

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 17 December 2012

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor S Croft,
Professor Christina Hughes,
Professor Christopher Hughes,
Professor T Jones,
Mr N Swain,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor P Thomas.

Apologies: Deputy Registrar, Professor J Labbe, Professor S Swain.

In Attendance: Registrar, Group Finance Director, Academic Registrar, Director of HR, Director of Estates, Head of Governance Support Services, Administrative Officer (Governance), Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment (for item 174/12-13 and item 175/12-13), Senior Assistant Registrar (Outreach) (for item 174/12-13 and item 175/12-13).

167/12-13 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2012 be approved subject to the following amendments (deletions ~~struck through~~, additions underlined):

153/12-13 (...)

RESOLVED:

(...)

- (b) That it should be clearly stated in all communications that the collaboration was between WMG and Beijing City University, ~~with~~ noting that the specific purpose ~~of~~ was to aiding the Chinese government in increasing the capacity for automotive manufacturing in China.

168/12-13 UCAS End of Cycle Report 2012

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the UCAS End of Cycle Report on the final university admissions figures for the 2012/13 intake showed an 11% fall in students starting at UK universities in autumn 2012, compared with the same point in the previous year.
- (b) That the Report also indicated that admissions to English higher education institutions had decreased by 13%.
- (c) That the Report suggested that lower deferral rates in 2011-12 resulting from the rise in tuition fees accounted for approximately half of the decline, with a wide range of additional factors explaining the remaining fall; including changes in the way institutions made offers to applicants in response to the new government policy on the recruitment of students with top grades.

- 169/12-13 Warwick Network 2012
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- (a) That the annual Warwick Network held on Wednesday 12 December had been extremely successful.
 - (b) That a number of innovative ideas had been developed on the day, which would be formally taken forward by the University in due course.
- 170/12-13 Limmud Conference 2012
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- That the Limmud Conference on Jewish learning would be held at the University for the fifth successive year from 21 to 27 December 2012, with approximately 2,000 delegates expected to attend.
- 171/12-13 Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- (a) That Warwick had joined a number of other leading UK universities to create a MOOC, Futurelearn Ltd, which aimed to widen access to and meet global demand for high quality tertiary education through the provision of free online courses.
 - (b) That Warwick Business School had already prepared a module for the initiative, and six further departments had expressed interest in doing so.
- 172/12-13 UK Border Agency
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- (a) That press reports had indicated that delays at the UK Border Agency were resulting in some overseas students not receiving their passports in time to travel home for the Christmas vacation.
 - (b) That the extent to which Warwick students were affected by the issue was currently unclear.
- (by the Registrar)
- (c) That the International Office was in the process of contacting overseas students to determine the scale of the issue at the University.
 - (d) That the University would ensure that on and off campus residential support and catering facilities were available during the vacation period for students who were unable to travel home.
- 173/12-13 Capital Developments and Space Management
- CONSIDERED:
- A paper providing information on recent capital and space developments (SC.108/12-13).
- RECEIVED:
- An oral report for the Director of Estates noting key issues, including the following:

- (a) Rootes Student Study Space
That the main contractor works were scheduled to start in January 2013, not January 2012 as was stated in the paper.
- (b) Scarman House
That significant works were planned for all Warwick Conferences venues which would present challenges in ensuring that sufficient access remained to the facilities to allow for business continuity.
- (c) Off-Campus Highways Alterations
 - (i) That the response rate for the bi-annual travel survey had increased by 15% from the 2010 exercise.
 - (ii) That research into car park usage and bus tickets sales on routes servicing the campus indicated an increase in commuters to the University using public transport.
 - (iii) That once the major building developments at Warwick Conferences were complete, it was anticipated that work would begin to make the major campus roads safer and more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - (iv) That a bid to Sustrans to secure funding for the creation of additional cycle paths to campus had been submitted, and was expected to be successful.

REPORTED:

(by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research: Arts & Social Sciences and Fundraising)

- (a) That the Humanities Building was no longer fit for purpose, and risked being a deterrent to prospective humanities applicants in a challenging recruitment environment.

