

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 28 May 2012

Present: Vice-Chancellor,  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,  
Professor A Caesar (from item 528/11-12),  
Professor S Croft,  
Professor M Finn,  
Professor J Labbe,  
Professor S Swain,  
Professor M Taylor,  
Professor P Thomas,  
Professor P Winstanley,  
Mr L Bøe.

Apologies: Professor C Hughes, Professor T Jones.

In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Finance and Financial Strategy, Director of HR, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy (from item 527/11-12), Director of Estates, Head of Corporate Governance, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director of the International Office (for item 530/11-12), Deputy Director of IT Services (for item 531/11-12), Acting Librarian (for item 532/11-12), Deputy Academic Registrar (from items 532/11-12 to 534/11-12).

526/11-12 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2012 be approved.

527/11-12 University's Access Agreement for 2013/14 (minute 498/11-12 refers)

CONSIDERED:

The University's revised 2013/14 Access Agreement, including the additional areas of information requested by OFFA (SC.369/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That, in its guidance for producing an Access Agreement for 2013/14, OFFA had recognised the need for institutions to understand the impact of the new fee regime on student behavior during 2012/13 before making significant changes to their Access Agreement.
- (b) That the University had not made any changes to the financial support package available to students for 2013/14 entry.
- (c) That the University had not made any significant changes to the 2013/14 targets set under its 2012/13 Access Agreement.
- (d) That a statement was included to demonstrate how the University had consulted with students in drawing up its Access Agreement.
- (e) That the draft Access Agreement for 2013/14 entry incorporated initial teacher training (ITT) students.

- (f) That more detailed information had been provided within the draft Access Agreement for 2013/14 entry regarding collaborative outreach arrangements, including HEAT, and activities with Queen Mary University.

RESOLVED:

That the University's revised 2013/14 Access Agreement be approved as set out in paper SC.369/11-12, and submitted prior to the deadline of 31 May 2012.

528/11-12

Student Number Controls for 2013-14: Proposals for High Grades and a Core and Margin Exercise

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft response to the circular from the HEFCE inviting comments on its proposals for freeing more student places from control and making 5000 places available through a core and margin exercise (SC.372/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the response to the HEFCE reiterated the criticality of the inclusion of several ABB+ equivalence qualifications on the HEFCE's list, particularly those from Europe, and the impact that their exclusion had on recruitment inside the Student Number Control (SNC).
- (b) That the reduction in the University's SNC target for 2013 would cause significant concern should certain equivalence qualifications remain excluded from the HEFCE's list, as the University's residual SNC would, from 2013/14, primarily need to be utilised to recruit these students.

(by the Head of Corporate Governance)

- (c) That the emphasis of the response should be on the impact on widening participation recruitment of students with qualifications currently excluded from the HEFCE's list of ABB+ equivalences.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (d) That the University's response should make clear the University's concerns about implied restrictions on the recruitment of EU students, given the HEFCE's current list of ABB+ equivalences.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Access, Widening Participation and Development)

- (e) That the University's should establish whether other institutions, particularly those with Business Schools, would face the same issues regarding the impact of the HEFCE's current list of ABB+ equivalences.

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

- (f) That there could be a secondary impact on postgraduate courses since EU students were often retained through to Masters and Doctoral courses.

RESOLVED:

That the University's draft response to the HEFCE's proposals regarding Student Number Controls for 2013/14 be approved as set out in paper SC.372/11-12, subject to the revisions discussed in the meeting, and submitted prior to the deadline of 1 June 2012.

529/11-12 Departure of Professor Margot Finn

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That this would be the last meeting of the Steering Committee attended by Professor Margot Finn as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Access, Widening Participation and Development due to her departure to take up a Chair in Modern British History at University College London.

RESOLVED:

That the gratitude of the Steering Committee be recorded to Professor Margot Finn for her considerable contribution to both the Steering Committee and the University.

