

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 26 April 2010

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

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Professor S Palmer, Director of Estates, Finance Director, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director and the Academic Manager of the Reinvention Centre (for item 478/09-10), Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment (for item 479/09-10), the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) (for item 480/09-10).

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Professor M Taylor, Dean of Warwick Business School, to his first meeting of the Steering Committee.

468/09-10 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2010 be approved.

469/09-10 Group of 13 (minute 436/09-10 refers)

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

- (a) That the University had sent a letter to the Chair of the Group of 13 reminding her of Warwick's position in relation to the HEFCE-funded 'Realising Opportunities Project' and in particular, the University's concerns around adopting universally the proposed common reduced offer and that if such an approach was adopted, Warwick would have no option but to withdraw from the project.
- (b) That the Chair had subsequently confirmed to all institutions in the Group of 13 that a diversity of approaches had been agreed and that this agreement should be respected.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (c) That local partner schools were very positive about the work being pursued by Warwick under the banner of the 'Realising Opportunities Project' and that this needed to be considered as decisions were being made.

RESOLVED:

That the University continue to engage with the Group of 13 and that an institutional-level letter be sent to the Chair of the Group of 13 to solidify the University's position as set out above.

470/09-10 National Pay Negotiations (minute 437/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff had met with the trade unions last week and that there had been no advance of the 0.25 percent non-consolidated offer made by employers.
- (b) That it was expected that the unions would focus on concerns relating to pensions and job security rather than pay at the next joint meeting to be held on 5 May 2010.

471/09-10 HEFCE Assessment of Institutional Risk (minute 439/09-10 refers)

RECEIVED:

The letter from HEFCE confirming that Warwick had been classified as 'not at higher risk' in the annual assessment of institutional risk, together with the benchmarking data provided by HEFCE (SC.321/09-10).

RESOLVED:

That a 'traffic light' analysis of the benchmark data included in HEFCE's assessment of institutional risk prepared by the Finance Director be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

472/09-10 HEFCE University Modernisation Fund (minute 444/09-10 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

That the University had submitted the following bids to HEFCE under the two student number-related initiatives within the HEFCE University Modernisation Fund:

- (a) Movement of full-time undergraduate numbers to Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects (SIVS), specifically in the Departments of Chemistry, Statistics and the School of Engineering (deadline was 23 April 2010).
- (b) Proposal to fund additional new entrants to Biological Sciences and the Department of Economics (deadline was 26 April 2010).

473/09-10 Advice on Potential Student Absences from Examinations Resulting From Current Travel Restrictions (minute 422/09-10 refers)

RECEIVED:

A paper from the Academic Registrar seeking the Committee's endorsement of key principles relating to the treatment of current travel restrictions as valid mitigating circumstances for absence from examinations and arrangements for consideration of departmental requests beyond the provision of Regulation 12 (SC.325/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

That since the previous meeting, the University had a clearer understanding of the issues facing departments and individual students and the guidance set out in SC.325/09-10 had been circulated to departments regarding potential student absences.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Steering Committee confirm to departments that, for consistency, the impact of the travel restrictions would be considered as a valid mitigating circumstance and

would be considered by the Board of Examiners accordingly;

- (b) That, where Boards of Examiners wish to pursue a course of action outside of the terms of Regulation 12 governing absence from University examinations, the Steering Committee or the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the Steering Committee (and on behalf of the Senate) would consider requests for alternative arrangements for individuals (for example, deferral of examinations or setting of special papers); and
- (c) That it be noted that students wishing to submit travel restriction as a mitigating circumstance are required to provide appropriate documentary confirmation of their original flight and its cancellation.

474/09-10 HEFCE Review of Teaching Funding Method (minute 442/09-10 refers)

RESOLVED:

That, following the approval to establish a Working Group to compile the University's response to the HEFCE review of the teaching funding methodology at the previous meeting, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Resourcing) be appointed as the Chair of the Group.

