THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 25 October 2010

Present: Vice-Chancellor,
                    Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
                    Professor S Bruzzi,
                    Professor A Caesar,
                    Professor R Higgott,
                    Professor C Hughes,
                    Professor T Jones,
                    Professor J Labbe,
                    Mr D Stevens.

Apologies: Professor K Lamberts, Professor M Taylor, Professor P Winstanley, Finance Director.

In Attendance: Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Academic Registrar, Director of Estates, Director of
                    Development, Communications and Strategy, Director of HR, Head of Governance
                    Support Services, Executive Officer (VC's Office), Assistant Registrar (Deputy
                    Registrar's Office), Administrative Officer (Governance), Deputy Academic Registrar
                    (for item 60/10-11).

55/10-11   Minutes

            RESOLVED:

            That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2010 be approved.

56/10-11   Universities that Count (minute 36/10-11 refers)

            CONSIDERED:

            An email from the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges, confirming that
            Year 3 of the Universities that Count survey would be used for a period of methodological
            review (SC.34/10-11).

            RESOLVED:

            That the Director of Estates give further consideration to participation in the focus groups that
            would form part of the Universities that Count review process.

57/10-11   The Browne Report (minute 37/10-11 refers)

            RECEIVED:

            A copy of the Universities UK overview and response to the Browne Report's
            recommendations (SC.41/10-11).

            REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

            That Universities UK had been explicit in its opposition to a system in which there was no
            upper limit on the fees set by HEIs for the courses they offer.

58/10-11   <u>Comprehensive Spending Review outcomes</u>

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

(a)   That the outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review were largely as anticipated, noting that the ring-fencing of the Science budget in cash terms was better than expected.

(b)   That the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) would continue, although it was unclear at this point in exactly what form.

(c)   That the Prime Minister would shortly announce a new £200m fund for university and industry collaboration including the creation of Technology Innovation Centres.

59/10-11   <u>American Visits</u>

REPORTED: (by the Vice-Chancellor)

(a)   That he had recently visited the United States, under the auspices of the British Council, to promote institutional engagement between UK and US institutions, and attending a meeting of the American Council of Education concerning global engagement.

(b)   That it was clear from the meeting of the American Council on Education that the impact of cuts on some US institutions had been significant, noting that the emphasis in the US system on growing the numbers of part time students had resulted in a significant decline in completion rates.

60/10-11   <u>Report on Postgraduate Issues</u>

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Academic Registrar concerning postgraduate issues, together with an oral report (SC.35/10-11).

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

(a)   That, subsequent to the drafting of the report:

(i)   the decision had been taken to maintain the current total number of postgraduate scholarship nominations permitted by departments, to encompass WPRS and AHRC doctoral awards and the new international scholarship scheme.

(ii)   the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies and Assistant Registrar (Graduate School) were meeting the Director of Graduate Studies (Life Sciences) later that day to continue to ensure that PGR students within the School of Life Sciences continued to be supported appropriately.

(b)   That it was acknowledged that the move from a 3 to 4 year standard period of registration for PhD students had a wide variety of implications, noting that the decision had been driven in large part by student welfare issues and that it was important that the student support structure was aligned with any further growth in postgraduate student numbers.

(c)   That further consideration was being given as how best to structure the schedule of fee payments for PhD students with a 4 year period of registration.

(d)   That a recent meeting with Jerry Oppenheim, Regional Director of the UK Border Agency, had given cause for optimism regarding the current levels of administrative burden placed on HEIs arising from the employment of external examiners.

(by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

(e)   That further investigation needed to be undertaken as to how Warwick could be featured on the Singapore Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star) sponsorship listings.

(by the Vice-Chancellor)

(f)   That continuing the current trajectory of PGR numbers towards the targets in Vision 2015 remained challenging, and that Warwick would need to continue to be innovative in finding sources of funding to support its strategy.

61/10-11   Fees Review

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Academic Registrar and Senior Assistant Registrar (Management Information & Planning) concerning work being overseen by the Fees Working Group (SC.45/10-11), together with an oral report from the Academic Registrar.

