

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the Meeting of the Steering Committee held on 1 February 2016

Present: Professor Stuart Croft (Vice-Chancellor and President (Chair)), Ms R Drinkwater (Group Finance Director), Professor S Gilson (Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Arts), Professor Christina Hughes (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)), Professor Christopher Hughes (Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences), Professor T Jones (Provost), Mr I Leigh (President of the Students' Union), Mr K Sloan (Registrar and Chief Operating Officer), Professor S Swain (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (External Affairs)), Professor M Shipman (Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Science), Professor C Sparrow (Academic Member of the Senate), Professor P Thomas (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)), Professor L Young (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resources)).

Apologies: Professor A Coats (Academic Vice-President (Monash-Warwick Alliance)), Professor J Palmowski (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Postgraduate and Transnational Education)), Professor P Winstanley (Chair of the Board of the Faculty of Medicine).

In Attendance: Mr J Breckon (Director of Estates), Ms C English (Administrative Officer (Governance) (Assistant Secretary)), Dr M Glover (Academic Registrar), Mrs P Glover (Director of Governance and Assurance Services, for item 157/15-16), Ms J Horsburgh (Deputy Registrar (Secretary)), Ms G McGrattan (Director of Human Resources), Mr J Phillips (Director of Health and Safety, for item 157/15-16), Mr I Rowley (Director of Development, Communications and External Affairs).

151/15-16 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the open and restricted minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2016 be approved.

152/15-16 Secretary's Business

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

That the Steering Committee welcomed Professor Stuart Croft in his new capacity as Vice-Chancellor and President, and Professor Tim Jones in his capacity as Interim Provost.

153/15-16 Chair's Business: Schedule of Steering Committee meetings

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

That, with effect from 1 February 2016, the Steering Committee would meet on a fortnightly basis.

154/15-16 Winter Degree Ceremonies

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

That in excess of 1800 Warwick students had been awarded their degrees at the highly successful degree ceremonies held in January 2016.

RESOLVED:

That thanks be extended to all those staff volunteers who had contributed to the smooth running of the events.

155/15-16 Miscarriage Research Centre

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That Warwick had been selected as a partner in the establishment of the largest miscarriage research centre in Europe, funded by leading pregnancy charity *Tommy's*, and due to open in April 2016.
- (b) That researchers from Warwick would work collaboratively with doctors from University Hospital, Coventry, to investigate the causes of early miscarriage.
- (c) That the Institute of Digital Healthcare at the University would develop a clinical database, led by WMG Professor Theo Arvanitis, to support the work of the Research Centre and improve on outcomes based information-driven approaches.

156/15-16 AVIVA Women's Tour

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (a) That Warwick had agreed to be the principal partner for the Warwickshire leg of the AVIVA Women's Tour; the world's premier women's cycling event, due to take place on Thursday 16 June 2016.

(by the Director of Development, Communications and External Affairs)

- (b) That the University would welcome the opportunities this event would offer for staff and student engagement, as well as involvement with an extensive schools programme.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (c) That consideration would be given to the mitigation of disruption on campus, noting that the event would fall within the exam period.

157/15-16 *Health and Safety Incidents Update

CONSIDERED:

An update regarding the progress of close-out actions following three significant health and safety incidents that occurred in 2015 (SC.68/15-16 {Restricted}).

RESOLVED:

That the update regarding the progress of close-out actions following three significant health and safety incidents that occurred in 2015 be noted.

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft response to the UCAS evidence gathering survey on the feasibility of name-blind applications (SC.69/15-16).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the Prime Minister had announced a proposal that from 2017, UCAS would introduce name-blind applications, intended to address the perceived risks arising from unconscious bias in university admissions, in relation to students from ethnic minority backgrounds in particular.
- (b) That the University was wholeheartedly committed to increasing widening participation, but it should be considered that an under-representation of students from minority backgrounds could be due to a range of factors.
- (c) That the University intended to submit a response which raised a number of significant practical concerns with the proposal; this response had been written in consultation with staff in the Admissions and Outreach teams within SROAS, and the Student Recruitment Strategy Steering Group, for submission prior to the deadline of 5 February 2016.
- (d) That the proposed response outlined the way in which an applicant's name helped to build a relationship, enable communications and contextualise an application, for instance by enabling the reviewer to establish whether an applicant had partaken in a University widening participation programme.
- (e) That there was no evidence to suggest that an applicant's name caused unconscious bias during the university application process, and the University's proposed response to the consultation highlighted that, in the absence of such evidence, this proposal would only serve to make existing University processes more difficult.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

- (f) That the University's response should clearly distinguish between the importance of increasing widening participation generally, an issue which the University was entirely committed to, and the issue of the proposed introduction of name-blind applications, which the University was not supportive of due to the operational concerns highlighted within the response.

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

- (g) That the proposal for name-blind applications would not address any perceived bias in the university admissions systems entirely, as any perceived bias could still affect offers made following interviews.
- (h) That the proposal overlooked other potential causes of bias in the university application process; for example potential bias relating to gender, socio-economic group and disability, noting that there was evidence to suggest that white, working class males were under-represented in the higher education sector.

- (i) That the University was committed to reducing bias in the application process, noting that pilot projects on the use of contextual data had been undertaken by a number of academic departments, and an institutional policy which sought to operationalise current processes in order to mitigate any such bias was under development.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research))

- (j) That the tone of the response would be important in order to ensure that the University's commitment to widening participation generally was not called into question.

(by the Vice-Chancellor and President)

- (k) That it would be important to reflect in points 3, 4 and 17 of the University's response the overall widening participation context, noting where action could be taken.
- (l) That points 6 and 7 should be revised in order to provide further detail regarding the action taken by the University to date to minimise any bias in existing student admissions processes.

(by the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer)

- (m) That, in keeping with the ongoing changes to health and safety governance, there may be opportunity to consider whether equality and diversity could be more firmly embedded within the University's executive governance structures.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed response to the UCAS evidence gathering survey on the feasibility of name-blind applications be approved for submission by the deadline of 5 February 2016, subject to further revisions to questions 3, 4, 6, 7 and 17, in light of the feedback from the Steering Committee.
- (b) That the Director of Governance and Assurance Services be asked to consider the question of how to embed equality and diversity in the executive governance structure.

159/15-16 *HEFCE Prevent Enquiry

RECEIVED:

A paper informing the Steering Committee of a request for further information made by the HEFCE following a press enquiry in relation to a campus event (SC.70/15-16 {Restricted}).

RESOLVED:

That the content of the paper be noted.

160/15-16 Proposed Merger of South Leicestershire College and North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

RECEIVED:

The University's response to the consultation on the proposed merger of South Leicestershire College and North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, due to take place on 1 April 2016 (SC.71/15-16).

RESOLVED:

That the University's response to the consultation be noted.