UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Widening Participation Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Widening Participation Committee
Wednesday 3 April 2019

Present: Professor Chris Hughes (Chair, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Education), Paul Blagburn
                (Secretary, Head of Widening Participation), Anil Awesti (Centre for Lifelong
                Learning, Co-Chair of Student Success and Progression Working Group), Delyth
                Chambers (Director of Student Recruitment, Outreach and Admissions Service), Matt
                Ferguson (Director of Development), Professor Lorenzo Frigerio (Head of
                Department, Life Sciences), Professor Louise Gracia (Dean of Students), James
                Hutchinson (Head of Student Finance and Student Funding), Kate Ireland (Director of
                Centre for Teacher Education), Larissa Kennedy (Education Officer, Warwick SU),
                Ellie King (Postgraduate Officer, Warwick SU), Samuel McClenaghan (Deputy
                Finance Director), Dr Ines Molinaro (Academic Director, Warwick Foundation
                Studies), Professor Robin Naylor (Director of Studies, Economics, Co-Chair of WP
                Evaluation and Research Working Group), Kulbir Shergill (Director of Social
                Inclusion), Professor Jeremy Smith (Head of Department, Economics), Professor
                Patrick Tissington (Academic Director of Employability and Skills), Professor Richard
                Tunstall (Head of Clinical Anatomy & Imaging, WMS), Dr Chris Twine (Academic
                Registrar), Despina Weber (Head of Disability Services)

Apologies: Hannah Friend (Director of Wellbeing and Safeguarding), Jonathan Heron (Institute
                for Advanced Teaching and Learning), Andrew Higgins (Director of Academic Office),
                Anne Hollingshead (Director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning), Dr Rachel Moseley
                (Head of Department, TV and Film), Professor Colin Sparrow (Academic Director,
                Graduate Studies),

In attendance: Baljit Gill (Assistant Secretary, Widening Participation Manager), Tammy Thiele (WP
                Evaluation and Evidence Manager) (item 44/18-19)

39/18-19   **Apologies and 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

40/18-19   **Minutes**

             CONSIDERED:

             The minutes of the meeting of the WP Committee held on 14 February 2019.

             RESOLVED:

             That the minutes of the WP committee held on 14 February 2019 be approved.

41/18-19   **Matters Arising**

NOTED:

(a)   31/18-19 National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)
       The University is required to submit details of all future engagement with
       NCOP to the Office for Students. The local NCOP has been successful in its
       bid to support additional geographical areas, and will support young people in
       the Hinckley ward going forward. A full update on NCOP will be presented
       before the Committee at the July meeting.

(b)   34/18-19 Widening Participation Strategy
       The WP Strategy will shortly go online for local consultation with departmental
       groups and colleagues across the University, in advance of presentation
       before the Education Group in May. Details will also feature on Insite, to
       ensure maximum engagement of University staff and students.

(c)   36/18-19 Student Recruitment Strategy
       The Strategy will be presented to the Strategy Group in April, detailing UK
       Recruitment and referring to Widening Participation targets. Operational plans
       aim to work across Recruitment and Widening Participation to deliver
       ambitious student numbers.

42/18-19   **Chair's Business**

(a)   Into University
       The Coventry Into University Centre was formally launched on 12 March
       2019, with significant representation from University colleagues. The Chair
       thanked the Committee and the Widening Participation team for the support
       demonstrated to this new partnership.

(b)   OfS events
       The Chair and the Head of Widening Participation attended an information
       event held by the OfS on 20 March. It is recognised that the emphasis lays
       firmly on targeting support both across the student lifecycle and to reduce the
       gaps between the engagement and achievement of specific groups of
       learners. It is acknowledged that Access and Participation Plans submitted by
       higher tariff universities will be subject to greater scrutiny, and will be returned
       by the OfS if they do not demonstrate sufficient ambition in their endeavours.
       The Chair will attend a further event on target setting in London, which will
       direct and clarify the measures universities need to consider in their Plans.
       The University's Access and Participation Plan to be discussed in detail in
       item 45/18-19.

43/18-19   **Social Inclusion Strategy**

REPORTED:

A paper from the Director of Social Inclusion detailing the University's draft Social
Inclusion Strategy (WP 18/18-19)

(a)   Social Inclusion stands as one of the four strategic priorities underpinning the
       University Strategy; the draft Social Inclusion Strategy articulates the
       University vision for inclusion. It has been developed in consultation with key
       stakeholders across the institution and has been presented to the Education
       Committee, Faculty Forums and the Students' Union.

(b)   The development of the Social Inclusion Strategy has built on existing work
       across the University, particularly that of Widening Participation, Equality,

Diversity and Inclusion, the academic body and the People Directorate. It provides a framework to promote diversity in the widest sense, focussing on social disadvantage and mobility.

(c) The Strategy aims to remove economic, social and cultural barriers that present challenges to working, studying and succeeding at Warwick, with three objectives:

i. Increase the diversity of staff and students to maximise diversity of thought, promoting innovation and creativity

ii. Develop a culture of inclusion that supports diversity to thrive, utilising WP considerations on the intersectionality of influences

iii. Become an internationally recognised leader in inclusion, reflecting the diversity of our local and regional communities

(d) In developing this Strategy, close collaboration, particularly with the WP and Education Strategies, demonstrates the aspiration for cultural change at the University in an integrated way, with joined-up conversations between staff and students.

