

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 20 October 2008

- Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor S Bassnett,
Professor L Bridges,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor R Higgott,
Professor K Lamberts,
Mr S Thomson
- Apologies: Professor Y Carter, Professor R Lindley, Professor M Smith, Professor H Thomas,
Professor M Whitby
- In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Finance, Director of Estates, Director of Communication and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Acting Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Assistant Director (HR) for item 48/08-09, University Librarian for item 51/08-09, Director of IT Services for item 52/08-09, Deputy Academic Registrar for item 54/08-09 and 55/08-09, Assistant Registrar (Examinations) for item 55/08-09, Director of Management Information and Planning for item 56/08-09

47/08-09 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2008 be approved, subject to the following amendments (additions underlined):

36/08-09

REPORTED:

(by the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Social Studies)

- (b) That the Director of the NHS Workforce Review Team had contacted him over the Summer and that a discussion had taken place about the proposed Centre of Excellence and the possible collaboration between the WRT and Warwick.

48/08-09 Pulse Survey (minute 4/08-09 refers)

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of HR outlining the rationale for continuing with existing plans to undertake the next Pulse Survey in January 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the Pulse Survey be undertaken in January 2009, noting that a review of the timing of future surveys would be undertaken and reported back to the Committee once response rates and results for the 2009 survey were known.

49/08-09 Web Note on University Finances

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supported the nature and tone of the note given the need to prepare the University community for the potential consequences that may arise from the current and projected economic issues affecting both the UK and international community.

50/08-09

Business Improvement

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That, as part of the University's commitment to sustainability and business improvement steps should be taken to reduce significantly the amount of paper being used in the conduct of University business.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That for future meetings of the Committee all 'For Information Only' items be circulated only by electronic means.
- (b) That reduction in paper use be considered as part of the review of University Governance being conducted this year.

51/08-09

Library Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the University Librarian focusing on the development of the University's Institutional Repository for research outputs (SC.40/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Librarian)

- (a) That, while the existing Institutional Repository project would improve exposure to Warwick's research outputs, the proposed enhancements would provide for full publication of items which would improve exposure through search engines like Google.

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

- (b) That the proposals might deliver cost and efficiency savings in preparing for the Research Excellence Framework.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (c) That the proposals would improve significantly the University's internal monitoring processes.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals for the further development of WRAP (including the establishment of a publications database) be approved, subject to full financial analysis and budgetary approval.

52/08-09

IT Services Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of IT Services focusing on progress arising from the Five Year Plan submission, work being undertaken to identify the next phase of priorities, and the need for the University to establish how it wishes to differentiate itself through its IT provision (SC.43/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Director of IT Services)

- (a) That whilst significant progress had been made in enhancing core capabilities, significant priority needed to be given to how the University might differentiate itself and its services through the use of IT.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (b) That the report was welcome, particularly as it addressed the vast majority of issues which are important to students.

(By the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (c) That the allocation of £4m from CIF towards replacing existing IT infrastructure highlighted a need to secure a sustainable funding model for IT from mainstream University funds.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved, noting the Committee's recognition of the significant improvements in delivery and forward planning that had been achieved to date.

53/08-09

Development and Alumni Relations Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Regional Engagement and Development) and the Director of Communication and Strategy updating the Committee on significant developments (SC.42/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Communication and Strategy)

- (a) That, despite organisational changes, 2007/08 had been a satisfactory year for DARO delivering an outturn of £2.35m including the provision of an additional £150k for PGR scholarships.
- (b) That the target for 2008/09 of £4m was challenging in the current economic climate but achievable.
- (c) That the proposals being taken forward to transform engagement with alumni and related communities, including the decision by the Warwick Graduates' Association to abolish the annual fee, represented bold but exciting steps forward.
- (d) That the highlighting of staff giving within the references to the new Warwick Match scheme was to recognise existing staff giving which already takes place but also to highlight the potential impact of staff gifts under this programme.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Campus and Community))

- (e) That the report should be commended for its clarity in capturing existing activities and future developments.

(By the Vice-Chancellor)

- (f) That whilst the potential impact of current economic issues on DARO's activities could not be denied, the positive impact of the Director of Communication and Strategy's work with the DARO team should be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved, noting in particular the significant step taken by the WGA in abolishing its annual membership fee as an integral part of its alumni engagement strategy.