REPORTED: (by the Academic Registrar)

(a)   That the Browne Report and the Comprehensive Spending Review, as well as other anticipated changes in funding, presented the University with a complex set of issues to consider when reviewing fees.

(b)   That the Fees Working Group was overseeing scenario-planning and modelling to address these issues, in order to present options to a future meeting of the Committee.

(by the Deputy Registrar)

(c)   That there may be further external constraints placed on the scenarios being modelled, for example HEFCE limits to increases in student numbers.

(by the President of the Students' Union)

(d)   That it was important that the views of the student body were considered when reviewing the University's longer-term fees setting strategy and that there should be sufficient opportunities for consultation and engagement in the decision-making process.

RESOLVED:

(a)   That the Fees Working Group oversee the detailed development of proposals for the University's longer-term fees setting strategy in the context of the outcomes of the Browne Report and the Comprehensive Spending Review.

(b)   That the Steering Committee be kept up to date on progress with subsequent options and proposals being considered by the Committee at a future meeting.

62/10-11   PULSE Action Plan from the 2010 Survey

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Director of HR concerning the PULSE Action Plan from the 2010 survey, (SC.42/10-11), together with an oral report.

REPORTED: (by the Director of HR)

That it was the view of the PULSE Action Team that, in light of the current changing climate in the sector, institutional focus should be concentrated on three key themes; Leadership, Communications and Change Management.

RESOLVED:

(a)   That the next round of the PULSE survey in 2010/11should be a 'lighter touch', focused survey concentrating on the three suggested key themes of Leadership, Communications and Change Management.

(b)   That a further full PULSE survey be carried out in 2011/12.

(c)   That the Director of HR and Registrar liaise to identify senior members of the University to act as Champions for each of the three key themes.

63/10-11   National Audit Office Census of Higher Education Institutions

CONSIDERED:

A letter from the National Audit Office, informing the University of a forthcoming survey into the financial health of the HE sector in England, and the role played by HEFCE in sustaining it (SC.36/10-11).

REPORTED: (by the Registrar)

That the questionnaire had been received by email that morning, and that further analysis was required in order to establish the scope of the survey.

RESOLVED:

That the Registrar identify those individuals most appropriate to complete the questionnaire, noting that the response would be considered by the Steering Committee prior to the deadline for submission of 5 November 2010.

64/10-11   Memberships of Senate Committees

REPORTED:

That Professor Neil Johnson would serve as Chair of the Warwick Medical School Undergraduate Studies and Postgraduate Studies Committees ex officio in his capacity as Pro-Dean (Education) in Warwick Medical School, noting that in his capacity as Chair of the Postgraduate Studies Committee Professor Johnson would also serve as an ex officio member of the Board of Graduate Studies and the Continuation of Registration Committee Panel – Post Graduate Students.

RESOLVED:

(a)   That the appointment of Professor Neil Johnson, Pro-Dean (Education) in the Warwick Medical School as the second representative appointed by the Senate from the Warwick Medical School to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, be approved on behalf of the Senate.

(b)   That the recommendation that the Senior Tutor be formally added to the constitution of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee be approved on behalf of the Senate, noting that Mr Stephen Lamb would currently serve in this capacity.

65/10-11   Independent Public Services Pensions Commission

RECEIVED:

The executive summary of the Interim Report from the Independent Public Services Pensions Commission, chaired by Lord Hutton, noting that the final report will be published in 2011 (SC.40/10-11).

66/10-11   NESTA Independence

RECEIVED:

Correspondence from the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts, confirming the Government's intention to grant NESTA full independence (SC.39/10-11).

67/10-11   UUK Patterns of Higher Education Institutions in the UK Report

RECEIVED:

The covering letter and introduction of the tenth publication of Universities UK Patterns of Higher Education Institutions in the UK Report, examining trends in the higher education sector at both the sector and institutional level (SC.38/10-11).

68/10-11   University Response to the UUK Research Conduct Survey (minute 29/10-11 refers)

RECEIVED:

The University's response to the UUK Research Conduct Survey, submitted to the UUK prior to the deadline of 15 October 2010 (SC.43/10-11).