

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the Meeting of the Steering Committee held on 25 April 2005

Present: Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Professor L Bridges
Professor A Caesar
Professor R G Dyson
Professor A Easton
Professor J Jones
Mr S Lucas
Professor M Luntley
Professor H Thomas
Professor S Palmer
Professor M Whitby

Apologies: Professor Y Carter, Professor I Lauder

In Attendance: Acting Director of Finance, Academic Registrar, Director of Academic and Student Affairs, Director of Estates, Registrar, University Secretary, Mrs H E Blunt, Ms N Snodgrass, for item 390/04-05 the Assistant Registrar (Space Management and Timetabling), for item 391/04-05 the Acting Assistant Registrar (Graduate School), for item 394/04-05 the Director of Operations and Planning.

383/04-05 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2005 be approved, subject to the addition of the University Registrar in the list of those persons in attendance at the meeting.

384/04-05 E-learning Strategy (minute 372/04-05 refers)

RECEIVED:

An oral report from Professor Whitby on proposals for the use of the University's allocation of e-learning capital investment funding to support distance learning initiatives within the University.

RESOLVED:

That the sum of £20k be allocated, as part of the University's overall allocation of e-learning capital investment funding, to undertake a pilot within the Department of History of a distance learning scheme, with a view to extending this scheme to other departments should the pilot prove successful.

385/04-05 National Student Survey (minute 361/04-05 refers)

RECEIVED:

An oral report from Professor Whitby on the proposed content of the institutional response to HEFCE Circular 08/2005 on issues relating to the National Student Survey (NSS) for submission to the HEFCE by 9 May.

REPORTED: (by Professor Whitby)

That a response from the HEFCE was currently awaited to the University's requests for clarification of Data Protection issues arising from the provision and use of student data under the National Student Survey (NSS) and for clarification of the legal basis for the HEFCE's decision that universities be not permitted to facilitate student opt-out from participation in the NSS.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Professor Whitby prepare the University's response to HEFCE Circular 08/2005 on issues relating to the NSS along the lines discussed at the meeting.
- (b) That it was the view of the Committee that universities should be permitted to take an autonomous decision on whether to facilitate student opt-out from participation in the NSS and that this issue be raised with the HEFCE Regional Consultant during his visit to the University on 26 April 2005.

386/04-05 AC21 (minute 375/04-05 refers)

RECEIVED:

A copy of a paper circulated for the 21 April meeting of the International Strategy Group on the proposed RDF model for underwriting of major symposia within the Warwick AC21 2006 Forum (SC.249/04-05) noting that the preparation of comprehensive business plans would be required for all proposed symposia.

387/04-05 Visit of the Director-General for Higher Education (minute 381/04-05 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the visit of the Director-General for Higher Education to the University had been further postponed and was likely to take place in October 2005.

388/04-05 Science Cities

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That he, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar had recently met with the Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Principal and Registrar of the University of Birmingham to discuss potential collaborative opportunities for the two universities, particularly in the context of the Birmingham City Region 'Science City' initiative, noting that the discussions had been broadly based and that there was a need to determine particular areas where academic collaboration might add significant value to the work and development of both institutions.

389/04-05 University Open Day

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Academic Registrar on the success of the University Open Day held on 23 April 2005 which had been attended by approximately 6000 visitors.

390/04-05 SRIF3 and Project Capital 4

RECEIVED:

An interim report from the SRIF3 and Project Capital Advisory Group on the process used by the Group in assessing SRIF3 and Project Capital 4 bid proposals and the current shortlist of proposed projects (SC.248/04-05) together with oral reports from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Estates, noting that full details and costings for all proposals had been requested for submission by departments by 27 April 2005.

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That he would be seeking approval from the Chair of the Council and the Treasurer to an offer being made, as soon as practicable, for the acquisition of Millburn House by the University.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the priorities identified by the SRIF3 and Project Capital 4 Advisory Group be approved.
- (b) That final proposals for the allocation of SRIF3 and Project Capital 4 funding be brought forward for consideration by the Committee prior to submission to the HEFCE by the deadline of 30 May 2005.