475/09-10 Strategic Departmental Review: School of Engineering

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the Committee considered the report of the Strategic Departmental Review of the School of Engineering at its meeting held on 30 November 2009 (paper SC.113/09-10) and resolved that the generation of an Action Plan be deferred until further discussions with the Dean of the School and the Director of Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) had taken place.
- (b) That, subsequent to those discussions, a proposal from WMG seeking independence from the School of Engineering was considered by the Board of the Faculty of Science at its meeting on 10 February and that exploratory work was currently being undertaken by a Working Group of the Board of the Faculty of Science.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the generation of an Action Plan to address the recommendations from the Strategic Departmental Review of the School of Engineering be deferred until the Working Group of the Board of the Faculty of Science had reported to the Board at its meeting to be held in May 2010.
- (b) That the Head of Governance Support Services provide the report of the Strategic Departmental Review of the School of Engineering to the Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science for circulation to inform the Working Group's considerations.

476/09-10 Queen's Award for Achievement in Enterprise Promotion Enterprise

RESOLVED:

That the Steering Committee congratulate the Director of Warwick Ventures, Ederyn Williams, on the award of a Queen's Award for Achievement in Enterprise Promotion.

477/09-10 Potential Closure of Gibbet Hill Road

REPORTED: (by the Director of Estates)

That an article in the Coventry Telegraph had announced the closure of Gibbet Hill Road over summer 2010 for gas works, noting that the Highways Agency had not notified the University of any such closure in its weekly communications.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Estates confirm with the Highways Agency whether Gibbet Hill Road would be closed over the summer and what impact this would have on the University.

478/09-10 The Reinvention Centre: Final HEFCE Evaluation Report

CONSIDERED:

The final evaluation report to be submitted to HEFCE on work of the Reinvention Centre (SC.318/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of the Reinvention Centre)

- (a) That, during the five year funding period, the Reinvention Centre had achieved the majority of the initial objectives set for the Centre's activities relating to the development of undergraduate research and learning outcomes.
- (b) That "*Reinvention: a Journal of Undergraduate Research*" launched in 2007 had been highly successful with international author- and readership and that consideration was currently being given as to how to continue the Journal once the HEFCE CETL funding expired.
- (c) That the report would highlight the lack of a mechanism for pursuing any spin-off activities emerging from the Centre as an issue for HEFCE to consider for any similar schemes in the future.

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

- (d) That both Warwick CETLs, the CAPITAL Centre and the Reinvention Centre, had made a significant contribution towards the progress of the teaching and learning strand of the University Strategy and that most departments were engaged with the Centre and were in a position to take the approaches forward as a priority.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the final evaluation report on the Reinvention Centre be revised in line with discussion at the meeting prior to submission to the HEFCE by 30 April 2010.
- (b) That the Committee extend its thanks and congratulations to the staff at the Reinvention Centre for their significant achievements.

Admissions and Recruitment Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment providing an overview of developments in admissions, recruitment and widening participation including requests for the University to participate in a number of Trust school partnerships (SC.322/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment)

- (a) That the decision to make offers later in the cycle for the 2010/11 academic year had not affected the conversion position which had strengthened from last year and that, should the trend continue, the University would not be entering into Official Clearing.
- (b) That the postgraduate taught recruitment position remained strong with aggregate acceptances up against the previous year and most departments experiencing an increase, noting that this was in part due to faster processing meaning decisions were finalised and communicated more quickly.

(By the Deputy Registrar)

- (c) That careful consideration should be given to the University's participation in Trust partnerships in light of the forthcoming election and the potential resulting impact on schools.

(By the President of the Students' Union)

- (d) That any additional opportunities for students and/or the Students' Union to be involved with Trusts schools would be welcomed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the request for the University to participate in a Trust partnership with Myton School be approved as set out in SC.322/09-10 and that the Deputy Registrar write to confirm arrangements with the School.
- (b) That the request for engagement with the Aspire Trust be not approved as set out in SC.322/09-10.
- (c) That further consideration be given by the Institute of Education to potential engagement with Pudsey Grandfield School in Leeds, noting the geographic difficulties posed by such a relationship.
- (d) That the Steering Committee consider again the position of the University's engagement with Trust partnerships or Academies in the Spring Term 2011.
- (e) That, on the occasion of his final report to the Steering Committee in his current role, the Committee extend its thanks and appreciation to the Director of Admissions and Recruitment for his contribution.

