

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Widening Participation Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Widening Participation Committee  
Tuesday 10 April

- Present: Professor Chris Hughes (Chair, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Education), Sue Bennett (Director of Student Careers and Skills) Paul Blagburn (Secretary, Head of Widening Participation and Outreach), Emily Dunford (Postgraduate Officer, Warwick SU), Professor Louise Gracia (Dean of Students), Dr Richard Hutchins (Strategy Director, Strategy and Policy), Kate Ireland (Director of Centre Teacher Education) (until 2.30), Liam Jackson (Education Officer, Warwick SU), Professor Fergus McKay (Director of Centre for Lifelong Learning) (until 2.00), Dr Ines Molinaro (Academic Director, Warwick Foundation Studies), Dr Nick Monk (Director of Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning), Dr Rachel Moseley (Head of Department, TV and Film), Professor Robin Naylor (Director of Studies, Economics, Co-Chair of WP Evaluation and Research Working Group), Professor Jeremy Smith (Head of Department, Economics), Professor Patrick Tissington (Academic Director of Employability and Skills), Dr Chris Twine (Academic Registrar) (until 2.30pm), Despina Weber (Head of Disability Services), Teng Zhang (Head of Student Finance and Funding)
- Apologies: Delyth Chambers (Director of Student Recruitment Outreach and Admissions Service), Professor Geraldine Hartshorne (Head of Clinical Faculty, WMS), Kate Hughes (Regional Partnerships Director, External Affairs), Samuel McClenaghan (Deputy Finance Director), Matt Ferguson (Director of Development), Professor Lorenzo Frigerio (Head of Department, Life Sciences), Rory McIntyre (Senior Assistant Registrar, Strategic Planning and Analytics), Dr Ines Molinaro (Academic Director, Foundation Studies), Professor Colin Sparrow (Academic Director, Graduate Studies)
- In attendance: Baljit Gill (Assistant Secretary, Widening Participation and Outreach Manager), Claire Edden (Outreach Officer, Student Recruitment Outreach and Admissions Service)

26/17-18 **Conflicts of interest**

REPORTED:

That, should any members or attendees of the Senate have any conflicts of interest relating to agenda items for the meeting, they should be declared in accordance with the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance (2014), available online from <http://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/publications/>.

NOTE: No declarations were made.

27/17-18

**Minutes**

CONSIDERED:

The minutes of the meeting of the WP Committee held on 20 February 2018.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the WP committee held on 20 February be approved.

28/17-18

**Matters arising**

CONSIDERED:

A briefing document referenced at the previous meeting outlining some of the implications of the introduction of Universal Credit

- (a) Universal Credit is a payment to assist with living costs available to those on a low income or out of work and is replacing a broad range of benefits over the next twelve months.
- (b) The introduction, delays in implementation and miscommunication of this new benefit has negative implications for those students with caring responsibilities, disabilities or estrangement from their family, and furthermore is deterring potential 2+2 learners from the programme.
- (c) The Student Funding team are aware of the situation, and any student experiencing financial difficulty is encouraged to contact the team.
- (d) Eligible students are encouraged to apply to the University's Access to Learning Fund, which has been increased to meet need.

RESOLVED:

It is noted that better communication should be promoted, both to dispel myths and signpost students to Student Funding, raising awareness of the Access to Learning Fund and reducing concerns.

29/17-18

**Chair's Business**

- (a) Education Strategy  
The Strategy has been approved by Senate and will be presented to Council for final sign off.
- (b) House of Commons Education Select Committee  
The Committee visited the University on 26 February 2018 and displayed great interest in the University's Access and Widening Participation programmes. The recently published Impact Report has been sent to them supplying further information.
- (c) Guardian article  
The Guardian newspaper recently covered the A level Bootcamp held at the University over the Easter break with an informative and positive article on how the initiative aims to raise both aspirations and achievement.
- (d) National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)  
The NCOP programme had originally been funded to provide support for collaborative outreach across Quintile 1 wards in Warwickshire from January 2017 to December 2018. This has now been extended to July 2019 and the programme will continue under the remit of the Office for Students.
- (e) Office for Students (OfS)  
Following a discussion with the OfS regarding the current underspend on the Widening Participation budget, the University has been endorsed for the

student lifecycle approach it is taking, and it has been recognised that this will inevitably take time to embed. This has been factored in to the forthcoming Access and Participation Plan.

(f) Russell Group

At a recent Russell Group PVCs Education meeting, Chris Millward, Director of Access and Participation at OfS addressed the group and outlined that universities should focus not only on access but firmly on participation and student success, as demonstrated in the aforementioned Guardian article focused on disparities in student outcomes for identified WP groups.

