

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the Meeting of the Steering Committee held on 14 September 2015

Present: Professor Sir Nigel Thrift (Vice-Chancellor and President), Professor S Croft (Provost (Chair)), Ms R Drinkwater (Group Finance Director), Professor S Gilson (Chair of the Faculty of Arts), Professor Christina Hughes (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)), Professor Christopher Hughes (Chair of the Faculty of Social Sciences), Mr I Leigh (President of the Students' Union), Professor T Jones (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Science, Engineering and Medicine)), Professor J Palmowski (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Postgraduate and Transnational Education)), Professor M Shipman (Chair of the Faculty of Science), Professor C Sparrow, Professor S Swain (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Arts and Social Sciences)), Professor P Thomas (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Public Engagement)), Professor L Young (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resources)).

Apologies: Professor A Coats (Academic Vice-President (Monash-Warwick Alliance)), Mr K Sloan (Registrar and Chief Operating Officer), Professor P Winstanley (Chair of the Faculty of Medicine).

In Attendance: Dr M Glover (Academic Registrar), Ms K Gray (Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality), for item 444/14-15), Ms J Horsburgh (Deputy Registrar (Secretary)), Dr E Hough (Assistant Registrar, Governance (Assistant Secretary)), Mr I Rowley (Director of Development, Communication and External Affairs).

439/14-15 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the open minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 7 September 2015 be approved.
- (b) That the restricted minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 7 September 2015 be approved, subject to an amendment noted in the meeting.

440/14-15 *Admissions Update (minute 432/14-15 refers)

The Committee received an update on admissions data relating to widening participation.

441/14-15 WMG to Lead New Research Facility

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That Warwick Manufacturing Group was to lead a £14m consortium to create a new automotive battery manufacturing research centre.
- (b) That the project will help develop the next generation of traction batteries for electric and hybrid vehicles and has received £10m in funding from the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK

442/14-15 Jaguar Land Rover – Lifelong Learning Academy

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That Jaguar Land Rover had launched its Lifelong Learning Academy, with Warwick Manufacturing Group as a key partner in the new initiative, noting that it would offer all Jaguar Land Rover workers the opportunity to take part in continuous development programmes to enhance their careers and provide the skills the company needed.
- (b) That the Academy represented an important development in applied education with universities, noting that it was the first of its kind in the UK automotive sector.

443/14-15 Newton International Fellowship Award

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That Dr Corinna Preuss had been awarded a two-year Newton International Fellowship to conduct research at the University of Warwick's Department of Chemistry.
- (b) That the Fellowships were intended to provide the opportunity for the best early stage non-UK post-doctoral researchers from all over the world to work at UK research institutions.

RESOLVED:

That the congratulations of the Committee be extended to Dr Preuss on her achievement.

444/14-15 HEFCE Consultation on Quality Assessment

CONSIDERED:

A paper detailing draft responses to the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) consultation proposals for a new approach to quality assessment (SC.205/14-15).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning))

- (a) That the HEFCE proposals, as detailed in the paper, raised a number of concerns, noting that these principally regarded:
 - (i) The requirement that an institution's governing body provide assurance on the quality of student experience and academic standards, noting that it may not have the requisite expertise to do so effectively and that such duties were best undertaken by a robust Senate or Academic Board.
 - (ii) The establishment of a register of external examiners, noting that this might deter staff from engaging in such duties, and furthermore that it might not allow for institutions to apply their own criteria for appointment.
 - (iii) The proposal that calibration of academic output standards and the development of degree classification algorithms for borderline cases at the national level, noting that this fundamentally undermined institutional autonomy in the area of academic standards.

- (iv) The lack of clarity with regard to how the proposals might apply to postgraduate taught and research study.
 - (v) The lack of clarity with regard to how the mechanisms would interface with the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) under development by BIS, noting that while information about the latter was currently embryonic, the rationale appeared to be conflicting.
- (b) That the draft response with respect to the role of the Council had been discussed with, and included input from, the Chair of the Council, noting that the consultation included a question asking if the responses had been discussed with the head of the governing body.

(by the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality))

- (c) That the proposals were intended to reduce the administrative burden of cyclical quality assurance processes on institutions.
- (d) That the proposals also responded to concerns in the wider public sphere regarding the comparability of higher education provision.
- (e) That the Quality Assurance Agency did include postgraduate study within its remit.
- (f) That the Russell Group were in the process of developing an alternative approach to quality assurance.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (g) That the draft responses should be asserted more strongly in some places given the importance of the consultation and the concerns regarding some of the proposals.
- (h) That the Council already had the role to assure Teaching Quality at the University having within its remit to govern, manage and regulate all affairs of the institution, noting that it did so effectively in this regard through its relationship to the Senate and the assurance of the external QAA processes.
- (i) That should the proposals come into force, the level of expertise within the Council in relation to matters of teaching quality and student experience would need to be assessed.
- (j) That the University consider writing to the HEFCE to express its considerable concerns with regard to the potential threat to the autonomy of higher education institutions presented by the proposals.

(by Professor C Sparrow)

- (k) That the responses were well written and appropriate.
- (l) That the mention of postgraduate research students in Question 9 be reconsidered, noting the very different nature of this level of study and experience.

(by the Group Finance Director)

- (m) That the metrics used to measure student outcomes, as referred to in Question 9, were likely to be a crude measure of teaching quality and it was queried whether this would be of value.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (n) That the role of lay members in enabling the Council to be assured of teaching quality would need to be assessed given the fact that there was currently no direct lay membership involvement in such matters.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft responses to the HEFCE Consultation on Future Approaches to Quality Assessment in England Wales and Northern Ireland be strengthened in all areas, noting the general concern to the proposals as presented.

445/14-15 *Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

CONSIDERED:

A paper presenting the results and preliminary actions for the 2015 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (SC.206/14-15 {restricted}).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the results and preliminary actions for the 2015 PTES (SC.206/14-15) be noted.
- (b) That the congratulations of the Committee be extended to Professor Palmowski, the team and their departments for their hard work in securing such positive results.