

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 23 July 2012

Present: Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor J Labbe,
Professor S Swain,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor P Thomas
Mr L Bøe.

Apologies: Vice-Chancellor, Professor S Croft, Professor T Jones, Professor P Winstanley.

In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Finance and Financial Strategy, Director of Estates, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Assistant Registrar (Risk, Continuity and Information Security), Deputy Director of the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (for item 605/11-12).

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor welcomed Mr Nick Swain, incoming President of the Students' Union, to the meeting as an observer.

598/11-12 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2012 be approved, subject to the following amendment (deletion struck through and addition underlined):

588/11-12

(...)

(by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

(e) That, when she had been on a selection panel for the ~~Early Career Fellows~~ Global Research Fellowship Scheme, the high calibre of applicants was evident.

(...)

599/11-12 HEFCE Consultation on Improving Quality Assurance in Higher Education (minute 502/11-12 refers)

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to the HEFCE consultation on improving quality assurance in higher education (SC.422/11-12).

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

(a) That the intention of the HEFCE proposal was to create a lighter touch approach to institutional audits, reducing the administrative burden on institutions which could demonstrate a track record of assuring the quality and standards of their provision.

(b) That there was a separate review route for institutions which posed quality assurance concerns and that HEFCE further proposed the introduction of out-of-cycle reviews driven by annual assessment of performance markers, including items such as complaints raised with the QAA and based on analysis of qualitative data.

- (c) That the draft University response sought to highlight the underlying concern that the HEFCE proposal would not achieve its ambition of relieving the audit burden on institutions.
- (d) That the response stressed the importance of the process continuing to be based on peer review by academic staff to maintain sector-wide acceptance and to make informed recommendations to institutions.
- (e) That the University was supportive of the proposed ten-year formal audit cycle with lighter touch interim reviews, noting however that feedback from consultation events suggested that was unlikely that the final review approach would include a interval of this length and that an interval of five to eight years was more probable.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (f) That student feedback and engagement alongside a number of other new regulatory mechanisms to increase transparency and accountability were likely to be stronger drivers for quality and other enhancement activities within institutions than QAA institutional audits.

(By the Head of Governance Support Services)

- (g) That the University response could usefully include examples of information, which could be used to gauge the assurance performance of institutions in order to highlight the limitations of solely using key datasets as a trigger for out-of-cycle investigations.

RESOLVED:

That the draft University response to the HEFCE consultation on improving quality assurance in higher education as set out in SC.422/11-12 be revised in light of discussion at the meeting, prior to submission by the deadline of 31 July 2012.

600/11-12

QAA Consultation on the UK Quality Code: Section B3 – Learning and Teaching (minute 555/11-12 refers)

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to the QAA Consultation on the UK Quality Code: Section B3 – Learning and Teaching (SC.423/11-12), together with an oral report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience.

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

- (a) That the lack of focus on PhD level study within the UK Quality Code was marked.
- (b) That the University raised concerns around the implied requirement that all staff involved in teaching were appropriately qualified which might manifest in an externally imposed set of 'permissible' qualifications.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (c) That the University's partial agreement with some of the statements within the consultation should be made more explicit to avoid these being interpreted as overall positive responses should the responses be viewed at an aggregate level.

RESOLVED:

That the draft University response to the QAA Consultation on the UK Quality Code: Section B3 – Learning and Teaching as set out in SC.423/11-12 be revised in light of discussion at the meeting, prior to being submitted by the deadline of 25 July 2012.

601/11-12 Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2012-15: Public Consultation

CONSIDERED:

The revised draft University's response to the Warwickshire County Council public consultation on its Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2012-15 (SC.412/11-12, revised).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

That, following consideration of the Steering Committee by correspondence, the University's response to the Warwickshire County Council public consultation on its Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2012-15 had been revised.

RESOLVED:

That the revised draft University's response to the Warwickshire County Council public consultation on its Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2012-15 be approved for submission by the deadline of 3 September 2012 as set out in SC.412/11-12 (revised), subject to the inclusion of details of the proposed role of the University and the emerging Academic Health Science Network within the Strategy.

602/11-12 Summer Degree Ceremonies

RESOLVED:

That the Committee record its thanks and congratulations to all colleagues involved in the successful Summer Degree Ceremonies held between 16 and 20 July 2012.

603/11-12 University's Response to the UCEA Consultation on Amendments to the Medical Profession

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

That, following consideration of the Steering Committee by correspondence, the Vice-Chancellor had taken Chair's Action on behalf of the Steering Committee to approve a revised version of the University's response to the UCEA Consultation on Amendments to the Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) 2010 Regulations, as set out in SC.411/11-12 revised (received at this meeting – minute 610/11-12 refers), and that it had been submitted to UCEA prior to the deadline of 13 July 2012.

604/11-12 Expression of Interest for the West Midlands Academic Health Science Network

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

That, following consideration of the Steering Committee by correspondence, the Vice-Chancellor took Chair's Action on behalf of the Steering Committee to approve a revised version of the University's Expression of Interest for the West Midlands Academic Health Science Network and that it had been submitted to the Department of Health prior to the deadline of 20 July 2012.

Note: The final Expression of Interest was circulated to members after the meeting for their information as SC.413/11-12 (Revised).

605/11-12

Institute of Advanced Teaching and Learning Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) updating on current activities including learning spaces, interdisciplinarity, Green Steps (SC.418/11-12), together with an oral report from the Deputy Director of the IATL.

