

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Board of the Faculty of Science

Minutes of the Board of the Faculty of Science held on 9 February 2011.

Present: Professor T Jones (in the Chair), Professor R Ball, Professor T Bugg, Dr J Cave, Dr A I Cristea, Professor A Czumaj, Professor R Dashwood, Professor D Haddleton, Professor S Jarvis, Mr J Lapage, Dr D Leadley, Professor T R Marsh, Mr D Maynard, Dr A M Price, Dr J Robinson, Professor J Seville, Professor M Shipman, Professor C Sparrow, Professor B Thomas, Dr D Wood.

Apologies: Professor S Banerji, Dr M Cassidy, Dr A Clark, Professor S Creese, Professor J Davey, Professor D Evans, Professor D Firth, Professor S D Jacka, Professor M Keeling, Professor K Lamberts, Professor J McCarthy, Professor D Morley, Professor S Palmer, Professor L Robinson, Professor N Stocks.

In attendance: Mr D Dean, Dr M Glover (for item 6 Changes to Fees, Student Finance and Widening Participation), Mrs H Ireland, Dr K Leppard, Mr S Williams.

MINUTES

21/10-11 Minutes

CONSIDERED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Board of the Faculty of Science held on 10 November 2010.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board of the Faculty of Science held on 10 November 2010 be approved.

22/10-11 Matters arising on the Minutes

(a) Progress of Faculty Recommendations to the Senate (minute BFS.15/10-11 refers)

REPORTED:

That at its meeting on 26 January 2011, the Senate resolved:

- (i) That the membership of the Board of the Faculty of Science and its sub-committees be approved, as set out in paper S.16/10-11.
- (ii) That the constitution of the Board of the Faculty of Science be amended to include only two members per department rather than three members for the departments of Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Physics and WMG.
- (iii) That the constitution of the Sub-Faculty of the Board of the Faculty of Science be amended to include up to three members per department

rather than three members for the departments of Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Life Sciences, Mathematics and Physics.

RECOMMENDED (to the Senate):

That the revision to the constitution of the Sub-Faculty of the Board of the Faculty of Science be amended to require either two or three members per department for the departments of Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Life Sciences, Mathematics and Physics in order to remove the ambiguity of the phrase "up to three members".

- (b) Election of a Deputy Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science (minute BFS.04(d)/10-11 refers)

REPORTED:

That the Secretariat had emailed members of the Board on 19 November 2010 asking for expressions of interest in the position of Deputy Chair with the deadline for nominations being 12 noon on 26 November, but that no expressions of interest had been received.

- (c) Representation from Faculty Boards on E-Learning Steering Group (minute BFS.13/10-11 refers)

REPORTED:

That following a call for nominations for two members of academic staff from the Faculty of Science to join the E-Learning Steering Group, Dr Dave Wood (Mathematics) and Dr Mike Joy (Computer Science) had been appointed to represent the Faculty.

- (d) Fees for Intercalated Years (minute BFS.47(c)/08-09 refers)

REPORTED:

- (i) That at its meeting on 10 November 2010, the Board of the Faculty of Science resolved that the Chair of the Board would take this issue to the next Deputy Vice-Chancellor's fortnightly meeting with Chairs of Faculty.
- (ii) That at the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's fortnightly meeting with Chairs of Faculty on 24 January 2011 it was resolved that the issue of fees for intercalated years will be considered more broadly as part of the tuition fees review currently being undertaken by the Fees Working Group.
- (iii) That the issue of Fees for Intercalated Years would be considered for 2012 entry and beyond.

23/10-11

Report from the Faculty of Science IT Committee

RECEIVED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Faculty of Science IT Committee held on 26 January 2011.

REPORTED (by Dr K Leppard):

- (a) That there were concerns over the effectiveness of the current arrangements for Online Module Registration;
- (b) That IT Services and others involved aimed to learn from the problems experienced with OMR in this academic year to improve the service for future years.