530/11-12 International Office Update

RECEIVED:

A report on international issues from the Director of the International Office (SC.367/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Director of the International Office)

- (a) That the University was yet to receive confirmation of its Highly Trusted Sponsor status, and that other institutions that had applied in September 2011 were also awaiting confirmation.
- (b) That the UKBA had increased its list of countries where a pre-entry TB screening was required for nationals seeking entry to the UK for more than 6 months, to include China and India, requiring an additional step and fee in the visa application process for prospective students.
- (c) That the University's international representatives participated in a three day conference on campus from 15-17 May 2012, and that these colleagues played a key role in the recruitment of international students and supporting alumni and other international activities in the countries and regions where they work.
- (d) That the International Office was working with the Communications Office and the Management Information and Planning Office to produce an agreed set of data for use in all internal and external communication to demonstrate the University's international engagement.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (e) That his engagement with the University's international representatives at their conference had been useful for the Students' Union in their understanding of the outlook of prospective overseas students.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (f) That, given the University's strategy of internationalism, it would be useful for work to be undertaken by the International Office and the Centre for Student Careers and Skills, to gain a greater understanding of the level of employment of Warwick's international students, the number of students employed overseas, and their longer term career trajectories.

531/11-12 IT Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of IT Services, including a status of current major projects (SC.365/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Director of IT)

- (a) That core service performance remained stable.
- (b) That the ambition for complete wireless coverage across campus was being progressed; student residence coverage would be implemented during Summer 2012, subject to building access.
- (c) That there was an intention for IT Services at Warwick to become device independent in their provision of support, and proposed changes would allow users to access network, storage, print, and email from any device.
- (d) That nine departments had piloted a new assignment management and feedback system, with 97% of feedback given via this system being collected by the student.
- (e) That some departments had requested Turnitin plagiarism software to be incorporated into the system before use.
- (f) That the current assignment management and feedback system was being used by undergraduate students at present, but could be used by postgraduate students going forward.

(by the Head of Governance Support Services)

- (g) That she supported steps being taken towards a full document management solution, in the light of the need to develop a Corporate Records Management system and to mitigate risks in this area, such as information security.

(by Vice-Chancellor)

- (h) That the recently-completed IBM Data Centre was a significant asset for the University.

RESOLVED:

That a defined schedule for implementation of the assignment management and feedback system be established for departments outside of the pilot exercise.

532/11-12

Library Update

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Acting Librarian, including an update on the Postgraduate Hub and usage of the Library's dedicated facilities for postgraduates (SC.366/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Acting Librarian)

- (a) That the newly opened Postgraduate Hub was already popular, with occupancy reaching 50% and typical usage for quiet study, largely for collaborative purposes.
- (b) That the Research Exchange was frequently fully occupied, and that demand for this and the Postgraduate Hub were likely to grow.
- (c) That the Main Library was piloting opening 24 hours a day over 7 days a week (24x7) during the summer term in response to student comments and requests.
- (d) That it would cost an additional £170,000 per year to extend to 24x7 opening hours for a full calendar year.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (e) That students would find reassurance in 24x7 opening hours during intensive periods of work that could fall throughout the academic year.
- (f) That it would be helpful to understand the levels of usage of the Main Library's facilities during vacation periods to see if 24x7 opening hours could be justified.

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

- (g) That consideration should be given to 24x7 opening hours at the Main Library during term time only, especially if the opening hours of the Postgraduate Hub were extended appropriately to meet the demand of postgraduate students remaining on campus during vacations.

(by the Director of HR)

- (h) That, while respecting individual working styles, there could be an impact on well-being for students who persistently use the Main Library's facilities overnight, and that an offer of support may be required in these circumstances.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Access, Widening Participation and Development)

- (i) That student requirements should be established first prior to establishing a policy on the Main Library's opening hours.

(by the Head of Governance Support Services)

- (j) That 24x7 opening hours in the Main Library with a more limited provision of services overnight, would enable students to continue their study without relocating.

RESOLVED:

That the Acting Librarian collate more information regarding Main Library usage to clarify the case for extended Library opening, to be discussed at a future meeting of the Steering Committee.