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Director of the IATL)

- (a) That careful consideration should be given to ensure that teaching and learning spaces across campus permit innovation whilst allowing excellent teachers with a more traditional style to continue to deliver outstanding learning experiences.
- (b) That the integration of innovative teaching and learning spaces on campus carried hidden costs in respect of resources to manage the spaces appropriately on an operational level, to allow academic colleagues and students to optimise the use of the spaces, and that there was a pressing need to address resourcing concerns from IATL, which managed a number of spaces on campus.

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

- (c) That the Creative Writing Across Genres module had been taught at the inaugural Warwick International Summer School and that it had been a major success alongside the module being offered by the Warwick Business School.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee extend its congratulations to all colleagues involved in the successful International Summer School.

606/11-12

Admissions and Recruitment Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment providing an update on admissions, recruitment and widening participation (SC.419/11-12), together with an oral report from the Academic Registrar.

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That Home and EU Undergraduate applications and conversion figures indicated that reaching the institutional target would be challenging, noting that Overseas applications and conversion rates remained stable.
- (b) That all efforts were being made to keep in touch with firm offer holders and that departments would be reminded to ensure contact continued with those applicants.
- (c) That discussions continued around mitigating strategies for the anticipated shortfall, including the acceptance of additional students in high demand with significant numbers of AAB+ middles but that a senior level decision had yet to be taken in this regard.
- (d) That the conversion rate was two percent lower than the previous cycle and that this could be a result of HEIs making more offers to more students within the open AAB+ band, leaving students with more choices with a resulting delay in accepting offers.
- (e) That the Widening Participation Team would be able to initially report on the success of widening participation activities and conversion to studying at the University.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (f) That heavy applicant demand for some courses from Overseas student markets should be monitored from the perspective of sustainability in a changing climate, as well as to ensure a productive diversity of nationalities within the student experience.

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Science)

- (g) That it should be noted that, in addition to gaining high quality applicants who exceeded their predicted grades, Warwick could lose AAB+ students within the UCAS adjustment process should they choose to adjust upwards to different institutions.

RESOLVED:

That a forthcoming Admissions and Recruitment update report include analysis of the diversity of EU students for the consideration of the Committee.

607/11-12 Equality and Diversity Update

RECEIVED:

A paper from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Director of HR updating on progress of key activities within Equality and Diversity, including the Warwick Medical School's successful bid for ATHENA Bronze Award status, progress against the University objectives to respond to the Single Equality Act, changes to HESA data collection for staff and students and the development of an access guide of the University facilities for disabled people (SC.421/11-12).

608/11-12 UK HE International Unit Consultation on a National Strategy for Outward Mobility

CONSIDERED:

The draft University response to the UK HE International Unit Consultation on a National Strategy for Outward Mobility (SC.430/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the University recognised the value in outward mobility opportunities for students but acknowledged also with the draft response the significant challenges posed by a national strategy for these activities.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (b) That an ambition of a national strategy in this regard should be that all groups have access to outward mobility opportunities in an equal way and that this should be reflected within the University's response, as well as internally by ensuring that all departments are aware of the opportunities open to Warwick students.
- (c) That information relating to the differing mobility opportunities should be made available to students at the earliest opportunity and that this could be as early as the application stage to inform student choice.

(By the Chair of the Faculty of Science)

- (d) That there were issues around the processes for facilitating inward student mobility and that making this a more positive experience for incoming students would be beneficial in holistically promoting mobility opportunities and experiences.

RESOLVED:

That the draft University response to the UK HE International Unit Consultation on a National Strategy for Outward Mobility as set out in SC.430/11-12 be revised in light of discussion at the meeting, prior to being submitted by 1 August 2012.

609/11-12 Thanks to the Outgoing President of the Students' Union

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the President of the Students' Union summarising his experience at the University and the broad range of successful events and activities that were undertaken during his leadership.

RESOLVED:

That the President of the Students' Union be thanked for his enthusiasm and commitment to the students of the University, evidenced through a range of positive developments over the past year.

610/11-12 UCEA Consultation on Amendments to the Medical Professions (Responsible Officers) 2010 Regulations (minute 578/11-12 refers)

RECEIVED:

The University's response to the UCEA Consultation on Amendments to the Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) 2010 Regulations submitted to UCEA prior to the deadline of 13 July 2012 (SC.411/11-12 revised).

611/11-12 HESA Performance Indicators 2012

CONSIDERED:

Analysis of the HESA Performance Indicators published on 29 March 2012 and 5 July 2012, with key outcomes of relevance to the University (SC.425/11-12).

RESOLVED:

That the paper presenting an analysis of the of the HESA Performance Indicators published on 29 March 2012 and 5 July 2012 as set out in SC.425/11-12 be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

612/11-12 QAA UK Quality Code: Publication of Section B5 – Student Engagement (minute 449/11-12 refers)

RECEIVED:

A QAA circular announcing the publication of Section B5 – Student Engagement of the UK Quality Code, following a consultation, to which the University responded prior to the submission deadline of 18 April 2012 (SC.426/11-12).

613/11-12 REF – Reviewing Codes of Practice for Staff Selection (minute 183/11-12 refers)

RECEIVED:

A letter from the HEFCE to confirm that the University's REF Code of Practice for Staff Selection had met the requirements and guidance published by the REF team, following submission in April 2012 (SC.427/11-12).

614/11-12 National Centre for Universities and Business

RECEIVED:

A press release from the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) and the HEFCE regarding the launch of a National Centre for Universities and Business (SC.428/11-12).

615/11-12 Interim Regulatory Partnership Group: Project B report "Redesigning the Higher Education and Data and Information Landscape"

RECEIVED:

The report of the Project B working group of the Interim Regulatory Partnership Group which outlines a new, collective approach to the governance of the data and information landscape in HE which could be achieved in the medium term (SC.403/11-12).

NCO/JF/steersshare/minutes/201112/July12/23July12