30/17-18

**The Warwick Bursary Scheme**

CONSIDERED:

An updated paper from the previous meeting on student financial support (WP.7/17-18 Revised **{Restricted}**)

REPORTED:

- (a) This paper provide further information on the financial support packages available to Warwick students, to inform the decision-making process on future financial support.
- (b) While the Maintenance Loan is the main support accessed by our students, Warwick's offer is effective, and includes Warwick Undergraduate Scholarships and Bursaries, the Multicultural Scholars Programme, the Warwick Scholars Programme and the Lloyds Scholars Programme. Warwick Bursaries are competitive when benchmarked against the Russell Group.
- (c) It is noted that the anticipated OfS guidance, together with implications from the HE Funding Review, the requirement of potentially significant changes would need to be reported in the 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan, and implemented from 2020-21. It is therefore suggested that it would be prudent to review and gather evidence once the new requirements are known, rather than make major changes in the short term.
- (d) It is recommended that a robust methodology is developed for the review to ensure evidence-based decision-making in view of the refreshed strategy.

RESOLVED:

The recommendations are accepted with a requirement to be proactive at an institutional level in reviewing priorities early enough in the cycle to make a positive impact.

31/17-18

**Disability Support and Student Outcomes**

CONSIDERED:

A paper on support and outcomes for students with a disability (WP.9/17-18)

REPORTED:

- (a) Changes in government funding have resulted in the rebalancing of the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA), moving the responsibility from central government to universities.
- (b) The report highlights the constraints surrounding the analysis of disability data due to the individual, varied and complex nature of the area, together with the

challenges of using SITS based data, where a number of discrepancies have been identified.

- (c) However significant trends in lower attainment rates for students within certain disability groups have been noted.
- (c) The report also indicates the differential rates of engagement with students dependent on the disability group.

RESOLVED:

That further exploration into disability related areas to investigate the disparity in the data is required to drive operational and strategic measures.

32/17-18

### **Widening Participation Evaluation**

RECEIVED:

A presentation on national evaluation practice produced for the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) on understanding the effectiveness of outreach interventions.

- (a) Three broad aims underpin the paper, submitted to OFFA last year:
  - (i) To improve the understanding of current practice regarding outreach and outreach evaluation, as aimed at higher education access of young people from disadvantaged groups in England;
  - (ii) To improve evaluation practice across the higher education sector in England;
  - (iii) To help OFFA make robust, evidence-led policy that supports and challenges institutions to identify and use the most effective approaches to improving access.
- (b) Evaluation of activity challenges the impact of spend and is dependent upon the effectiveness of that evaluation, in the context of institutional strategy.
- (c) Within the guidance there is a strong theme of the intrinsic role of evaluation. It is noted that a holistic approach should be taken to assess the success of activity, to inform the development of new activity, with clearly defined objectives throughout.
- (d) Three standards of evaluation practice are proposed:
  - (i) Level 1 – The narrative motivating the selection of activity in the context of the institution, evidenced in best practice elsewhere in the sector, or in research literature.
  - (ii) Level 2 – Quantitative or qualitative evidence of impact, with no causal correlation
  - (iii) Level 3 – Quantitative or qualitative evidence of a causal correlation, utilising randomised control trials

RESOLVED:

The investment in evaluation demonstrates a relatively new approach for the University, and the Committee to be updated regularly by the Evaluation and Research Working Group to ensure synergy with strategic priorities.

33/17-18

### **Access and Participation Plan**

RECEIVED:

A verbal update/presentation on the development of the University's Access and Participation Plan to submit to the Office for Students (OfS)

- (a) Guidance received in February indicated a subtle change in expectation of institutional submissions, with the emphasis clearly shifting from the traditional focus on access. The guidance reflects OfS's approach to focus on student outcomes across the lifecycle, ensuring institutions examine their performance and develop strategy around where gaps and challenges exist.
- (b) The University is predicting an increase in higher fee income and therefore any additional investment will be targeted towards student success and progression categories.
- (c) While there is no change to previous target groups, the plan aims to explore the intersectionality of groups to provide an evidence-based approach to access and participation, progression and success.
- (d) The plan furthermore identifies institutional and sector-wide gaps and potential target groups, and characteristics influencing the attainment gap between different groups.
- (e) The draft plan to be circulated and endorsed by the end of April.

34/17-18 **Looked After Children and Care Leavers**

A paper outlining the University's approach engage and support Looked After Children, and Care Leavers (WP.10/17-18) to be considered at the next meeting.

35/17-18 **Any other business**

No other business to be reported.

36/17-18 **Date of next meeting**

REPORTED:

That the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be held on Wednesday 23 May 2018 at 10.30am in CMR 1.0, University House.