(by the Director of Estates)

- (b) That a rebuild of the Humanities Building was not currently included in the University's Capital Plan as a business case had not yet been submitted.

(by the Registrar)

- (c) That many of the scheduled and proposed major works affected income-generating facilities, such as Warwick Arts Centre, thus it was important that that the development programme was carefully planned to minimise disruption.
- (d) That the Management Information and Planning Office had produced a draft policy aiming to increase the flexibility and equity of the teaching timetable and to ensure efficient use of the University's teaching facilities.
- (e) That the draft policy would be considered by the Steering Committee in early 2013.

(by the Group Finance Director)

- (f) That the Department of Physics should be included in the review of the utilisation of laboratory and research space currently being conducted in the Department of Chemistry and the School of Engineering.

174/12-13 Annual Monitoring of Access Agreement and Widening Participation

CONSIDERED:

The University's Access Agreement and WPSA monitoring return for 2011-12 (SC.109/12-13).

REPORTED:

(by the Senior Assistant Registrar (Outreach))

- (a) That the data provided in the 2011-12 monitoring return referred to the 2010-11 Access Agreement.
- (b) That all targets in the 2010-11 Access Agreement had been met or exceeded, with the exception of increasing the number of full-time young entrants to the University from the lowest socio-economic groups.
- (c) That the target of increasing the number of full-time young entrants from the lowest socio-economic groups was challenging to fulfil, as data on student socio-economic background was not available to the University prior to enrolment.

RESOLVED:

That the University's Access Agreement and WPSA monitoring return for 2011-12 be approved as set out in paper SC.109/12-13, subject to the correction of the technical issue affecting appendix four.

175/12-13 Admissions and Recruitment Update

RECEIVED:

A paper providing an update on undergraduate applications for entry in 2013/14 (SC.110/12-13).

REPORTED:

(by the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment)

- (a) That the University had experienced a 5% decline in undergraduate application numbers in the 2012 admissions cycle, compared to a national decline of 11%.
- (b) That application numbers in the 2013 cycle had decreased overall, although a number of individual subject areas were in a similar or stronger position to the same point in the previous year.
- (c) That the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office was working on activities to optimise applicant conversion in the current admissions cycle and to broaden the recruitment pool for future cycles.
- (d) That the Undergraduate Admissions Team was processing new applications as swiftly as possible whilst maintaining accuracy, noting that the more competitive courses operated a gathered field admissions process which postponed decision making until all on-time applications had been received.

(by the Chair of the Faculty of Science)

- (e) That the operation of the gathered field process was causing the University to fall behind its competitors in the timing of its decision-making.

(by the Registrar)

- (f) That up to date information on applicant levels and offer numbers was available to departmental admissions contacts on the Course Selectors' website, and that it was important for heads of academic departments to liaise regularly with their admissions contacts to remain informed of the current recruitment position.
- (g) That a number of schools and colleges appeared to require their UCAS application exercise to be completed before the Christmas vacation and as such, advised students to withdraw any applications to institutions yet to communicate a decision.
- (h) That departments operating a gathered field process should be encouraged to consider whether this was still appropriate in the current admissions climate.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (i) That the Academic Resourcing Committee (ARC) had asked a number of departments to increase their intake targets in order to mitigate shortfall elsewhere.

176/12-13

Major Applications: European Research Council Synergy Grants

CONSIDERED:

A paper outlining proposals for two applications to the European Research Council (ERC) Synergy Grant Scheme (paper SC.111/12-13).

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

That there was no specified requirement for a University contribution to ERC Synergy awards beyond its commitment to meet the requirements of EU terms and conditions.

RESOLVED:

That the following proposed applications to the ERC Synergy Grant Scheme be approved for submission as set out in paper SC.111/12-13:

- (a) New Approaches to Cell Signalling via Information and Hypothesis Testing.
- (b) Performing representation: building a new paradigm for political analysis.