

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 20 February 2012

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor S Croft,
Professor M Finn,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor T Jones,
Professor J Labbe,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor S Swain,
Professor P Thomas,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor P Winstanley,
Mr L Bøe.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Finance and Financial Strategy, Director of HR, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy, Director of Estates, Head of Corporate Governance, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director of Student Careers and Skills (for item 330/11-12), Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) (for item 331/11-12).

323/11-12 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2012 be approved.

324/11-12 Russell Group Response to Post-Legislative Scrutiny of the Freedom of Information Act

RECEIVED:

The Russell Group's response to the post-legislative scrutiny of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act (SC.235/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That Parliament had recently taken the decision not to support a proposed amendment to the Freedom of Information Act to enable exemptions based on protecting pre-publication research, noting Parliament's view that the Information Commissioner was better placed to judge the appropriateness of release of information in particular cases.
- (b) That the University would need to examine further its current procedures in respect of Freedom of Information requests relating to pre-publication research outputs.

325/11-12 Office of Fair Access (minute 309/11-12 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the appointment of Professor Les Ebdon as the new Head of the Office of Fair Access would be confirmed.

- 326/11-12 The Commission on the Future of Higher Education in England
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- That he would chair The Commission on the Future of Higher Education in England, established by the Institute for Public Policy Research, which aimed to address how higher education should respond to the major challenges it will face over the next two decades.
- 327/11-12 Coventry House Council Chamber
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- That provision had been made to convert space in Coventry House into a Council Chamber with appropriate audio-visual provision.
- 328/11-12 Extraordinary Meeting of the Senate
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- That an extraordinary meeting of the Senate would be held on Wednesday 22 February 2012.
- 329/11-12 Erica Vickers
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- That it was with deep regret he announced the death of Erica Vickers, Senior Finance Officer in the Student Finance team within the Academic Office.
- 330/11-12 Student Careers and Skills Update
- RECEIVED:
- A report from the Director of Student Careers and Skills, with an update on labour market trends, and the services provided by the Centre for Student Careers and Skills to encourage student engagement (SC.232/11-12).
- REPORTED: (by the Director of Student Careers and Skills)
- (a) That there remained a number of students that delayed their engagement with the Centre for Student Careers and Skills, and would leave Warwick with uncertainty about their career direction, noting that effort and activity was presently being focused on identifying and engaging with those that had not engaged prior to the mid point of the second term.
- (b) That the Centre for Student Careers and Skills had developed a welcoming service, and were undertaking a variety of activities to increase engagement, including departmental newsletters targeted at academic and administrative staff.
- (c) That the inclusion of employability within the Institutional Teaching and Learning Review had significantly increased awareness and interest within departments.
- (d) That a survey of non-user finalists (those not presently engaged with the Centre for Student Careers and Skills) was to be undertaken in early March, to explore barriers to engagement and how these could be overcome.
- (e) That the HEIF-funded Placement Learning Unit had commenced operation, with departmental meetings expected to begin imminently.

- (f) That the Placement Learning Unit would utilise links with the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP and Warwick District Council, who were keen to maintain talent locally.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (g) That academic buy-in to employability was crucial and that the introduction of departmental newsletters from the Centre for Student Careers and Skills was a positive step.
- (h) That there had been anecdotal evidence of personal tutors refusing to write student references for further study or work, due to a possible misunderstanding of their role.
- (i) That an induction week without academic commitments could be helpful for new students to absorb critical information, including information from the Centre for Student Careers and Skills.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (j) That provision of student references formed part of the expected duties of academics at Warwick.

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

- (k) That anecdotal evidence of personal tutors refusing to write student references for further study or work had not been presented during the Personal Tutor Review, but that she would raise the matter with the Senior Tutor and others.
- (l) That employability was included on the agenda for the Faculty Engagement process in the coming weeks.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Access, Widening Participation and Development)

- (m) That there was a need to think strategically about how to target effectively new students with careers information during their first year, and that value would not necessarily be added by increasing the information provided during the initial Induction period.
- (n) That Employability Tutors could be established within each department to act as a conduit to the experience and expertise in the Centre for Student Careers and Skills.

(by the Registrar)

- (o) That the Director should explore the possibility of residential staff being used to reinforce messages of engagement on employability.
- (p) That cross-discussion between departments on approaches to employability, as well as employer links, was important.
- (q) That the provision of evidence from other Universities of the positive impact on employability, as a result of an induction week without academic commitments, would be useful.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (r) That the NUS Charter indicated that the induction of students should be considered to be an extended process.

331/11-12

Draft Response to the QAA Consultation on the UK Quality Code Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft response to the QAA Consultation on the UK Quality Code Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision (SC.236/11-12).

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

- (a) That the majority of areas covered by the consultation did not raise a concern for the University, but there was an issue of the proposed remit of the QAA stretching into such matters as general institutional governance and alumni services,.
- (b) That Indicator 10 represented additional requirements over and above the need to produce a collaborative course register and that the University's response would question the need for this additional requirement.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (c) That centralised data would be publicly available through the introduction of Key Information Sets, to assist potential students in making informed choices.

