

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 12 September 2011

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Professor A Caesar,
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,
Professor P Winstanley,
Mr L Bøe.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Finance Director, Director of HR, Director of Development, Communications and Strategy, Director of Estates, Head of Governance Support Services, Administrative Officer (Governance), Head of the School of Life Sciences (for item 872/10-11), Director of the Management Information and Planning Office (for item 883/10-11), Assistant Director (Planning & Student Experience), International Office (for item 884/10-11).

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Professors Pam Thomas, Simon Swain and Stuart Croft to their first meeting of the Committee in their roles as Faculty Chairs and PVC respectively. The Vice-Chancellor also welcomed back the Head of Governance Support Services.

871/10-11 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2011 be approved, subject to minor revisions.

872/10-11 Life Sciences Doctoral Training Bid (minute 845/10-11 refers)

CONSIDERED:

An update document from the School of Life Sciences regarding an application to BBSRC for a Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) (SC.622/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Head of the School of Life Sciences)

- (a) That, as lead partner of a consortium with the University of Birmingham and the University of Leicester, the University would undertake the administrative processes and provide initial student training in the first year of study.
- (b) That administrative costs were not fundable through the BBSRC DTP programme, and that the BBSRC expected a matched funding contribution from institutions.
- (c) That the University DTP could expect to be awarded 40 to 50 ~~Plus~~ PhDs overall from the DTP, and that awards were being more selectively restricted to those institutions who could provide appropriate infrastructure to support the research training environment.

- (d) That consideration was being given to a joint doctorate award across the participating institutions.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

- (e) That following the Steering resolution (845/10-11) that the request for support from the School of Life Sciences for an application to BBSRC for a DTP be considered by the Academic Resourcing Committee, he had written to the Vice-Chancellor and the Finance Director to suggest that, for future DTP bids, allocating and forecasting recurrent funding via the Financial Plan Sub-Committee would be a more effective method.
- (f) That other areas of the University, such as the Graduate School, could support the drafting of the DTP bid to ensure it was written in line with University protocol.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies would request staff from the Graduate School to liaise with the School of Life Sciences to help inform decisions regarding development of a joint award to students across the participating institutions.
- (b) That the Head of the School of Life Sciences liaise with the Deputy Academic Registrar and the Graduate School to refine the final bid before submission, prior to the deadline of 15 September 2011.

873/10-11 UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) (minute 791/10-11 refers)

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That it had been previously resolved that the Director of Research Support Services would undertake further investigation into the support covered by the UKRIO subscription, and report back to Steering Committee in due course.
- (b) That services provided were considered to be of sufficient value and thus an institutional subscription to UKRIO would be taken up for 2011/12.

874/10-11 White Paper on Higher Education (minute 765/10-11 refers)

RECEIVED:

A note from UUK regarding the White Paper Consultation, highlighting forthcoming consultations, reviews and other actions (SC.623/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Deputy Registrar)

- (a) That the draft Russell Group response to the White Paper had been received and the UUK response was expected shortly, and that both would be circulated for comment and then in their final form to the Steering Committee.
- (b) That the University would not be submitting a direct response to the White Paper.

875/10-11 BIS Consultation on Potential Early Repayment Mechanisms for Student Loans (minute 814/10-11 refers)

CONSIDERED:

The University's draft response to the BIS Consultation on Potential Early Repayment Mechanisms for Student Loans (SC.627/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

- (a) That the Committee had previously disagreed with the policy of penalising those who wished to pay their tuition fees in advance or make early repayments, and that there were potentially legal barriers to enforcing take up of loans.

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

- (b) That fundraising for scholarships and fee support could be impacted if students were not able to pay up front and that this required clarification.

RESOLVED:

That the University's draft response to the BIS Consultation on Potential Early Repayment Mechanisms for Student Loans be amended before submitting, to include a request for clarification that fees could be paid directly to institutions and amendment of text in response to Question 3, prior to the deadline of 20 September 2011.

876/10-11 Student Experience

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That improving the student experience remained an area of key focus for the University.
- (b) That, in 2005, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee had approved a policy of a four week maximum period for return of work and feedback to students.

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

- (c) That many departments now stated a three week turnaround of work and feedback in student departmental handbooks.
- (d) That further discussion was required around the support that could be provided to Heads of Departments in achieving the expected standards for staff to return work to students.

RESOLVED:

That the Academic Quality and Standards Committee consider revision of the policy on return of assessed work and feedback, with a view to moving to an expectation of a three week maximum period of turnaround.

877/10-11 Consultation on Post- Qualifications Admissions

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the Chief Executive of UCAS, at a recent meeting of UUK, had announced that a consultation on Post- Qualifications Admissions would be forthcoming.

878/10-11 50m Legacy Pool

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the University had received an offer from DCMS for a 50m pool tank, and that the deadline for a response was 2 November 2011.

879/10-11 UCEA Chair and Deputy Chairs

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) had announced that Professor Paul Curran, Vice-Chancellor of City University London, was to be UCEA's new Chair.
- (b) That UCEA had also confirmed the appointment of two Deputy Chairs, Professor John Brooks, Vice-Chancellor, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Paul Jagger, Pro Chancellor and Chair of Council, University of Bradford.

880/10-11 Undergraduate Course Offers

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That the University was likely to move to a position of offer levels for 2012 entry of at least AAB for all undergraduate courses, noting that discussion was ongoing in relation to one programme.

881/10-11 League Table Rankings

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the latest QS World University Rankings were published on 5 September 2011, with the University ranked as 50th in the world.
- (b) That the University had maintained its position of 8th in the latest The Times Good University Guide.

882/10-11 The Wolfson Foundation Studentships

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

That he had received a letter from the Wolfson Foundation, informing the University of their decision to award 3 studentships in History, Literature and Languages from 2012.

