

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 31 October 2011

Present: Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor A Caesar (from item 78/11-12),
Professor S Croft,
Professor M Finn,
Professor C Hughes,
Professor T Jones,
Professor J Labbe,
Professor K Lamberts,
Professor S Swain,
Professor M Taylor,
Professor P Thomas,
Mr L Bøe.

Apologies: Vice-Chancellor, Professor P Winstanley.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Finance and Financial Strategy (except for items 83 (d)/11-12 to 83 (e)/11-12), Director of HR, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy, Director of Estates, Head of Governance Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Assistant Registrar (Institutional Review) (for item 82/11-12), Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment (for item 83/11-12).

77/11-12 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2011 be approved, subject to the following amendments (deletions ~~struck through~~, additions underlined):

64/11-12 OIA Pathway 3 Consultation

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

- (d) That the majority of cases sent to the OIA were those where students had not achieved their desired ~~degree~~ outcome from the University's appeals process, and that there was uncertainty over whether an additional layer of mediation with an ombudsman would assist in reducing the number of complaints to the OIA.

(...)

78/11-12 Research Funding Update (minute 57/11-12 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Dean of Warwick Business School)

- (a) That, in relation to minute 57/11-12 from the meeting of Steering on 24th October 2011, it was his view that the University placed greater value on high quality research than the ability to generate income.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (b) That while the University placed a high priority on 3* and 4* research, there needed to be a careful balance with the ability to support the sustainability of research activity

across departments, and that it was the role of the Research Committee, on behalf of the Senate to monitor this balance and communicate with departments accordingly.

79/11-12

Wilson Review of Business-University Collaboration (minute 930/10-11 refers)

RECEIVED:

The University's contribution of case studies in response to Professor Tim Wilson's invitation for input into the Review of Business-University Collaboration (SC.51/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

- (a) That the University had submitted three case studies in July in response to Professor Tim Wilson's invitation, with a further case study from Warwick Manufacturing group to follow.
- (b) That a response was yet to be received from Professor Wilson.
- (c) That Professor Wilson had been invited to speak to the University Chancellor, Sir Richard Lambert, but contact had not yet been made.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (d) That it was pleasing to note that three of the case studies submitted were related to Science City.

(by the Dean of Warwick Business School)

- (e) That he would provide a further case study on the relationship between the Warwick Business School and the Royal Shakespeare Company for submission to the Review.

80/11-12

USS Pension Scheme

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the USS Board had finalised its proposals on the assumptions to be used for the triennial actuarial valuation as at 31 March 2011 of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) to determine whether the scheme's assets were sufficient to cover its liabilities in pensions owed.
- (b) That the USS Board's assumptions indicated a £2.9bn deficit in funding which was mostly due to changes in assumptions, such as increased longevity, and lower than expected investment returns.
- (c) That potential underfunding could be higher than that, given changes in the financial markets since 31 March 2011.

(by the Registrar)

- (d) That the USS Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) met on 27 October and had agreed to establish a joint working group seeking to improve dialogue between the employers and the UCU and increase the understanding of the financial position of the scheme.

(by the Director of HR)

- (e) That UUK (who hold the position of representative employer under the rules of USS) would be responding to the USS Board's proposals on behalf of the member institutions of the USS prior to the next meeting of the USS Board on 18 November 2011 and that the Director of HR and the Director of Finance and Financial Strategy would respond to the UKK accordingly.

81/11-12 Recruitment to the Post of Registrar (minute 45/11-12 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

That the recruitment process for the new Registrar had commenced, and that an advertisement would be posted later in the week, with a view to the appointment being made by the end of the 2011 calendar year.

82/11-12 Institutional Teaching and Learning Review Update

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Assistant Registrar (Institutional Review), updating the Committee on preparations for the Institutional Teaching and Learning Review (SC.58/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Assistant Registrar (Institutional Review))

- (a) That the Institutional Review Co-ordination Team was in the process of sending departmental information to panel members and secretaries, and that departmental reviews were scheduled in the period 14th to 17th November 2011.

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

- (b) That the Steering Committee should formally receive all copies of the departmental reports of the Institutional Review process, but given the large number of reports, she proposed that the Committee be guided in its considerations by summary information following the more detailed analysis undertaken by the Institutional Review Steering Group.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (c) That the Heads of Department Forum would be a suitable opportunity to feedback the Steering Committee's view following the Institutional Review, and would enable the dissemination of outcomes to departments.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Institutional Review Steering Group consider the outcomes of each of the departmental reviews, and identify themes and areas of best practice.
- (b) That the Institutional Review Steering Group provide a summary report on the Institutional Review to the Steering Committee in January 2012, together with a full set of reports from all of the departmental reviews, and that consideration be given at that time as to the further communication of issues and outcomes to other relevant bodies such as the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and the Academic Resourcing Committee.

