

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 13 May 2013

Present: Vice-Chancellor,  
Deputy-Vice-Chancellor,  
Professor A Caesar,  
Professor A Coats,  
Professor S Croft,  
Professor Christina Hughes,  
Professor Christopher Hughes,  
Professor T Jones,  
Professor J Labbe,  
Professor J Palmowski,  
Mr N Swain,  
Professor S Swain,  
Professor M Taylor,  
Professor P Thomas,  
Professor L Young.

Apologies: Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, Professor P Winstanley.

In Attendance: Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Group Finance Director, Director of Development and External Affairs, Director of Estates, Director of Business Development, Executive Officer (Vice-Chancellor's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment (for item 323/12-13), Director, International Office (for item 323/12-13), Director of Health and Safety (for item 324/12-13), Senior Assistant Registrar (Strategic Planning and Analytics) (for item 325/12-13).

318/12-13 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2013 be approved

319/12-13 Royal Society Fellowships

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That on Thursday 2 May 2013, Professor Keith Ball from the Department of Mathematics and Professor Gareth Roberts from the Department of Statistics were made Fellows of the Royal Society.
- (b) That Professor Ball and Professor Roberts were elected through a peer review process, selected from more than 700 candidates, on the basis of excellence in science.

RESOLVED:

That the congratulations of the Committee be extended to Professor Ball and Professor Roberts.

320/12-13 Monash-Warwick International Conference of Undergraduate Research

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That On Friday 10 May 2013, Monash and Warwick Universities hosted their inaugural International Conference of Undergraduate Research.

- (b) That the conference was organised by the joint Monash-Warwick team working on the universities' undergraduate research journal Reinvention and the Student Careers and Skills team at Warwick.
- (c) That the global, 24-hour event had featured a number of sessions staged concurrently at Monash and Warwick Universities, and three Monash students and three Warwick students were selected to receive a full stipend to fly to the UK and Australia respectively to present in person.

321/12-13 Complete University Guide 2014

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That the Department of Economics, the School of Comparative American Studies and the Centre for Cultural Policy Studies had come top in their subjects in the 2014 Complete University Guide subject league table.
- (b) That the subject league tables were based on student satisfaction, research assessment, entry standards and graduate prospects.

322/12-13 Wolfson Research Merit Award

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (a) That Professor Marin Alexe from the Department of Physics had received a Wolfson Research Merit Award from the Royal Society.
- (b) That the Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award scheme aims to provide universities with additional support to enable them to attract science talent from overseas and retain respected UK scientists of outstanding achievement and potential.
- (c) That Professor Alexe had received his award for his work on nanoscale multiferroic materials and heterostructures for oxide electronics.

RESOLVED:

That Professor Alexe be congratulated on this achievement.

323/12-13 Admissions, Recruitment and International Update

CONSIDERED:

A paper updating the Committee on undergraduate and postgraduate admissions to the 2013/14 academic year, and proposing the date of the 2013/14 Postgraduate Open Day (SC.198/12-13).

REPORTED (by the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment)

- (a) That although the overall number of undergraduate applications had decreased from the same point in the previous year, 750 more offers had been made, and conversion rates were comparable to those in the 2012/13 admissions cycle.
- (b) That planning for the confirmation period was underway, with recruitment targets for near-miss candidates being mapped against the student number control (SNC) to ensure an undergraduate intake as close to the University's SNC threshold as possible.
- (c) That targeted correspondence had been sent to offer-holders to encourage conversion, and that the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office (SARO) was

liaising with the Director of University Marketing to identify future strategies for widening the applicant pool.

- (d) That future reports would contain widening participation data, including numbers of applicants from state schools and low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs).

