

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 24 May 2010

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Professor L Bridges,
Professor S Bruzzi,
Professor A Caesar,
Professor R Higgott,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor M Whitby,
Mr A Bradley.

Apologies: Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor P Winstanley, Registrar.

In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Professor S Palmer, Director of Estates, Finance Director, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Head of the Department of French Studies (for item 538/09-10), Head of the Department of Chemistry (for item 539/09-10), Assistant Director (Planning & Student Experience), International Office (for item 540/09-10), Deputy Academic Registrar (for item 541/09-10), Director of MOAC and the Director of HR (for item 542/09-10).

533/09-10 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2010 be approved.

534/09-10 New Government (minute 522/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That unconfirmed reports indicated that the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, which included higher education, could experience the most severe funding cuts of all the government departments.
- (b) That the University had considered the best and worst scenarios regarding potential funding reductions and had planned accordingly with the Financial Plan, noting that the level of reduction would not be clear until the publication of the Emergency Budget on 22 June 2010.

535/09-10 OFFA Report on Widening Access

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the recently published report, written by Sir Martin Harris, noted that while widening participation as a whole had been very successful, particularly over the last five years, new analysis showed that participation at the top third of selective universities from the least advantaged 40 per cent of young people had remained almost flat since the mid-1990s.
- (b) That HEFCE had notified the University that it had received a FOI request for all Russell Group and '94 Group Widening Participation Strategic Assessment document and that it currently intended to release the information, except for any financial or personal information contained in the documents.

RESOLVED:

That the report, along with a covering paper outlining Warwick's response to the recommendations from the Academic Registrar, be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

536/09-10 Warwick Institute of Education OFSTED Inspection

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Warwick Institute of Education had recently undergone an OFSTED inspection across three areas of training, namely Primary PGCE, Secondary PGCE and Graduate Training Programme.
- (b) That the results would be formally announced in due course.

537/09-10 Applied Crop Research Centre

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That at its meeting held on 19 May 2010, the Council had approved in principle the establishment of an Applied Crop Research Centres at Wellesbourne, noting that the outline business case would be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- (b) That the Senate had been informed of the proposals at a briefing session held on 18 May 2010.

538/09-10 Strategic Departmental Review: Department of French Studies Response

CONSIDERED:

The departmental response to the Strategic Departmental Review of the Department of French Studies held between 8 and 12 December 2009 and the Action Plan considered initially at the meeting held on 22 March 2010, together with an oral report from Professor Seán Hand, the Head of the Department (SC.333/09-10, revised).

REPORTED: (by the Head of the Department of French Studies)

- (a) That the Department welcomed the Strategic Departmental Review Report which had resulted from a constructive and rigorous review.
- (b) That the review marked a specific point in a continuous process of development and that the Department expected to respond to most of the recommendations.
- (c) That the Department was pursuing a number of activities to develop a more vibrant and inclusive research culture, such as a symposium between Warwick, Oxford and Kings' College but it should be noted that the Department already attracted prominent names in the field of French Studies to its seminars.
- (d) That colleagues within the Department had been encouraged to pursue research grants on a systematic rather than opportunistic basis and that a challenging research income target of £110k had been set within the departmental Five Year Plan, noting that the current income secured was circa £30k.

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

- (e) That the research culture within the Department was perceived externally as insular and current departmental activities such as the research seminar series were poorly attended, which the Panel had noted as a sign that perhaps the whole Department was not fully supportive of or engaged in such ventures.
- (f) That there were some opportunities for the Department to engage in collective research activities which could be implemented quickly, such as the HRC conference competition for PGR students.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience))

- (g) That the Department should consider the recommendation of introducing a final-year dissertation as it had been proved to encourage undergraduate students to take postgraduate study and would not entail as much extra work as colleagues might envisage.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposals set out in the Action Plan in SC.333/09-10 (revised) as to the delegation of each of the recommendations included within in Report be approved.
- (b) That the Head of the Department of French Studies be invited to provide the Steering Committee with a progress report in the Spring Term 2011.
- (c) That the Head of the Department of French Studies invite the Research Development Manager (Arts) to attend departmental meetings to advise on potential research grant opportunities.

539/09-10

Strategic Departmental Review: Department of Chemistry Response

CONSIDERED:

The departmental response to the Strategic Departmental Review of the Department of Chemistry held between 16 and 18 February 2010 and the Action Plan considered initially at the meeting held on 10 May 2010, together with an oral report from Professor Peter Sadler, the Head of the Department (SC.364/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Head of the Department of Chemistry)

- (a) That, as the Committee noted in its consideration of the report of the Review, the report was very detailed but that the details were important to the effective operation of the Department.
- (b) That the Department had received a record number of undergraduate applicants for 2010 entry, in part due to its exceptional outreach programme, and that he was concerned that teaching resources would be stretched unless additional posts were approved by the University.
- (c) That the Review might be viewed as presenting a turning point in the history of the Department and the University should consider how it wanted Chemistry at Warwick to develop, acknowledging that significant investment would be required to further improve infrastructure, to grow the staff complement and to increase the Department's ability to be in the top 5 departments nationally.