83/11-12 Admissions and Recruitment Update

RECEIVED:

A report from the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment with an overview of developments in admission, recruitment and widening participation (SC.64/11-12).

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

- (a) That the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office was working with the Management Information and Planning Office to establish the relative impact of factors such as the AAB+ policy, student number control, and UKBA requirements, on the admissions process.

- (b) That the University sought to continue the work of the Aimhigher programme in local schools, through the “Student Progression Team” scheme.
- (c) That the total postgraduate research target for home and overseas students for 2015 was highly ambitious, and the trajectory indicated that this may not be met.
- (d) That it was too early to say whether certain departments were experiencing a downward trend in undergraduate recruitment due to the change in fee regime, but that this would continue to be monitored.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (e) That, while the advent of the AAB+ policy removed the restriction on the number of AAB+ students that the University could recruit, departmental consideration should be given to the restraints imposed by resource availability, including pressure of the University’s physical infrastructure.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (f) That the memorandum, to be issued to departments shortly concerning the student number targets for 2012/13, would ask departments to consider whether or not they wished to pursue marginal increases to their undergraduate Home/EU intake, noting this would require the department to be able to recruit further students with eligible AAB+ qualifications.
- (g) That it was the intention to align the student number planning process with the strategic planning process from 2013 onwards.

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

- (h) That discussions were underway with the Department of Chemistry on a pilot project (for 2013/14 entry) to use contextual data to make offers to applicants at a slightly lower than standard level, in tandem with the introduction of a scholarship programme comprising additional departmental support, to increase accessibility for local widening participation students who have the ability to be successful at Warwick.

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

- (i) That, while it was pleasing that the University was engaging with different media for student recruitment purposes, the approach and tone of Warwick’s recruitment materials needed to reflect the high quality of the student experience and be appropriately competitive with other leading universities.

(by the President of the Students’ Union)

- (j) That consideration should be given to the pressures on Students’ Union support services, should the student population increase significantly beyond current levels.

84/11-12

Early Student Statistics

RECEIVED:

A report from the Academic Registrar and the Senior Assistant Registrar (Management Information and Planning), providing an early snapshot summary of postgraduate and undergraduate enrolments against budget plan, and forecast fee income for 2011/12 (SC.62/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That a total increase in fee income of £3.02m (+1.9%) was predicted against plan given enrolments and re-enrolments at this stage in the year, noting that £21m of the total fee income related to estimates for courses which recruit and enrol throughout the year.
- (b) That Home/EU full-time undergraduates (both new intake and continuing students), were higher than forecast, and resulted in a positive variance of 271 FTEs above plan.
- (c) That there was an overall undershoot of approximately 50 overseas undergraduates compared to the targets forecast in the financial plan (spread across Bands 1 and 2), although the impact of this had been somewhat mitigated by above plan numbers of continuing students.
- (d) That there was significant recruitment above the planned targets for overseas postgraduate taught courses, both on government-supported programmes as well as on independently-funded programmes.
- (e) That recruitment on Home/EU postgraduate taught courses was below the planned target, and that this was primarily attributable to a shortfall in independently-funded full-time numbers (although this had been partially mitigated by full-time recruitment to government-supported courses).
- (f) That there was a shortfall in postgraduate research numbers compared to the target in the plan, across both Home/EU and Overseas students, noting that in-year recruitment would help to improve the year-end out-turn.
- (g) That the International Office was undertaking work to establish specific reasons for the recruitment of overseas undergraduates below the planned target, including whether there were issues with visas.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (h) That 31 October was the census date for Academic Statistics, and that this data would feed into the forecast for the financial plan.

(by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies)

- (i) That the census date for Academic Statistics of 31 October did not appropriately reflect the number of postgraduate research students, due to the nature of rolling admissions throughout the year, and that an April snapshot might more accurately reflect the total number of postgraduate research students enrolled at the University, and be a more helpful tool in planning meetings.

85/11-12

Enhanced Facilities for Commuting Undergraduates

CONSIDERED:

A paper requesting consideration of proposed measures designed to increase the study and social facilities available to constituencies within the commuting undergraduate population (SC.65/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That a paper proposing the space requirements for new study and social facilities available to the commuting undergraduate population had been considered by the Capital Planning and Accommodation Review Group.

- (b) That it was felt that the Capital Planning and Accommodation Review Group would be in a better position to approve space decisions once the Steering Committee had considered the proposal in principle.