(by the Director of the International Office)

- (e) That the number of offers made to international applicants was at target, but there were concerns that conversion rates may be adversely affected by the UK Border Agency's introduction of "credibility interviews" for students from countries it deemed to be "high risk".
- (f) That the interviews would be carried out by immigration officers based in Sheffield via Skype, provoking fears that students fully qualified under Tier 4 could experience communication issues over an internet link, and that many good students may perceive the interview as an excessive barrier to studying in the UK.
- (g) That the International Office was working closely with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) to prepare applicants for the interview.
- (h) That Universities UK (UUK) had published an analysis of the international student market, which reflected the University's concerns that the UK was declining in popularity as a study destination for postgraduate students.
- (i) That the International Office was undertaking a number of initiatives to promote the University overseas, including enhanced engagement with international alumni, use of social media, and the strengthening of its international representative offices; and that work was being done with the Director of University Marketing to review the University's promotional material for the overseas market.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (k) That the University would write to the UK Border Agency to formally communicate its concerns regarding the introduction of credibility interviews.

RESOLVED:

That the Postgraduate Open Day for 2013/14 be held on Wednesday 27 November 2013, as proposed in paper SC.198/12-13.

324/12-13

Annual Health and Safety Report

CONSIDERED:

A report updating the Committee on the developments, issues and progress on health and safety matters at the University (SC.197/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Director of Health and Safety)

- (a) That the Health and Safety Department's proposed Forward Strategy for 2013 to 2015 recommended that the emphasis for its team of Health and Safety Advisors shift towards providing more formal reporting through audit recommendations to Heads of Department on the performance of their department against the standards for the management of health and safety.
- (b) That a bid had been submitted for a system to support the formal reporting, noting the resource issues implicit in the increased onus on departments for managing their own health and safety matters.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

- (c) That the positive trajectory with respect to the Reporting of Incidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDORs) reflected the work that had been undertaken on health and safety across the institution.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

- (d) That the governance of health and safety matters was being supported under the University's assurance mapping process currently being undertaken as part of the Council Effectiveness Review.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee's endorsement of the proposed Forward Strategy for Health and Safety 2013-2015, as set out in paper SC.197/12-13, be recorded.
- (b) That thanks be expressed to all colleagues responsible for the positive developments in health and safety during 2012, as outlined in paper SC.197-12/13.

325/12-13

HESA Performance Indicators

RECEIVED:

A paper outlining the key outcomes for the University of the first tranche of the Performance Indicators, as published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on 21 March 2013 (SC.186/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Senior Assistant Registrar (Strategic Planning and Analytics Office))

- (a) That the data in the report referred to the 2011/12 academic year.
- (b) That the University's performance had been broadly positive, with improvements seen in the recruitment of students from low socio-economic groups and low-participation neighbourhoods and in retention rates for young undergraduate students.
- (c) That declines had been seen in the percentage of students from state schools and the retention rates for mature students.
- (d) That the report showed a decline in the University's performance against the benchmark for students leaving higher education between 2007/8 and 2009/10, and that whilst further analysis of the HESA figures was required, it was noted that the benchmark for leaving HE had fallen, resulting in a widening gap between this and the University's performance, despite a considerable improvement in the University's actual metrics in 2011/12.

(by the Academic Registrar)

- (e) That although there had been declines in recruitment in some widening participation categories, the University's expenditure on bursaries was continuing to rise due to increasing numbers of students becoming eligible for financial support during their studies.

(by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education (Innovation, Employability and Widening Participation))

- (f) That it should be noted that it was very difficult to target specific groups of students based on widening participation data, due to the high complexity of data collection parameters and methodologies, and the frequent changing of benchmarks.

326/12-13 Update on Major Research Proposal: West Midlands CLAHRC

RECEIVED:

A paper updating the Committee on the approval of the proposal for the University to join a Consortium to submit a major bid to the National Institute for Health Research to establish the West Midlands CLAHRC (paper SC.186/12-13).

REPORTED: (by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Life Sciences and Medicine) and Capital Development)

That the bid had been approved for submission by a delegation comprising the Vice-Chancellor, The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, the Group Finance Director and the Chair of the Academic Resourcing Committee.

KS/CS/Steering/Minutes/2012-2013/13-05-2013