(By the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing))

- (d) That the Academic Resourcing Committee would continue to work with the Department in achieving its strategic objectives.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee record its thanks to the Head of the Department of Chemistry for his leadership and commitment.
- (b) That the proposals set out in the Action Plan in SC.364/09-10 (revised) as to the delegation of each of the recommendations included within in Report be approved.
- (c) That the new Head of the Department of Chemistry be invited to provide the Steering Committee with a progress report in the Spring Term 2011.

540/09-10 Enhancing the International Student Experience

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Assistant Director (Planning & Student Experience) of the International Office presenting the steps taken at the University to implement the recommendations of a recent UK HE International Unit's 'A UK Guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience' (SC.358/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That the work undertaken by the Student Support team for international students should be referenced within this paper.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (b) That there had been a proposal raised at a recent Strategy Bites session that the Warwick Prize for Writing winning book be incorporated as a set text for all first year undergraduate students to provide a common element to the curriculum irrespective of subject and that this might also contribute a greater feeling of integration for overseas students.

RESOLVED:

That the Steering Committee support the proposal in principle to incorporate the Warwick Prize for Writing winning book be incorporated as a set text for all first year undergraduate students and that the Director of Development, Communication and Strategy explore the feasibility of this, noting that a common element to the curriculum was prevalent in US institutions and that the University might draw on practice at international institutions.

541/09-10 Report on Postgraduate Issues

RECEIVED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar on developments concerning postgraduate students including scholarship awards from entry in 2010, PGR scholarships business process review, the University's ESRC DTC application and development relating to the future of Roberts-funded activities (SC.359/09-10).

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

- (a) That the Graduate School was exploring the combination of the existing student application portal with a scholarships portal to avoid duplication in the process of such applications which drew on the same materials and to prompt earlier submission of

scholarship applications, noting that the availability of ITS resources would be critical to the development of this proposal.

- (b) That the University had prepared its response to the anonymised peer comments received on its application for the ESRC Doctoral Training Centre and that the response would be forwarded to the ESRC shortly.

542/09-10 HTA Licence Fees and Consultation: Draft University Response

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Project Director (Research Governance) in Warwick Medical School updating the Committee on the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) consultation on the proposed licence fees structure from 2011/12, together with the University's draft response to the consultation (SC.357/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

That the HTA would conduct an investigation at the University between 21 and 22 July 2010.

RESOLVED:

That the draft University response be approved as set out in SC.357/09-10, noting that the Committee would take advice from the appropriate colleagues in this area due to the detailed and priority nature of the work carried out under the HTA licence.

543/09-10 The University's Athena SWAN Bronze Award

CONSIDERED:

A draft of the University's application for an Athena SWAN Bronze Award which represented a University-wide achievement in the collection and analysis of key data and the development of action plans on gender equality in Science, Engineering and Technology (SC.368/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of MOAC)

That she extended her thanks to Sandra Beaufoy and Miriam Gifford for their considerable contributions to the preparation of the draft application.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee thank the Director of MOAC and colleagues for their work to date on the draft application.
- (b) That the University's draft application set out in SC.368/09-10 be remitted to the Deputy Registrar and the Director of HR, in consultation with the Director of MOAC, for completion on behalf of the Committee in light of discussion at the meeting prior to submission by the deadline of 1 June 2010.

- 544/09-10 UUK Academic Freedom and Free Speech Survey
- CONSIDERED:
- A survey issued by the Universities UK Academic Freedom Working Group (SC.363/09-10).
- REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)
- That the Academic Freedom Working Group sought to consider how universities could best protect academic freedom and freedom of speech on campus while facing challenges arising from political, racial and religious freedom tension.
- RESOLVED:
- That the Deputy Registrar complete the survey on behalf of the University by the submission deadline of 4 June 2010.
- 545/09-10 UUK Information Note I-2010-036: Delivery of Financial Support to Students
- RECEIVED:
- A progress report from Universities UK on developments within the Student Loans Company to improve the delivery of financial support to students in England (SC.360/09-10).
- REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)
- That the University would ensure representation on the newly established Stakeholder Forum.
- 546/09-10 UUK Information Note I-2010-039: The New Government of the United Kingdom
- RECEIVED:
- An I-Note from Universities UK updating on the current political situation and implications of the coalition agreement and its policies for higher education (SC.369/09-10).
- 547/09-10 UUK Information Note I-2010-038: External Examiners and Employment Checks
- RECEIVED:
- Information from Universities UK updating on the UKBA requirements for temporary academic staff such as external examiners who were already in the UK and often employed by other UK universities (SC.374/09-10).
- 548/09-10 UUK Information Note I-2010-037: International higher education activities – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- RECEIVED:
- Information on international higher education activities within the different countries in the UK as well as UK-wide activity (SC.361/09-10).
- 549/09-10 Science City Research Alliance Monitoring Report April 2010
- RECEIVED:
- The final version of the report submitted to HEFCE on Friday 23rd April 2010 (SC.362/09-10).

550/09-10 Russell Group Report: Staying on Top

RECEIVED:

A report from the Russell Group entitled Staying on top: The challenge of sustaining world-class higher education in the UK (SC.370/09-10).

551/09-10 UUK Submission to the Browne Review call for proposals – phase 2

RECEIVED:

UUK's submission in response to the second call for evidence made by the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, led by Lord Browne (SC.371/09-10).

JFB/jf/steersshare/minutes2009-10/May10/24May10