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

- (d) That the QAA approach assumed uniform provision of information, without consideration for the variation in information required by different audiences, such as pre-application students, pre-arrival students, and students on course.

RESOLVED:

That the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) submit the University's draft response to the QAA Consultation on the UK Quality Code Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision, as set out in SC.236/11-12, prior to the deadline of 24 February 2012.

332/11-12

Fees Working Group Report

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Fees Working Group, with recommendations for changes to non-standard fee levels for 2012/13 (SC.240/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That the Fees Working Group had reviewed further the fee level for members of staff undertaking the PhD by Published Works and proposed a 6% increase in line with other fee increases for 2012 entry, other than in exceptional cases.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed increases in non-standard tuition fees for undergraduate and postgraduate courses for 2012/13 as set out in the schedules of paper SC.240/11-12 be approved.
- (b) That the proposal that the fee for members of staff undertaking the PhD by Published Works for 2011/12 be set at £670, an increase of 6% on the 2010/11 fee of £630, be approved.

333/11-12 University Letter in support of Warwickshire College Application for Foundation Degree Awarding Powers

CONSIDERED:

A letter from the Principal and Chief Executive Officer of Warwickshire College inviting the University as a validating partner for the award of Foundation Degrees, together with the University's draft response in support (SC.239/11-12).

RESOLVED:

That the University's response to the invitation from the Principal and Chief Executive Officer of Warwickshire College to become a validating partner for the award of Foundation Degrees, as set out in SC.239/11-12, be sent before the end of February 2012.

334/11-12 UCAS Qualification Information Review Consultation

CONSIDERED:

A letter from the Chief Executive of UCAS on the UCAS Qualifications Information Review consultation, together with its recommendations and the current consultation process (SC.237/11-12).

RESOLVED:

That a draft response to the UCAS Qualifications Information Review consultation be considered by the Steering Committee, prior to its submission deadline of 16 April 2012.

335/11-12 HEFCE Note: Review of Charities Act 2006

CONSIDERED:

Notification from HEFCE of the Cabinet Office review of the Charities Act 2006 (SC.241/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Deputy Registrar would liaise with the Students' Union to understand how it might be affected by the potential outcomes of the forthcoming review of the Charities Act 2006, and how they intended to engage with the review given their charitable status.

(by the Registrar)

- (b) That HEFCE, as the University's principal regulator, would respond to the review, but had also encouraged representative groups and individual institutions to respond directly.

RESOLVED:

That a draft response to the Cabinet Office review of the Charities Act 2006 be considered by the Steering Committee, prior to its submission deadline of 16 April 2012.

336/11-12 AHRC Block Grant Partnership 2 Expression of Interest – Revised Draft (minute 315/11-12)

CONSIDERED:

A revised Expression of Interest (EOI) from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies for a collaborative AHRC Block Grant Partnership 2 (BGP2) bid led by the University (SC.249/11-12).

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

- (a) That the redrafted AHRC BGP2 EOI included revisions suggested by the Steering Committee at its meeting held on 13 February 2012.
- (b) That the EOI included two tables to show the minimum and maximum costing of the consortium, as a requirement of the AHRC to reflect the inclusion of London and non-London partners in the consortium.
- (c) That the EOI was strengthened by the potential for the extension of existing relationships between partner institutions, geographical spread, and cross-sector and cross-discipline opportunities.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Access, Widening Participation and Development)

- (d) That the benefits gained by students attending a Midlands and campus based university should be emphasised, to reinforce the critical role of Warwick within the consortium.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (e) That the difference that the consortium would make to the students involved should be highlighted further at the beginning of the EOI.

RESOLVED:

That the Expression of Interest (EOI) for a collaborative AHRC Block Grant Partnership 2 (BGP2) bid led by the University, as set out in SC.249/11-12, be revised by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies as discussed in the meeting.

337/11-12 Students' Union Sabbatical Officer Elections

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

That there were 37 candidates for the seven full time Sabbatical Officer positions, of which fourteen were female, and that voting would commence during the week beginning 27 February 2012.

338/11-12 Go Green Week

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

That the Students' Union would be celebrating its annual Go Green week during the week commencing 20 February 2012, and that Caroline Lucas MP (leader of the Green Party) would be a keynote speaker on Thursday 23 February 2012.

339/11-12 Voluntary Giving to Higher Education

RECEIVED:

Information from HEFCE regarding the outcome of the HEFCE matched funding scheme for voluntary giving to higher education and presenting some of the challenges for the future (SC.234/11-12).

340/11-12

Universities UK: Futures for Higher Education

RECEIVED:

A publication presenting the themes and analysis arising from a scenario development exercise, which sought to identify the likely factors and their impact and implications for the future shape of the sector (SC.238/11-12).

KMS/KP/steersshare/minutes/201112/Feb12/20Feb12