391/04-05

Graduate Issues

CONSIDERED:

A paper on current issues relating to postgraduate study at the University and a summary and analysis of the HEFCE report "Costs of Training and Supervising Postgraduate Research Students" (SC.253/04-05) together with an oral report from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies convey to the Board, at its meeting on 26 April, the points raised in discussion at the meeting relating to the implementation of proposed changes to examination procedures for research degrees, noting in particular:

- (a) That it was the view of the Committee that examiners' reports for research degrees should remain confidential but that the restrictions on the release of such reports should be expanded to include the examiners, the Director of Student and Academic Affairs, the appropriate Graduate Studies Committee, the supervisor and Chair of the student's department, the student and, if required, the external adjudicator, the Preliminary Review Panel and the Graduate Appeals Committee.
- (b) That the Committee supported the appointment of an independent Chair internal to the University but external to the Department, School or Faculty in which the candidate is registered to serve on the viva voce examination panel, whose primary role would be to ensure the fairness of the viva process.

392/04-05

Regional Issues

CONSIDERED:

The second Quarterly Digest of Regional Issues produced by the Community Relations Manager (SC.247/04-05) together with an oral report from Professor Dyson.

REPORTED: (by Professor Dyson)

That it had been agreed that the University would not be responding to the consultation by Advantage West Midlands and the East Midlands Regional Development Agency on the 'Smart Growth: the Midlands Way' initiative but that the University's views on this consultation document had been expressed in the consultation response from the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnerships (CSWP).

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the University was represented on a group convened by the Chief Executive of Advantage West Midlands to discuss the opportunities afforded to the region by the Science Cities initiative and the designation of Birmingham as a Science City (minute 388/04-05 also refers).

RESOLVED:

That copies of the consultation document on the 'Smart Growth: the Midlands Way' initiative and the CSWP response to this consultation be circulated for information to members of the Steering Committee.

393/04-05 The Guardian University League Tables

CONSIDERED:

An analysis of the University's performance in the University League Tables recently published by *The Guardian* (SC.246/04-05) together with an oral report from the Director of Student and Academic Affairs.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Student and Academic Affairs undertake further investigation into various aspects of the methodology used by *The Guardian* in the compilation of its league tables, including the nature of the staff qualifications used in the staff quality measure, with a view to a further report being made to the Steering Committee at a future meeting.

394/04-05 Allocation of Funds for Additional Student Numbers 2006-08

CONSIDERED:

- (a) A letter from the University's HEFCE Regional Consultant on HEFCE's proposed priorities for the West Midlands for the allocation of additional student number funding from 2006-08 (SC.250/04-05).
- (b) An oral report from the Director of Operations (Planning) on discussions on the strategic allocation of additional student number funding at the HEFCE Regional Seminar held on 21 April 2005, noting that there had been discrepancies between the regional priorities identified by the HEFCE and the reported priorities of West Midlands Higher Education institutions.

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Student and Academic Affairs and the Director of Operations (Planning) prepare a briefing note on the allocation of ASNs for the Vice-Chancellor to discuss with the HEFCE during their visit to the University on 26 April 2005 taking into account the points raised in discussion at the meeting.

395/04-05 Additional Dental Student Numbers

CONSIDERED:

HEFCE Circular 09/2005 on bids for additional dental student numbers in England from the academic year 2006-07 (SC.251/04-05).

RESOLVED:

That the Director of Student and Academic Affairs contact the Dean of the Warwick Medical School to establish the view of the Warwick Medical School on whether a bid request should be submitted to the Department of Health for the establishment of a new dental school.

396/04-05 Strategic Science Provision

CONSIDERED:

UUK Information Note I/05/49 on the recent Report from the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee on strategic Science provision in English universities (SC.252/04-05).

RESOLVED:

That the Registrar prepare a letter from the Vice-Chancellor to the President of Universities UK indicating the University's serious concerns about the Science and Technology Committee's proposal for a 'hub and spoke' model of University provision and the University's expectation that UUK would resist any pressure to adopt this proposal.

397/04-05 Student Accommodation Strategy

RECEIVED:

An oral report from Professor Dyson on the progress of development of the University's Student Accommodation Strategy, noting that a working group had been established to prepare an initial plan for the development of student residences in the light of projected overseas student numbers, with a view to reporting back to the Steering Committee in due course.

398/04-05 International Student Visas

RECEIVED:

A copy of the University's response to proposals by UK Visas for an increase in the cost of initial international student visas (SC.255/04-05, tabled at the meeting).

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