

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 23 September 2013

- Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor Christina Hughes,
Professor Christopher Hughes,
Mr B Sundell,
Professor S Swain,
Professor P Thomas,
Professor P Winstanley,
Professor L Young.
- Apologies: Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, Professor S Croft, Professor T Jones,
Professor J Palmowski, Professor M Taylor.
- In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Deputy Academic Registrar, Group Finance Director, Director of Development and External Affairs, Director of Estates, Director of Human Resources, Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director (Student Careers and Skills) (for item 452/12-13), Head of Student Support (for item 453/12-13), Director of Business Development (for item 454/12-13), Director of Corporate Relations (for item 454/12-13), Director of Delivery Assurance (for item 455/12-13).
- 445/12-13 Minutes
- RESOLVED:
- That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2013 be approved.
- 446/12-13 Centre for Quantitative Methods (Warwick Q-Step) (Arising from Minute 434/12-13)
- REPORTED: (by the Chair of the Faculty of Social Sciences)
- That the revised bid for the Centre for Quantitative Methods in Social Sciences had been approved by the funding partners: the Nuffield Foundation, the ESRC, and HEFCE.
- 447/12-13 Phytobiology Facility
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- (a) That a new research centre focused on fundamental plant science research related to securing the provision of high-quality food for future generations had opened at Warwick, as part of a £5 million investment into food security research across the University.
- (b) That the centre featured state-of-the-art growing environments where scientists would study a diverse range of plants to develop research to ensure a sustainable and secure supply of food for the planet's growing population.
- (c) That the two-story 1,200 square metre Phytobiology Facility would be used by more than 80 scientists studying vital issues such as resistance to pests and diseases, how plants cope with environmental stress and the mechanisms behind plant reproduction.

RESOLVED:

That the Design Engineer, Mr Gerard Hunter, be thanked for his extensive work on the project.

448/12-13

Warwick Placement Learning Unit

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That Ms Emma Nugent, Manager of Warwick's Placement Learning Unit, had been awarded Outstanding Newcomer at the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) Conference held in Exeter from 10-12 September 2013, where Warwick Student Careers and Skills staff showcased the University's leadership in student development and employability.

RESOLVED:

That the congratulations of the Committee be extended to Ms Nugent on her success.

449/12-13

Undergraduate Open Day

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the second 2013 Undergraduate Open Day had taken place on Saturday 21 September 2013.
- (b) That the event was well attended, with the numbers on campus further boosted by the arrival of Postgraduate students moving into their accommodation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the thanks of the Committee be expressed to all staff and students involved in the organisation and execution of the open day.
- (b) That consideration would be given to optimising the atmosphere on campus for future open days.

450/12-13

Founding Professors Bus-Naming Event

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That nine founding Professors of the University were recognised by each having a Stagecoach Unibus named after them, at an event held on 22 September 2013.
- (b) That the successful event was hosted by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Life Sciences and Medicine) and Capital Development, and was attended by a number of the surviving founding Professors and family representatives.
- (c) That the recognition had been welcomed by the surviving founding Professors and family representatives.

451/12-13

Launch of FutureLearn

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the UK-led Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform, FutureLearn, was launched on 18 September 2013.
- (b) That the University's first contribution was a six-week short course offered by Warwick Business School, scheduled to start on 4 November 2013.

- (c) That registrations for Warwick's course had reached the capacity of 10,000 within two hours of the launch, and that Warwick's course was one of only two which achieved such a high level of interest.

452/12-13

Annual Report on Employability

CONSIDERED:

A paper updating the Committee on progress on employability activities during 2012/13 and on current and planned activity for future development (SC.262/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Director (Student Careers and Skills))

- (a) That the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data published in July 2013, showed that 92.3% of the 2011/12 cohort of graduates were in work or further study at the six month census point.
- (b) That many departments recognised the importance of employability and had responded by appointing staff to student experience or employability roles; by identifying employability within existing modules; and by undertaking curriculum review and planning new modules to address employability.
- (c) That My Warwick Journey, an initiative aimed at engaging students with Student Careers and Skills' services and employability issues throughout their time at Warwick, would be launched to all undergraduates at the start of the new term, with a series of events targeted at different year groups and a strong physical and online presence.
- (d) That whilst the impact of the work of Student Careers and Skills could be measured for UK students and graduates through such methods as the DLHE survey, it was more difficult to benchmark success for international students and graduates.
- (e) That Student Careers and Skills was working to develop its knowledge of and links with the international market, noting that the Project Manager for PhD and Strategic Programmes had recently visited China to liaise with employers, and that once actions were put in place to build on these relationships, it would be possible to measure the impact of the visit on international employability.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education (Innovation, Employability and Widening Participation))

- (f) That whilst the work of Student Careers and Skills had to date been extensive and had provided a strong basis for future development, it was crucial that funding remained available for areas such as the Placement Learning Unit and the creation of an accessible physical focal space to enable continued progression.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (g) That employability was a key strategic priority for the University, and that it was important for current and proposed developments to be supported by benchmark data, to ensure that funding for this service could be directed appropriately.

RESOLVED:

That future strategic update reports from all areas reporting to the Steering Committee would include key performance indicators and comparative data against competitors where available, so the University's performance could be benchmarked against that of the higher education sector.

