressure to establish carbon targets for the sector.
- (b) That HEFCE was obliged under the conditions of the 2008 grant letter from the Secretary of State to link future capital funding allocations with performance against carbon plans, noting that this would potentially result in those institutions failing against carbon reduction targets not being eligible for CIF2 funding in the 2011 to 2014 funding round.
- (c) That, in order to respond to carbon targets, the University would need to impose greater ownership for emissions on individual departments within the context of an institution-wide carbon strategy.
- (d) That a risk relating to carbon management at the University should be incorporated into the University Risk Register.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (e) That the University's response should be strengthened to highlight the overly ambitious targets and that the proposals would in effect penalise institutions for their structure and geography.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (f) That universities could make more of an impact on the carbon reduction agenda by leading in low-carbon research rather than simply reducing their own emissions.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft response be approved for submission to HEFCE by the deadline of 16 October 2009, subject to the revisions discussed at the meeting.
- (b) That the Senior Assistant Registrar (Deputy Registrar's Office) incorporate an entry on carbon management into the University Risk Register.

12/09-10

New University Challenge: Milton Keynes

RECEIVED:

A letter from HEFCE to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bedfordshire informing that the proposal to establish an HE centre in Milton Keynes had been selected to be developed into a full business case under the HEFCE new 'University Challenge', together with the related HEFCE press release (SC.12/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That six proposals had been initially selected for the next stage which would require a full business case to be provided.
- (b) That the feedback from HEFCE had brought clarification regarding the role of Warwick in the venture and that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bedfordshire wanted to meet with delegates from Warwick in this regard.

13/09-10

Research Councils UK: Letter Notifying of Reduction in Funds

RECEIVED:

A letter from Research Councils UK informing members of the outcome of a review of the value of cash indexation applied to research grants and fellowships (SC.13/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Finance Director)

- (a) That the reductions reported by Research Councils UK had been calculated on a basis of zero per cent inflation.
- (b) That the value of grants and contracts held by the University would be revised as a result of the review with an estimate in most cases of a 1.2 per cent reduction from 1 April 2010.

14/09-10

Grant Funding: Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)

RECEIVED:

A letter from the STFC announcing a science prioritisation exercise concluding in early 2010 which would affect grants and contracts held by the University (SC.20/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine))

- (a) That the announcement had caused disquiet in the science community, particularly as the STFC would announce only new grants up to October 2010 whilst the prioritisation exercise was undertaken.
- (b) That the limit placed on new grants had significant implications for institutions' ability to recruit quality staff as funding was only confirmed for a year.

15/09-10

HEFCE 22/2009: Additional Student Numbers for 2010/11

CONSIDERED:

A letter from HEFCE inviting bids from higher education institutions for additional student numbers for 2010/11 (SC.09/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That any new numbers awarded to the University could not represent an increase in overall intake targets given the University's contract provision, but would partially mitigate the need to decrease intake.
- (b) That the University should develop a strategic bid for Band B undergraduate numbers at a level of 33 per year for the period 2010/11 to 2012/13 to protect intake targets in specific departments, noting that the maximum request permitted per proposal was 100.

RESOLVED:

That the Academic Registrar develop a proposal for submission to HEFCE by the deadline of 26 October 2009, noting that the Committee would receive the proposal for information once it had been submitted.

16/09-10 Conservative Party: Additional Student Places Plan

RECEIVED:

An announcement from the Conservative Party outlining a plan to create an additional 10,000 university places for 2010/11 (SC.14/09-10).

17/09-10 I/2009/091: Development of the HE Achievement Report and National Conference

CONSIDERED:

A UUK I-Note updating members on the work of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group in developing the Higher Education Achievement Report and announcing a national conference to be held on 4 November 2009 (SC.08/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That Academic Registrars in the Russell Group had raised concerns about the principle of the Higher Education Achievement Report and its relationship to the potential abolition of degree classifications.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing))

- (b) That there had not been strong support received from employers as the Report would increase the complexity of information to be digested in applications.

RESOLVED:

That further information on the scheme be considered at a future meeting of the Steering Committee following University representation at the conference on 4 November 2009.

18/09-10 Capturing the Potential of the Knowledge-based Economy for Birmingham

RECEIVED:

Proposals from Birmingham City Council on collaboration between the organisation and local universities, noting that the Council proposed to potentially engage with the University in the areas of healthcare technologies, digital media, advanced materials, energy and the Warwick Manufacturing Group (SC.03/09-10).

19/09-10 Success of Student Societies

REPORTED: (by the President of the Students' Union)

- (a) That the student radio station, RaW, had been nominated for 9 awards in the Student Radio Awards across 7 categories, including Best Male and Female Presenters, Best Newcomer, Best Entertainment, Best Interview, Best Scripted Programming and Best Journalistic Programming and that the winners would to be announced at indig02 in London on 5 November 2009.
- (b) That former Warwick student, Sam Hancock, had been shortlisted for Best Travel Writer for the Guardian Student Media Awards 2009.

- (c) That the previous Editor of the Warwick Boar and winner of Student Critic of the Year in the Guardian Media Awards 2008, Leo Robson, had been appointed as Chief Film Critic of the Times Literary Supplement and Lead Fiction Critic for the New Statesman as well as being published in The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph and the Daily Express.
- (d) That George Eaton, former Comment Editor of the Boar, had become a contributing writer for the New Statesman and editor of 'Fourth Estate', a media blog on the New Statesman website

RESOLVED:

That the President of the Students' Union liaise with the Director of Development, Communication and Strategy to ensure that the successes of student societies were showcased.

20/09-10

Appointments to Committees of the Senate

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the appointment of Dr Mukul Saxena of the Centre for Applied Linguistics to the Graduate Appeals Committee Panel for 2009/10 as a replacement for Dr Annamaria Pinter be approved on behalf of the Senate.
- (b) That the appointment of Ms Tilly Harrison of the Centre for Applied Linguistics to the Undergraduate Appeals Committee Panel for the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences for 2009/10 be approved on behalf of the Senate.

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