24/10-11

IT Services Strategy Overview

CONSIDERED:

The IT Services Strategy Overview, paper IPSC.05/10-11.

REPORTED:

That the Board welcomed the core aims of the Strategy, particularly the move towards user-driven developments.

REPORTED (by Professor D Haddleton):

- (a) That there is a need for the development of electronic systems for student feedback, noting that this was an area where Warwick currently performs relatively poorly and that some other institutions already have this facility;
- (b) That there is a need for rapid implementation of new IT systems to improve the student experience, given that from 2012 the new fee structures will be in place.

REPORTED (by Mr J Lapage):

That the introduction of electronic and permanent feedback would be well-received by the student body.

REPORTED (by Professor R Ball):

That best practices at other universities should be a strong informant.

REPORTED (by Professor J Seville):

That in order to ensure the effectiveness of the Strategy, IT Services must work with a broader range of people including their genuine primary users, not just designated IT representatives from departments.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the IT Services Strategy Overview be approved as set out in paper IPSC.05/10-11, noting that more consultation was needed with academic departments;
- (b) That the Director of IT Services be invited to attend the next Faculty Lunch on 1 June 2011 to discuss the strategy further.

25/10-11

Role of the Faculty Chair: Proposed Changes Post-Harris

CONSIDERED:

The proposed changes to the role of the Faculty Chair, as set out in paper BFS.09/10-11.

REPORTED (by Professor R Ball):

- (a) That although the Chair of the Faculty no longer had to be appointed from the Board of the Faculty, Responsibility f. in Annex B of BFS.09/10-11 (page 6) should be amended to state that the Deputy Chair should be appointed from the Board and by the Board of the Faculty.
- (b) That there was a potential clash between Objective c. in Annex B of BFS.09/10-11 (page 5) and the role of AQSC.

REPORTED (by Professor T Jones):

That there was some urgency in getting the proposed changes agreed, but that the Draft Role Description needed further revision in consultation with the current Faculty Chairs.

REPORTED (by Professor J Seville):

- (a) That the wording of Objective f. in Annex B of BFS.09/10-11 (page 5) should be amended from "To take a leading role" to "To take a strategic role" as the role of the Faculty Chair would be to ensure quality in academic staff appointments;
- (b) That consideration should be given to whether the Faculty Chair should not sit on, but advise the Promotions Committee.

REPORTED (by Professor D Haddleton):

That the advertisement for the role should make explicit what percentage the role of Faculty Chair represented and the level of any stipend involved.

REPORTED (by Professor C Sparrow):

That there should be a review of the role after the first twelve months.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the revision of the Draft Role Description (Annex B) in consultation with the current Faculty Chairs, the proposed changes to the role of the Faculty Chair post-Harris be approved as set out in paper BFS.09/10-11.

26/10-11

Changes to Fees, Student Finance and Widening Participation

RECEIVED:

A discussion paper on changes to fees, student finance and widening participation, SC.259/10-11.

REPORTED (by the Academic Registrar):

- (a) That in order to meet Government requirements, the University would need to set its undergraduate home/EU fee levels for 2012/13 as well as submit its Widening Participation and Outreach Proposal by the end of March;

- (b) That it was likely that a University-wide fee level would be set (with a different fee for 2+2 access degrees), but with provision for particular issues, such as four-year courses, intercalated years and years abroad.
- (c) That demand for undergraduate places at Warwick is mostly very strong, and so increased fees would be unlikely to threaten recruitment;
- (d) That, although the ability to charge the top-rate fee will be dependent on the Government's acceptance of our Access Agreement, there is minimal guidance at present on how the Access Agreement should meet the Government's requirements for Widening Participation;

REPORTED (by Professor D Haddleton):

- (a) That the introduction of top-rate fees would be defensible only in return for a new set of ambitious, time-specific commitments to enhance the student experience to which the University could be held accountable;
- (b) That a clear message should be sent to all academic staff that undergraduate teaching was an institutional priority;
- (c) That a number of teaching posts should be created within academic departments in order to focus on outreach work and enhancing the student experience, following the model pioneered by the Department of Chemistry.