533/11-12

Postgraduate Issues

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar, to update on developments relating to postgraduate students (SC.362/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Academic Registrar)

- (a) That steps had been taken to ensure that departments were prepared for the REF census date of end of July 2013, particularly with regard to the contribution of doctoral awards conferred by this date to unit of assessment research environment scores.
- (b) That the Graduate Awards and Nominations Committee (GANC) had met on 19 March 2012 to allocate scholarship awards, and that it had been agreed that priority would be given to "top-up" fees-only awards, rather than allocate funding to lower ranked applications.
- (c) That the Graduate School and the Centre for Student Careers and Skills had run three day-long faculty focused events to explore the realities of a career in academia, and that future events would be run following their success.

(by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (d) That there were strong acceptance rates for fees-only scholarship awards, with declines typically on reasonable grounds, such as a superior counter offer of a 5-year package at a well-regarded US institution.
- (e) That the decision-making process for award of scholarships was based on merit, with other issues considered separately, and that the setting of an appropriate deadline was difficult in the light of varying departmental requirements.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current Scholarship arrangements be reviewed to ensure that the University gains maximum benefit from its significant investment in this area.
- (b) That the conditions of the Warwick/Monash Joint PhD programme be amended to reflect that students should normally have completed at least 4 years of tertiary education to be considered for the programme.

534/11-12

Postgraduate Research Student Number Planning

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar regarding postgraduate research student number planning (SC.363/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Academic Registrar)

- (a) That she and the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies had undertaken a series of departmental meetings to gain fresh insight into the challenges posed by the institutional target to double postgraduate research student numbers.
- (b) That there were a wide variety of views from departments on what was considered an appropriate PhD supervisory load.
- (c) That departments were encouraged to provide a greater level of online information relating to individual staff members' supervisory expertise to facilitate searches by potential applicants.
- (d) That departments were encouraged to provide more information online about their doctoral research community to enable applicants to gain an insight into the department's research culture.
- (e) That, in some departments, students had been employed as Web Officers to present effective peer feedback on their integration into the department, rather than the more traditional institutionally-generated hard-copy marketing materials.

(by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (f) That all departments were being encouraged to actively recruit postgraduate research students, and that the Graduate School was helping departments with the mechanisms to do so.
- (g) That some departments had cited the importance of the availability of suitable space to enable growth in numbers.
- (h) That departments were strongly encouraged to respond to postgraduate research applications within 60 days of receipt, by de-coupling the offer of a place of study from an offer of funding.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (i) That it was the intention to bring together the Academic Resourcing Committee planning round and the postgraduate student number planning round conducted by the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office.

RESOLVED:

That departments be encouraged to pursue active recruitment of postgraduate research students, through a coordinated and professional approach to student number planning.

535/11-12

Senate Business

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That any proposal to revise the nomenclature of Faculty Chairs would need to be further reflected upon within the context of a review of governing instruments.

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 13 June 2012 be approved as set out in the papers circulated for the meeting of the Senate, subject to revisions as agreed in the meeting.

536/11-12

2012/13 Pay Negotiations

REPORTED: (by the Director of HR)

That UCEA had made its final offer of a 1% pay increase at the third meeting of collective pay negotiations for 2012/13, and that the trade unions were considering their response.

537/11-12

HEFCE Consultation on Student Number Controls and Teaching Funding (minute 511/11-12 refers)

RECEIVED:

The University's response to the HEFCE Consultation on Student Number Controls and Teaching Funding, submitted prior to the deadline of 25 May 2012 (SC.364/11-12).

538/11-12

NC3Rs ARRIVE Guidelines

RECEIVED:

A letter from the Chief Executives of MRC, BBSRC and the Wellcome Trust encouraging the use of the NC3Rs ARRIVE Guidelines, when designing experiments and reporting research findings (SC.370/11-12).

KMS/KP/steersshare/minutes/201112/May12/28May12