

# THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

## Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 22 June 2009

Present: Vice-Chancellor,  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,  
Professor S Bassnett (until item 654/08-09),  
Professor L Bridges,  
Professor S Bruzzi,  
Professor R Higgott,  
Professor K Lamberts,  
Professor R Lindley,  
Professor H Thomas (until item 657/08-09),  
Mr S Thomson,  
Professor M Underwood,  
Professor M Whitby.

Apologies: Professor M Smith.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Estates, Finance Director, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Associate Dean (Teaching) for Warwick Medical School (for item 645/08-09 only), Deputy Academic Registrar (for item 653/08-09 only), Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (for item 654/08-09 only).

642/08-09 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June be approved.

643/08-09 New Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (minute 625/08-09 refers)

RECEIVED:

Details of the ministerial responsibilities and incumbents within the newly created Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (SC.501/08-09).

644/08-09 National Pay Negotiations

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That no conclusions were reached at the recent meeting including the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and the trades unions which was held on 16 June 2009, noting that a further meeting was being arranged.
- (b) That the trades unions were pushing UCEA to protect jobs and that UCEA continued to confirm that it had no mandate for negotiating a national no-redundancy agreement.

645/08-09

Health Innovation and Education Cluster (minute 618/08-09 refers)

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Acting Dean and Associate Dean (Teaching) of Warwick Medical School setting out the University's proposed expression of interest to establish a Health Innovation and Education Cluster (HIEC) which was due to be submitted to the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) by 24 June 2009 (SC.505/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Associate Dean (Teaching), Warwick Medical School)

- (a) That the SHA had requested expressions of interest as the first step of the selection process.
- (b) That the postgraduate medical education and training aspect of the HIEC was currently operated on a pan-West Midlands basis and that it was likely that the SHA would move these activities to a 'provider body' housed within an NHS organisation with the HIEC providing educational support.
- (c) That the West Midlands SHA's preferred option of a single pan-West Midlands HIEC with smaller sub-HIECs might not find support with the Department of Health, but the details remained somewhat unclear.
- (d) That it was expected that HIECs would be linked with an Academic Health Science Centre (AHSC) and that to this end, the University had approached University College London AHSC.

(By the Finance Director)

- (e) That it would be advisable to amend the estimated funding to support the HIEC in its first three years.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the University's expression of interest be approved for submission, subject to the amendments made at the meeting and following the subsequent SHA meeting.
- (b) That the Committee be updated of progress against milestones in the HIEC application process as required.

646/08-09

Alumni Weekend

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the inaugural Alumni Weekend on 20 to 21 June 2009 had been a successful event representing a new period of closer engagement with Warwick alumni.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its thanks to those colleagues involved in the organisation of the event, as well as those colleagues who participated and attended.

647/08-09

Swine Flu Update

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That a Warwick Medical School student working at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire had tested positive for swine flu in the past few days, noting that the student was not resident on campus, had not been on campus for several weeks and had not been at the University during the period when they had had the virus.
- (b) That this brought the total number of confirmed cases of swine flu to two.

648/08-09

Potential NAO Enquiry into the Financial Arrangements for Universities

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That the Chief Executive of Universities UK had indicated that the comments made by the new Minister of State for Higher Education and Intellectual Property regarding a potential National Audit Office inquiry into the financial arrangements for universities were premature.

649/08-09

IUSS Fourth Special Report: The Future of Science Scrutiny Following the Merger of DIUS and BERR

CONSIDERED:

A report from the House of Commons' Innovation, Universities and Science Select Committee exploring the future of science scrutiny following the creation of the new Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (SC.502/08-09).

RESOLVED:

That the University write to confirm its support for the proposed establishment of a Science and Technology Committee alongside the new Business, Innovation and Skills Committee.

650/08-09

Higher Education and Sport Partnership Plan Consultation

CONSIDERED:

A request from Universities UK to Vice-Chancellors to participate in the consultation on a proposed HE and Sport England partnership (SC.512/08-09).

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

That at the recent meeting of the Warwick Sport Board, the new strategy designed to establish Warwick as the most active campus in the UK had been approved.

RESOLVED:

That the Deputy Registrar submit a response by the deadline of 3 July 2009 via the Sport England website.

651/08-09

Charity Regulation Update

CONSIDERED:

Information from HEFCE regarding changes to charity regulation with regards to research by higher education institutions and Office of the Third Sector guidance on solicitation statements (SC.503/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Finance Director)

That any private benefit accruing to research sponsors was an issue for universities and that processes would be needed to identify those contracts which were required to be undertaken by a subsidiary company of the University rather than the University itself.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Development, Communications and Strategy provide an update on any potential implications for the University in light of the changes regarding solicitation statements at a future meeting of the Committee.

652/08-09

Milton Keynes University Challenge Initiative

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Academic Registrar regarding discussions about the University's potential support for the submission of a statement of intent for development of a University Centre in Milton Keynes under the HEFCE 'New University Challenge' initiative (SC.513/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That HEFCE had announced in March 2009 the process for consideration of the development of up to 20 new University Centres with a submission date of 30 June 2009 for initial statements of intent from interested parties.
- (b) That the proposed University Centre in Milton Keynes would build on the established infrastructure of the small University Centre run by the Milton Keynes College and used by a consortia of University partners.
- (c) That at this stage, the University was involved as an interested party but that it had yet to confirm a definite role in the proposed project.
- (d) That the future of the HEFCE initiative was unclear and that the resulting University Centres may not secure Additional Student Numbers.