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

- (c) That the University dedicated significant resource to the experience of students living on campus, but that current facilities for commuting students were inadequate, noting that the commuting undergraduate population was expected to increase with the new widening participation requirements.
- (d) That it was proposed that part-time commuting undergraduates would access the new study and social facilities areas to enable the effective management of time on campus.
- (e) That it was proposed that full-time first year commuting undergraduates would also access the new study and social facilities areas, with the inclusion of continuing full time commuting undergraduates to be considered following a pilot.
- (f) That the proposed space would be sufficient for a pilot exercise and to identify any potential issues.
- (g) That she envisaged self governance by the students of the study and social facilities e.g. printers and lockers, but that there was potential for oversight by an identified member of warden staff, or paid students.
- (h) That there was an element of urgency for approval of the proposals, as it was her view that it was important to make some, albeit modest, provision this year for commuting students, and to enable the promotion of facilities at departmental open days in December 2011.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (i) That there were practical issues to consider, such as whether these students would self-identify and the allocation of lockers and that these issues might usefully be discussed in the forum of the Students' Union Liaison Group.

(by the Chair of the Faculty of Science)

- (j) That demand for the facilities would need to be assessed among the students of the commuting undergraduate population, to establish a preference for separate facilities or integration into the rest of the student population.

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

- (k) That while the rationale for the provision of these facilities was clear, there remained reservations about identifying facilities for specific groups of students, rather than ensuring that provision was suitable for all students.
- (l) That greater mobility of students between institutions and years of study was an additional consideration to the development of this proposal to ensure its sustainability.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed measures designed to increase the study and social facilities available to constituencies within the commuting undergraduate population, be considered by the Student Union Liaison Group, for report to the Steering Committee in due course.

86/11-12 Royal Society Request for Immigration System Experiences

CONSIDERED:

A letter from Paul Nurse, President of the Royal Society, requesting information on issues experienced with the immigration system, including concerns about the associated bureaucracy (SC.63/11-12).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That the Royal Society was one of four bodies, alongside Arts Council England, The Royal Academy of Engineering and The British Academy, appointed by the UKBA to endorse the entry of candidates into the UK via the new Tier 1 "Exceptional Talent" route.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (b) That the University should establish a mechanism to engage actively with the Tier 1 migration route to encourage exceptional talent to Warwick.

RESOLVED:

That a memorandum be sent to Heads of Department to highlight the University's active engagement with the Tier 1 migration route to encourage exceptional talent to Warwick, and that the issue be referred for further consideration to the Academic Resourcing Committee.

87/11-12 Appointments to Committees of the Senate

RESOLVED:

- (a) Board of Graduate Studies

That the recommendation that Mr Matteo Locane serve on the Board of Graduate Studies as one of up to two co-opted students subject to the approval of the Senate, be approved on behalf of the Senate.

- (b) Research Committee

That the recommendation from the Research Staff Forum that Dr Paul Sutcliffe (Warwick Medical School, Health Sciences) serve as a representative from the Research Staff Forum, nominated by the Forum and approved by the Senate, be approved on behalf of the Senate, as a replacement for Ms Mairi-Ann Cullen.

88/11-12 Arts and Humanities Research Council Block Grant Partnerships 2

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

That the University would be the lead on submitting an expression of interest to the Arts and Humanities Research Council Block Grant Partnerships 2 as part of a consortium consisting of Warwick, Birkbeck, Queen Mary's, the School of Oriental and African Studies and London Institute of Education.

89/11-12 Registrar (minute 81/11-12 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

That the Vice-Chancellor had passed on a message for the Committee (in his absence) which gave thanks to the Registrar, noted the significant contribution made by him to the University and the sector which recognised the warmth with which the Registrar was regarded by many colleagues in the University.

90/11-12 National Audit Office Consultation on the UK Border Agency Points Based System (minute 60/11-12 refers)

RECEIVED:

The University's response to the National Audit Office's consultation on the efficiency of the UKBA in its introduction of and changes to Tier 4 of the Points Based System (SC.66/11-12).

91/11-12 Chair-elect of the Technology Strategy Board

RECEIVED:

A House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report, in which it endorses Phil Smith as the government's preferred candidate for the role of chair of the Technology Strategy Board (SC.67/11-12).

92/11-12 Plans for the National Student Survey 2012

RECEIVED:

A letter from Sir Alan Langlands, Chief Executive of HEFCE, announcing the plans for the 2012 National Student Survey (NSS) (SC.71/11-12).

JFB/KP/steersshare/minutes/201112/Oct11/31Oct11