54/08-09

Graduate School Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Deputy Academic Registrar and Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies updating the Committee on postgraduate matters including the development of the Graduate School Office, Doctoral Training Account balances, strategy projects, scholarship funding, the cost of PGR students, amendments to the thesis submission policy, and PG Student Induction (SC.46/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Academic Registrar)

- (a) That work was being undertaken by the Graduate School Office and the International Office to maximise the impact and utilisation of available scholarship funding.

(By the Registrar)

- (b) That there had been a very recent update with regard to Commonwealth Scholarships.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved, as set out in SC.46/08-09.

55/08-09

Report on Invigilation

CONSIDERED:

A report on invigilation practice at the University comparing it to a number of other institutions (SC.41/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the review was triggered as a result of a concern from some departments about the impact of the current model of invigilation.
- (b) That there was evidence of significant diversity of practice across the sector.
- (c) That there were issues of training and quality assurance in the current model, particularly where PGR students were used.

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

- (d) That one of the key concerns raised was the number of senior academic staff from different departments that are often engaged in the same examination session.

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

- (e) That the real cost of the existing system was not clear.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (f) That it was not clear whether invigilation was simply an unattractive part of an academic's job or that they genuinely did not have time to do it.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (g) That, notwithstanding the issues of training and quality assurance that would need to be addressed, the projected future growth in PGR studentships might provide an opportunity to consider an alternative system but the case to do so now was not clear

RESOLVED:

That, given the prohibitive cost of alternative models and the lack of a clear imperative to change at this stage, the current system for invigilation be continued.

56/08-09 Sunday Times and THE League Tables

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Management Information and Planning outlining the University's performance in the Sunday Times and THE League Tables for 2008 (SC.44/08-09).

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

That serious methodological and statistical concerns had been raised with the THE which led him to doubt the validity of the University's position in both the current and previous year's THE World Rankings.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Management Information and Planning continue to engage directly with the producers of the THE World Rankings to highlight the University's concern regarding the unexplainable year to year volatility of rankings for many leading universities in the table.

57/08-09 University Response to UUK Ethnicity and Degree Attainment Consultation

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft response to the UUK Ethnicity and Degree Attainment consultation (SC.38/08-09).

RESOLVED:

That the response be approved and submitted as set out in SC.38/08-09.

58/08-09 HEFCE Circular 28/2008: Data Quality and Efficiency in Higher Education

CONSIDERED:

HEFCE Circular 28/2008 on Data Quality and Efficiency in Higher Education (SC.35/08-09), noting that the Vice-Chancellor was Chair of the Data Efficiency Project Steering Committee.

RESOLVED:

That paper SC.35/08-09 be submitted to the Audit Committee for consideration as part of its work to provide an assurance report to HEFCE on data quality at the University.

59/08-09 Appointments to Committees of the Senate

RESOLVED: (on behalf of the Senate)

- (a) That Professor C Hughes (Sociology) be appointed to the membership of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee on behalf of the Board of the Faculty of Social Studies.
- (b) That Ms J Liu (WBS) and Ms M Standing be appointed as the clerical staff representative and external member respectively on the Equality and Diversity Committee.
- (c) That Professor L Green (Biological Sciences) be appointed to the membership of the Board of Graduate Studies on behalf of the Board of the Faculty of Science, in place of Professor R Green (Engineering).

60/08-09 Business Link Review 2007/08

RECEIVED:

The Business Link Annual Review report for 2007/08 outlining the achievements of the Regional Development Agencies against their core objectives (SC.37/08-09).

61/08-09 UUK I-Note I/08/084: Future Business Models for UK Universities

RECEIVED:

UUK information note and report summarising the proceedings of the Long Term Strategy Group's joint seminar with the Funding and Management Policy Committee (SC.47/08-09).

62/08-09 HEFCE Guide: Funding Higher Education in England

RECEIVED:

A guide from HEFCE outlining the principles underpinning its allocations of grants to universities and colleges (SC.54/08-09).

63/08-09 Europe Unit Newsletter Issue 50

RECEIVED:

A newsletter from the Europe Unit updating the Committee on key developments in the European HE Sector (SC.55/08-09).

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