REPORTED (by Professor C Sparrow):

- (a) That making public commitments on improved services would expose the University to significant risk and therefore any such commitments would need to be carefully thought through;
- (b) That the larger academic departments should be consulted first on fee levels to establish specific departmental issues.

REPORTED (by Dr J Cave):

- (a) That demand for places at Warwick would remain high as long as a graduate premium in terms of employment could still be demonstrated;
- (b) That the University was not set up for differentiated offers and should consider introducing its own entrance examination.

REPORTED (by Mr J Lapage):

That the recent student survey on fees undertaken by the Students' Union indicated that:

- (a) Student priorities for improving the Student Experience were in the areas of one-to-one and smaller-group teaching and more personalised feedback;
- (b) Overall, respondents preferred the option of lower fees to higher fees with improved services;
- (c) That there was a need for transparency and the removal of 'hidden costs' of courses (for example, textbook purchase and printing) should be given serious consideration in fees planning.

REPORTED (by Mr D Maynard):

That the priority for postgraduate students was high quality teaching and the improvement of key services already provided, such as feedback.

REPORTED (by Dr A Price):

That there was no basis for charging the current levels of Fees for Intercalated Years and that these fee levels were detrimental to student recruitment and the student experience.

RESOLVED:

That the Academic Registrar and the Chair of the Sub-Faculty of Science would give further consideration to the issue of Fees for Intercalated Years.

27/10-11

Annual Course Reviews

(a) Undergraduate Course Review Reports

CONSIDERED:

The summary report on the Undergraduate course review reports for 2009-10 from across the Faculty of Science (paper SFS.15/10-11).

REPORTED:

That the issues of widest concern were the availability of large lecture theatres, timetabling, and the quality of resources, in particular the chalk available to lecturers.

RESOLVED:

The summary report on the Undergraduate course review reports for 2009-10 from across the Faculty of Science be approved.

(b) Postgraduate Research Course Review Reports

CONSIDERED:

The summary report on the Postgraduate Research annual course reviews for 2009-10 from across the Faculty of Science (paper SGS.62/10-11);

REPORTED:

That the issues of widest concern were around the accuracy of academic statistics (particularly with regard to PhD submission rates) and the offer-to-acceptance conversion rates in the recruitment of overseas students.

RESOLVED:

The summary report on the Postgraduate Research course review reports for 2009-10 from across the Faculty of Science be approved.

(c) Postgraduate Taught Course Review Reports

REPORTED:

That the deadline for submission of departmental Annual Course Reviews for Postgraduate Taught Provision for 2009-10 was 14 March 2011.

28/10-11

Report from the Sub-Faculty

RECEIVED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Faculty of Science held on 2 February 2011.

RECOMMENDED (to the Board of the Faculty of Science);

That the constitutions of the Sub-Faculty of Science and the Board of the Faculty of Science be amended to include two undergraduate student representatives, with each representing four departments (minute SFS. 23/10-11 (c) refers).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That once approved by the Students' Union, the Board of the Faculty of Science would make a recommendation to the Senate that the constitutions of the Sub-Faculty of Science and the Board of the Faculty of Science be amended to include two undergraduate student representatives, each holding one vote on the Sub-Faculty of Science and on the Board of the Faculty of Science.
- (b) That all other recommendations from the Sub-Faculty of Science be approved.

29/10-11

Report from the Graduate Studies Committee

RECEIVED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee of the Board of the Faculty of Science held on 1 February 2011.

RESOLVED:

That all recommendations from the Graduate Studies Committee of the Board of the Faculty of Science be approved.

30/10-11

Report from the Faculty of Science Research and Innovation Committee

RECEIVED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Faculty of Science Research and Innovation Committee held on 8 December 2010 and the draft minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2011.

REPORTED:

- (a) That WMG had been successful in winning an EPSRC award for an EngD centre, one of only three awarded in the UK.