883/10-11 Update on National League Tables Performance

CONSIDERED:

An outline of the results and analysis, of The Times Good University Guide and League table, The Guardian League Table, and The Daily Telegraph/Complete University Guide and League Table (SC.592/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Management Information and Planning)

- (a) That the University had held its position in The Times league table but had fallen in The Guardian and Complete University Guide.
- (b) That the University's performance was impacted by a weakening of the student:staff ratio, due to an increased student population, and the graduate prospects of the University's students.
- (c) That the decline in student completion in recent years had been stemmed, but that the University would continue to monitor performance in this area.
- (d) That dashboards relating to teaching data were being developed to help Heads of Department monitor performance.

- (e) That Student Careers and Skills continued to develop strategies to generate improvement in performance in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE), as the University under-performed against the top ten and Russell Group averages despite some marginal improvements compared to last year.
- (f) That the University remained at risk of losing its current position in league tables, and so further action was required to protect and maintain performance.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (g) That the University would continue to request an amendment to the DLHE methodology to consider the employment status of alumni three years rather than six months after graduation, as a stronger indicator of long term employability.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Dean of Warwick Business School liaise with the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience to identify staff within the School who may be able to support the development of employability and entrepreneurship programmes.
- (b) That the impact on widening participation be considered as part of the discussions concerning size and scope of the student population being undertaken by the Academic Resourcing Committee.

884/10-11

Highly Trusted Sponsor Renewal Application

CONSIDERED:

The University's application to renew its Highly Trusted Sponsor (HTS) status (SC.625/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Assistant Director (Planning & Student Experience), International Office)

- (a) That the new application process for HTS status included three core measurable requirements of visa refusal rate, enrolment rate and course completion rate.
- (b) That the inclusion of visa refusals as a measure of an institution's trustworthiness was strongly contested by UUK and the University in the response to the UKBA consultation.
- (c) That the UKBA's definition for course completion rate differed significantly from the University's definition, and that further clarification was required.
- (d) That the second stage of the HTS renewal process was to be undertaken by the UKBA using their data, and so the extent of the University's core measurable requirements could only be estimated.
- (e) That the University expected to have its HTS status renewed based on the estimates made using SITS data.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Section D of the University's Highly Trusted Sponsor application form be approved, and submitted as part of the completed Highly Trusted Sponsor application form prior to the submission deadline of 27 September 2011.
- (b) That the Registrar would liaise with Sir David Normington to identify the most effective route to raise the University's concerns about the methodology underpinning the retention of Highly Trusted Sponsor status.

885/10-11 HEA Strategic Plan Consultation

CONSIDERED:

An email from the Chief Executive of the HEA with an invitation to respond to the HEA consultation to inform development of a new Strategic Plan (SC.628/10-11).

RESOLVED:

That the University would not respond to the HEA consultation to inform development of a new Strategic Plan, but that a letter may be sent separately with regard to its proposed role in overseeing the National Professional Standards, following forthcoming discussion with Pro-Vice-Chancellors from the Russell Group on the issue.

886/10-11 Yvonne Carter Chair

CONSIDERED:

A proposal from the Warwick Medical School on the use of the eponymous title "Yvonne Carter Chair" (SC.629/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Dean of Warwick Medical School)

- (a) That the Faculty of Medicine Advisory Board had recommended a Chair in Warwick Medical School be named after the late Professor Yvonne Carter, and that no resource was attached to the title.
- (b) That a Professor of Pathology had been recently appointed and was deemed to be a strong candidate for the title of "Yvonne Carter Chair in Pathology".

RESOLVED:

That the proposal be approved in principle, but that the Dean of Warwick Medical School consult the family of Yvonne Carter about an appointment to the title of "Yvonne Carter Chair in Pathology", before requesting formal approval by Chair's Action.

887/10-11 OFFA: Core and Margin Model for 2012-13 and Revisions to Access Agreements

RECEIVED:

A circular from OFFA, inviting institutions to reduce their net average fee to below £7500, in order to bid for student places under the new "core and margin" model (SC.631/10-11).

888/10-11 AHRC Funding

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

- (a) That AHRC was phasing out its funding of Masters programmes, and consultation events were being held to inform institutions of the next block grant award process.
- (b) That AHRC was expecting to only award 10 Type A block grant partnerships, which would provide 40 to 60 studentships per annum across partner institutions.
- (c) That an expression of interest was due in February 2012, with institutional financial commitment expected, but not yet specified as matched funding.

- 889/10-11 Strategic Health Authorities – Postgraduate Deaneries
- RECEIVED:
- A letter from the Vice-Chancellor to Mr Ian Cumming, Chief Executive of NHS West Midlands, to register concern regarding forthcoming plans to reorganise parts of the NHS and to cluster Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), with impact on postgraduate deaneries (SC.633/10-11).
- 890/10-11 UCEA Update: Points Based Immigration System
- RECEIVED:
- An update from UCEA, summarising the latest information published with regard to the Exceptional Talent route to employment in the UK (SC.634/10-11).
- 891/10-11 UCEA Update: Consultation on Unfunded Public Sector Pension Schemes
- RECEIVED:
- An update from UCEA, summarising the recent Treasury announcement on the proposed increase to employee contributions for members of certain schemes, including the NHS Pension Scheme (SC.635/10-11).
- 892/10-11 Russell Group Response to HEFCE Consultation on Teaching Funding and Student Numbers
- RECEIVED:
- A response to the HEFCE consultation on teaching funding and student numbers submitted by the Russell Group on 2 September 2011 (SC.636.10-11).

JFB/KP/steersshare/minutes/201011/Sep11/12Sep11