(e) The Strategy may challenge thinking across the University, but clear objectives will be provided through KPIs, and a Social Inclusion Dashboard will identify good practice and any areas of deficit.

(f) This draft Strategy will be presented formally through Governance and further details will be brought before the WP Committee when endorsed.

NOTED:

The Committee welcomes further updates on the Social Inclusion Strategy.

44/18-19   **Contextual Data Outcomes**

RECEIVED:

A paper examining the early evidence of the University's contextual data policy from the Widening Participation Evaluation and Evidence Manager (WP 17/18-19)

(a) The report summarises research being undertaken by the WP Evaluation team exploring the usage, fairness and impacts of the University's contextualised admissions policy since its implementation in 2017. Contextual data refers to comparative school and socio-economic data used in admissions to situate individual prior attainment within the context of circumstance in which they were obtained. The research will inform the use of contextual data and ensure processes are robust, efficient and transparent.

(b) The use of contextual data is recommended for:
i. Identifying academically able applicants whose academic potential may not be fully reflected in their school grades alone
ii. Increasing University intake of WP students
iii. Remaining competitive
iv. Identifying groups that may require additional support once at the University

(c) UK domicile applicants must meet two of the following factors to be considered for a contextual offer (CO) of up to two grades below the standard offer:
i. Attended a school where average performance at Key Stage 4 was below the national average and/or attended a school or college where performance at Key Stage 5 falls within the bottom 40%
ii. Has spent time in local authority care

            iii. Attended a school with above average eligibility for Free School Meals
            iv. Lives in a low participation neighbourhood

(d)   The research indicated:

i. Substantial increase in applications eligible for CO and the number of students who entered with a CO, potentially due to system improvements and increased collaboration between WP and Admissions. It is anticipated that these levels will continue to increase.

ii. Over 50% of the offer holders were rejected each year because they either did not meet the CO or achieve at a level close enough to the CO

iii. Patterns differ substantially by department/Faculty

iv. The contextual policy appears to have positively impacted CO students who met the standard offer for highly selective, over-subscribed courses

v. Small but significant differences were identified in year 1 attainment, between CO/standard offer/WP students, varying by department; potential differences in gaps in progression require further research when the data become available.

vi. Over 80% of applicants were eligible on school based criteria. Around a third met an area level indicator. This may limit the accuracy of targeting and impacts of contextual admissions.

vii. The system does not consider the school at which the students actually achieved the qualifications, or to their GCSE attainment, despite this being a considered in the selection process.

viii. The system does not include school level indicators for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, meaning that applicants from outside England need only meet one contextual indicator.

(e)   Further research will be undertaken to identify impact on programme entry to both WMS and WMG degrees, where courses are solely graduate entry.

(f)   While links may be detected between receiving the CO and funding, the students will be eligible for undergraduate means-tested bursaries regardless of other programme-based bursaries.

(g)   The reliability of school-level indicators as indicators of future academic performance was discussed; studies have suggested an under-prediction of grades for learners from a WP background, and applicants would need to be predicted to meet the standard offer to receive the CO.

(h)   Differences in attainment in year 1 require further qualitative research; students in CLL have identified challenges they face around identity, belonging and a sense of 'imposter syndrome'. The Evaluation Team will be addressing this by undertaking surveys with incoming students, to gather more qualitative evidence to inform practice.

(i)   The Director of SROAS indicted that Admissions now follow a less selective process, making lower offers, while highly selective courses were performing well.

(j)   The Director of Employability and Skills further identified concerns around the potential level of employability skills of CO entrants, with stark differences across the group, requiring different support. The WP Evaluation and Research working group are pursuing this avenue of exploration, across different stages of the student lifecycle and utilising DLHE data to inform support mechanisms.

(k)   Recommendations:

i. To change the system so that students who can evidence a minimum of three months in care do not have to meet additional criteria to be eligible for a CO

ii. To include school level indicators for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

NOTED:

The paper examining the early evidence of the University's contextual data policy.

The Chair, Co-Chair of the WP Evaluation and Research working group and the Head of Economics commended the WP Evaluation team on an excellent piece of work, with meaningful analysis and insight, which would prove invaluable in deliberations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee endorsed amending the criteria regarding young people from a care background, basing the decision on a previous paper (WP 8/19-19) submitted to the group.

The Committee supported the inclusion of school level indicators for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to provide consistency and transparency in processes.

45/18-19   **Access and Participation Plan**

REPORTED:

A paper from the Head of Widening Participation on the development of the University's 2020-21 Access and Participation Plan including an initial review of the University's performance for WP target groups (WP 19/18-19)

(a)   The paper provides an overview of the expectations on providers for the development of Access and Participation Plans, including what should be included and linkage to national key performance measures. The move to a five year plan allows the implementation of longer-term measures and the OfS will be expecting ambitious targets. The Committee is invited to
i. Note the expectations from the OfS for the development of Access and Participation Plans
ii. Consider the initial assessment of performance for access, continuation, degree outcomes and progression for different target groups
iii. Consider and make recommendations for new institutional access targets in line with the OfS' expectations and provide feedback on the direction the University should take related to attainment, continuation and progression.