- (b) That four science-based research hubs were being developed as part of the Science Faculty Research Strategy to align the University with Research Council priorities.
- (c) That the Vice-Chancellor had introduced a mentoring system to enhance the quality of Research Council applications following a drop in league positions in the 2009/10 THES Annual Review of Research Council Success Rates.

RESOLVED:

That all recommendations from the Faculty of Science Research and Innovation Committee be approved.

31/10-11

Chair's Business

(a) Progress of the Refreshed University Strategy

REPORTED:

That a revised version of the refreshed University Strategy would be considered by the Council at its meeting on 17 February 2011.

(b) The University's Response to the UKBA's Proposed Changes to the Student Immigration Route

REPORTED (by Mr S Williams):

- (i) That the UK Border Agency (UKBA) consultation on proposed changes to the Tier 4 (student) immigration route had closed on 31 January 2011.
- (b) That the UKBA proposals included the prescription of Secure English Language Tests for degree-level students; the abolishment or significant restriction of the Tier 1 Post-Study Work route; the removal of the right for dependents of students on Tier 4 visas to enter the UK if the course is less than one year in duration; and the removal of work entitlements for the dependants of students on Tier 4 visas on courses of one year or longer.
- (c) That the University had used all appropriate channels available to lobby the Government and to alert students to the possible consequences of the proposed changes.

REPORTED (by Professor R Ball):

That in his view a tightening of the English language requirements was not necessarily negative, and that Warwick's standards are in general sufficiently high so as not to be at risk by the proposals on this area.

REPORTED (by Mr S Williams):

That the University's opposition to UKBA's proposed changes to English language requirements was based on the principle that the University should be allowed to use its own academic judgement to set its English language requirements and should not be dictated to by the UKBA.

REPORTED (by Dr J Cave):

That the proposed changes represented a threat to one of the University's most significant sources of compensatory income at a time of funding cuts.

REPORTED (by Mr D Maynard):

That the Tier 1 Post-Study Work visa was a very significant attraction for overseas students and the removal of this could have serious consequences for overseas student recruitment for the UK.

32/10-11

Faculty Advisory Board

REPORTED:

- (a) That at its meeting on 18 November 2010, the Science Faculty Advisory Board resolved that it would meet up to four times a year rather than a maximum of twice a year.
- (b) That at its meetings on 18 November 2010 and 7 February 2011, the Science Faculty Advisory Board considered three main key issues: the School of Engineering's Strategic Plan; the progress of the School of Life Sciences; and the impact of the Browne Report and the Comprehensive Spending Review on the University including the setting of undergraduate tuition fees for home/EU students.
- (c) That the Advisory Board is planning to hold a Faculty of Science Strategy Day at Arden House on 17 May 2011 and that Heads of Science Departments would be invited to attend.
- (d) That Dr Ezat Khoshdel, Head of Polymer Science at Unilever, had been recommended to the Vice-Chancellor for appointment to the Advisory Board.

33/10-11

Items to be brought to the Senate

CONSIDERED:

Whether there are any specific issues which the Board of the Faculty of Science wishes to refer to the Senate for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the following item should be brought to the Senate for consideration:

That the revision to the constitution of the Sub-Faculty of the Board of the Faculty of Science be amended to require "either two or three" members per department for the departments of Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Life Sciences, Mathematics and Physics.

34/10-11

Dates of Future Meetings

REPORTED:

- (a) That the final meeting of the Board of the Faculty of Science in the academic year 2010-11 would be held on the following date:

Summer Term – Wednesday 25 May 2011, 2pm (Council Chamber)

- (b) That the deadline for the receipt of papers would be 12 noon on Tuesday 17 May 2011.

35/10-11

Any Other Business

REPORTED (by Professor C Sparrow):

That further streamlining of the Board's agenda structure should be considered, to allow more items to be listed as not for discussion and so improve the efficiency of meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the Secretariat should examine the potential for such streamlining and adopt this if possible.

SW/DD/BFSMinutes09Feb11