480/09-10 Evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure (QAA Circular 04/10) (minute 380/09-10 refers)

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft response to the QAA evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure (SC.319/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality))

- (a) That the draft University response sought to highlight the key issues of principle posed by the current QAA Academic Infrastructure consultation rather than to respond individually to the questions posed by the QAA.

(By the Academic Registrar)

- (b) That, whilst it was noted that the QAA needed to improve its ability to communicate with different audiences, the University's response might suggest how the QAA could pursue this.

RESOLVED:

That the draft University response to the QAA evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure be approved for submission by 7 May 2010 as set out in SC.319/09-10, subject to the revisions discussed at the meeting.

481/09-10 Major Research Proposal: Complexity Science Doctoral Training Centre (Extension)

CONSIDERED:

A major research proposal to the EPSRC to extend the Complexity Science Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) for an additional three intakes of ten postgraduate students per annum (SC.324/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine))

- (a) That the EPSRC were inviting proposals to extend postgraduate activity in those DTCs believed to be successful and that the Complexity Science DTC had a significant external reputation.
- (b) That, despite the conditions placed on bids by the EPSRC, the University should seek to expand postgraduate numbers and funding given the strategic ambition and the changing financial situation.

(By the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (c) That the future funding of the Warwick Postgraduate Certificate in Transferable Skills was currently unclear due to the expiration of the Roberts funding in July 2010 and that it might therefore be advisable not to specifically highlight this programme within the application.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research: Science and Medicine) contact the Director of the Complexity Science DTC to confirm the arrangements around computing costs for the additional intakes to ensure that any additional costs be included in the final proposal prior to submission to the EPSRC by 27 May 2010.

- (b) That the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies report on potential funding sources for the Warwick Postgraduate Certificate in Transferable Skills at a future meeting of the Committee.

482/09-10 Department of Business, Innovation and Skills Review of Postgraduate Provision in the UK
(minute 453/09-10 refers)

RECEIVED:

The executive summary and recommendations of "One Step Beyond: Making the Most of Postgraduate Education", the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) review into postgraduate provision in the UK, together with a corresponding UUK I-note (SC.317/09-10).

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

- (a) That the report was disappointing both in its recommendations and the thin evidence base used to identify them.
- (b) That there was an expectation from BIS that postgraduate skills training currently allocated Roberts funding would continue but there was no reference to future funding once the Roberts fund ceased in July 2010, with wider funding concerns passed over to the Browne Review into HE funding and student finance.

Note: The full report was available online at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/shape-and-structure/postgraduate-review>

483/09-10 UUK I/2010/024: Hauser Review – The Current and Future Role of Technology and Innovation Centres in the UK

RECEIVED:

An UUK I-note relating to the recent publication of the Hauser Review which recommended that Government should establish, and provide sustained funding for, a network of elite business-focussed Technology and Innovation Centres in areas where the UK had the potential to gain substantial economic benefit (SC.316/09-10).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That the University would monitor the development of Technology and Innovation Centres as proposed in the Hauser Review and that the recommendations had been considered by the Warwick Ventures Board in relation to the distribution of future HEIF funding.

484/09-10 British Council Clarification on Comments Related to International Recruitment

RECEIVED:

A press release from the British Council clarifying comments made by its Chief Executive, noting that the Committee previously received the Universities UK response to the comments, together with the original British Council Press Release (paper SC.293/09-10, minute 451/09-10 refers) (SC.323/09-10).

485/09-10 UUK I/2010/028: Political Parties' Manifesto Digest

RECEIVED:

A summary from Universities UK of the main political parties' election manifesto pledges affecting higher education (SC.315/09-10).

486/09-10 'Review of the effectiveness and efficiency of HEFCE' – Commentary by the Review Group

RECEIVED:

Commentary from the Burselm Group on the recently published review of the effectiveness and efficiency of HEFCE (SC.314/09-10).

JFB/jf/steersshare/minutes2009-10/Apr10/26Apr10