(b)   While the University strategy has in the past concentrated on access, the focus is now firmly on the student lifecycle, demonstrating a coherent approach to support student progression and success, with particular focus on reducing the gaps between groups of learners. The paper outlines an initial assessment of performance for access, continuation, degree outcomes and progression for different target groups and provides possible scenarios for new institutional targets. The models present a challenging depiction of potential possibilities.

(c)   The gap between Q1 and Q5 entrants is substantial, however there has been improvement over a five year period. While the University is not the worst performing across the Russell Group, and has utilised quintile data to inform practice for some time, measures call for a significant increase in Q1 learners to balance the proportion and reduce the gap. However significant gaps exist in prior attainment by quintile. Therefore efforts to address this gap require co-ordination between Government, schools, employers and charities; universities cannot address this alone. Furthermore, any increase in Q1 learners at higher tariff universities may be at the expense of other institutions in the sector.

(d)   Discussion across the Committee raised a number of pertinent arguments. Increased flexibility in entry qualifications is one option that the institution might take, utilising competency-based assessment alongside academic attainment. Judgement may be made on minimum entry requirements going

forward, and an exploration of current models of alternative entry across the University to inform developments.

(e) It was suggested that the data does not accurately reflect the reality of student experiences at Warwick; the SU indicates that the gap is actually worse, with significant underrepresentation of some groups and overrepresentation of others, thus indicating the need for high level targets to effect real change. The robustness of the data, and the appropriateness of metrics used, were questioned, with indications that any further breakdown would need to be done locally, not through the OfS. Further consideration is necessary to eliminate 'unexplained' gaps and to explore areas of under-representation wider than solely on quintile data, encompassing the intersectionality of demographic groups.

(f) The concept that the institution only welcomes incoming students from a certain cultural background implies a cultural deficit in others. Impactful measures require a radical rethink about institutional priorities and local nuances, and how the University will meet them. To transform the culture of the institution, and institutional willingness to engage, requires strategic prioritisation. Recent WPC developments endorse this, and ongoing support for step change is needed from the Committee. However it is important to be realistic in meeting OfS demands, to ensure they are achievable.

(g) Qualifications alone do not present the only barriers to non-traditional students, who often do not perceive any value or benefit of higher education. Therefore communications from the University with local schools should be reviewed to address this.

(h) This undertaking requires sound resourcing and realistic flexibility in Admissions requirements as all Russell Group institutions will be pursuing the same group of learners. The potential impact of this measure on the institutional standing in the University League tables may prove challenging. Therefore a wider discussion is necessary to explore the implications, particularly on international student recruitment and income as highlighted by WBS.

NOTED:

Further information on targeting will be available after the OfS meeting in Birmingham.

The revised draft Access and Participation Plan will be circulated to the Committee, with further communications across the wider University.

46/18-19 **Access to Warwick Programme**

RECEIVED:

An updated paper on the development of the new institutional Access to Warwick Programme (WP 20/18-19) by the Head of Widening Participation

(a) The paper provides an update to the paper (WP 13/18-19) presented at the last meeting, where the core principles of the programme were agreed by the Committee (35/18-19)

(b) The paper has been presented to the Student Recruitment Steering Group, and the proposed admissions criteria have been supported.

(c) Models of financial support have been explored, based on predicted numbers of engaged learners. This will be subject to review in 2020-21 to assess uptake and to consider if a future cap on numbers is required. The Deputy

Finance Director has communicated queries to the Head of Widening Participation.

(d) Discussions with academic departments and Marketing are ongoing. While the programme has not yet achieved ARC approval, this can be brought to the meeting through Chairs' Actions.

(e) In response to a query from Warwick Medical School, it was confirmed that this programme targeted prospective year 12/13 students entering at undergraduate level only, rather than those students entering as graduates.

NOTED:

Updates on the development of the new institutional Access to Warwick programme.

47/18-19 **Widening Participation Working Group Updates (Standing item)**

REPORTED:

An oral update from the Co-Chairs of the WP Evaluation and Research and the Student Success and Progression working groups

(a) Evaluation and Research working group
The Co-Chair of the working group indicated that there are no further updates in view of item 44/18-19. Future presentations will be made before the Committee in due course.

(b) Student Success and Progression working group
The Co-Chair of the Student Success and Progression working group reported that focus groups have commenced to gather data on the students' experiences, with early themes focussing on the employability arrears felt by students under pressure to graduate into professional careers. Further discussions will be undertaken and conclusions reported to the Committee.

NOTED:

The updates on the WP Evaluation and Evidence and the Student Success and Progression working groups.

48/18-19 **Any other business**

None reported.

49/18-19 **Date of next meeting**

REPORTED:

That the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be held on **Thursday 23 May 2019, 3.00-5.00pm in CMR 1.0, University House**