RESOLVED:

That the University support the submission of a statement of intent to HEFCE by 30 June 2009, noting that due to the large number of bids, it was likely that the shape and form of any proposal in which Warwick might be involved would change as the application process progressed.

653/08-09

Teaching Enhancement and Student Success (TESS) Allocations

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs) and the Deputy Academic Registrar updating the Committee on the recommendations of the sub-group of the Steering Committee established to identify activities which might be supported by the HEFCE TESS funding (SC.498/08-09).

Note: That paper SC.498/08-09 had been circulated to members and attendees of the Steering Committee only at this stage.

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs))

- (a) That the sub-group had considered bids for the allocation of TESS funding via a competitive process, and that the group had been mindful of the existing pressure on departmental budgets.
- (b) That the Widening Participation and Improving Retention funds were allocated to departments with no accountability expectations, noting that an appropriate reporting mechanism would need to be devised for the future in line with the University's proposed Widening Participation Strategic Assessment submission to HEFCE.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (c) That it was not yet clear whether there would be a likely 1.4% reduction in the Teaching Grant resulting from the savings required by HEFCE in 2009/10.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the recommendations for TESS allocations proposed by the Steering Committee sub-group be approved as set out in SC.498/08-09.
- (b) That the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs) contact departments to request reports on their use of the allocated Widening Participation and Improving Retention funds.

654/08-09

Widening Participation Strategic Assessments

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) due to be submitted to HEFCE by 30 June 2009 comprising an overarching statement of the overall institutional objectives and policies with regards to widening participation (WP) and detailing the full range of the University's WP activities, related targets and the level of resource committed to this area (SC.507/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the University WPSA laid out the University's aims and objectives effectively and with clarity.

(By the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment)

- (b) That there were three main issues surrounding Widening Participation at Warwick:
  - (i) The visibility of WP in the University's governance structures
  - (ii) The aims of the University in this regard, in particular whether the three dimensions of self-interest, civic responsibility and critical self-reflection covered the objectives the University had set itself
  - (iii) The need to move beyond HEFCE performance indicators as a mechanism for measuring the University's performance as they did not fully cover the aims relating to creating a diverse cohort.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (c) That the ongoing Effectiveness Review of University Non-Departmental Governance had highlighted that there was scope for integrating WP within the remit of an existing committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the University Widening Participation Strategic Assessment be approved for submission to HEFCE by 30 June 2009, subject to the amendments discussed at the meeting.
- (b) That the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment identify an appropriate mechanism for disseminating the WPSA to the University community and beyond to achieve maximum visibility and impact.

655/08-09 Policy Update: Capital Developments and Space Management

RECEIVED:

A report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Director of Estates and the Senior Assistant Registrar (Space Management and Timetabling) providing information on recent capital and space developments (SC.506/08-09).

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

That, whilst acknowledging requests from the Faculty of Social Studies, contiguity within departmental office accommodation should not necessarily be an overriding principle as by 'mixing' colleagues from different departments within corridors it might contribute to greater interdisciplinary collaboration.

656/08-09 Teaching Quality: National Debate on Standards and Quality

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs) setting out the issues arising from the national debate concerning academic standards and quality at universities, together with proposed approaches to some of the issues for the Committee to consider (SC.511/08-09).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning/International Affairs))

- (a) That the QAA planned to consult the sector in the Autumn 2009 in light of input from Universities UK and a HEFCE working party on quality assurance issues, a report of which was currently being drafted.
- (b) That the University needed to consider whether there were any actions it should take at this stage based on the concerns raised in the recent QAA report, including:
  - (i) Student workload and contact hours
  - (ii) International Students – admissions and language requirements
  - (iii) External Examiners
  - (iv) Assessment practices

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Arts)

- (c) That it was unclear how personal tutoring, tutorials or one-to-one sessions were factored into student contact hours and that by engaging Student Staff Liaison Committee representatives the University might establish the actual student contact hours, workload and students' expectations thereof.

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Science)

- (d) That many students had replaced face to face contact with email correspondence which took-up significant amounts of academic staff time and that this should be factored in when considering contact hours.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft statement on undergraduate student contact hours included in SC.511/08-09 be circulated to departments for consultation, subject to the amendments discussed at the meeting and further evidence be gathered on local practice and expectations.
- (b) That the University adopt a firmer approach to external examiners at undergraduate level defaulting on the submission of a formal annual report and consider involvement in co-ordinated action on the topic of external examining with Russell Group institutions as set out in SC.511/08-09.
- (c) That an explicit statement regarding the appointment criteria for undergraduate level external examiners be developed to ensure high quality and consistency of appointments.

657/08-09

Senate Business

RESOLVED:

That the comments and recommendations of the Steering Committee on the items of business for the meeting of the Senate to be held on 1 July 2009 be approved as set out in the papers circulated for the meeting of the Senate, noting that an additional item would be incorporated into the Terms of Reference of the Constitutional Advisory Group as set out in S.48/08-09 in line with discussion at the meeting.