CONSIDERED:

A paper briefing the Committee on matters relating to student well-being (SC.263/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Head of Student Support)

- (a) That all areas of Student Support had experienced increased demand for services between 2007 and 2013, a trend which was reflected nationally.
- (b) That the increase could be attributed to a variety of factors including the rise in student numbers; growing expectations from students and parents in line with higher tuition fees; and enhanced support in schools and colleges, plus the development of the widening participation agenda, enabling more students with additional needs to progress into higher education.
- (c) That methods of service delivery were being reviewed in response to the increased demand, including enhanced office support to enable effective communication between the various student support services.
- (d) That the Counselling Service had recently undergone a formal review of its delivery model which had resulted in shorter waiting lists, despite a 10% increase in requests for face-to-face counselling, and that Student Support was considering how this could be adapted for its other services.

(by the Dean of the Warwick Medical School)

- (e) That there had been a national increase in the number of young people reporting mental health issues, and that there were youth mental health organisations which could give insight into trends in reported mental health issues to enable the University's mental health service to focus its support appropriately.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Alumni Engagement and Warwick's 50th Birthday))

- (f) That whilst improvements in the efficiency of service provision were vital, it was important that services were easily accessible face-to-face, as well as electronically.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (g) That many students were not aware of the support available to them from the Student Support service.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (h) That developments were underway for the presence of support services in Senate House, and for the improvement of the existing facilities on the ground floor of University House.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (i) That it was important for these developments to be widely communicated across the University; and that the Student Liaison Officers should be instrumental in connecting the Student Support services with the student community.

(by the Director of Human Resources)

- (j) That should a full delivery model review take place, it would be useful for the balance of services provided to students and staff to be given consideration, noting that a significant number of University staff utilised the Counselling Service.

RESOLVED:

That future update reports would include key performance indicators and competitor analysis data where this was available.

454/12-13

National Physical Laboratory

CONSIDERED:

A paper detailing the opportunity for the University to bid to become a partner in the future operation and academic offer of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), and the outline solution proposed for submission (SC.253/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Business Development)

- (a) That there were a number of potential benefits for the University's involvement, including: the ability to grow the experimental science base by providing access to extensive laboratory space and experimental facilities; access to a large cohort of industry partners, significantly strengthening the University's research impact agenda; the opportunity to generate significant income from industrial collaboration consultancy and the exploitation of fresh research facilities; and a site in South-West London.
- (b) That there was no financial or legal commitment on the University by submitting the outline solution proposal and pre-qualification questionnaire.
- (c) That it was recognised that the detail available from the NPL was not full at present and that it was anticipated that greater granularity of information would be available for review at the next stage of the process, should the University progress.

(by the Chair of the Faculty of Science)

- (d) That given the NPL's prominence in areas such as functional materials, there was potential for the partnership to be advantageous for physical science at Warwick and to provide the University with a strong competitive advantage; however, it was imperative that close scrutiny be given to the full details of the arrangement when they became available, to ensure that it would be beneficial for the University.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (e) That whilst the benefits of involvement were recognised, further consideration was needed as to whether such a partnership represented a strategic fit for the University, and that this consideration was a material factor in the future progression of the bid.

RESOLVED:

That authority be delegated to the Vice Chancellor, the Group Finance Director and the Deputy Registrar to review the outline proposal and pre-qualification questionnaire prior to submission by the deadline of 27 September 2013.

455/12-13 Office of the Independent Adjudicator Report and Letters 2012

RECEIVED:

A paper summarising the work of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for 2012, and the University's OIA complaints statistics (SC.264/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Delivery Assurance)

- (a) That the OIA subscription formula had been amended so that from 2013, the annual subscription that each university paid would include a case element to take account of usage of the OIA scheme.
- (b) That consequently, the number of complaints brought by Warwick students during 2013 was likely to impact on the subscription paid in 2014.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (c) That the administrative burden of complaints escalated to the OIA was significant for University staff, and that work was being undertaken to identify targeted steps which could be taken to achieve early resolution of complaints prior to escalation, and to mitigate the number of justified and partially-justified OIA outcomes.

456/12-13 National Scholarship Programme

RECEIVED:

A circular from HEFCE providing an update on the future of the National Scholarship Programme (SC.265/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That HEFCE had confirmed that it would be withdrawing support for the National Scholarship Programme from academic year 2015/16.
- (b) That from 2015/16, the University would honour its on-going commitments to students registered in earlier academic years, noting that the Warwick scholarship and bursary scheme provided support during all three or four years of study.
- (c) That since there was no assumption that commitments for the second to fourth years of study would receive HEFCE funding, these commitments would not have a negative financial impact on the University.

457/12-13 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 2 October 2013 be approved as set out in the papers circulated for the meeting of the Senate, subject to revisions and clarifications as agreed in the meeting.

458/12-13 National Fire Service Strike, 25 September 2013

RECEIVED:

An oral update from the Deputy Registrar on plans for a national Fire Service strike on 25 September 2013.

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That the Fire Service would strike from 12:00pm to 16:00pm on Wednesday 25 September 2013.
- (b) That the University Fire Safety Officer had consulted with the Faculty of Science, the Estates Office, the Students' Union and the Campus and Commercial Services Group in order to minimise the risk of a fire occurring during this time.
- (c) That no fire alarms would be tested during the strike period.

459/12-13

UUK Report: Where Student Fees Go

RECEIVED:

A report from Universities UK illustrating the way in which English universities were changing in response to a rapid shift in the way they were funded to teach home/EU undergraduates; in order to provide those involved in the public and political debate about tuition fees with evidence of their impact (SC.266/12-13).

JH/CS/Steering/Minutes/2012-2013/09-23-2013