

## HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

### Staff Meeting

A Staff Meeting will be held on Monday, 19 September 2016 at 0915 in Foulkes-Crowther Lecture Theatre

### AGENDA

1. **Welcome**

To welcome: those staff attending their first staff meeting

2. **Minutes**

To approve: the minutes of the Staff Meeting held on 15 April 2016 (attached). A copy can be located on the University Portal under the HR Business Unit

3. **Matters Arising**

To note: that the actions set out on page 5 of the minutes have been completed

4. **Presentation by the Vice-Chancellor**

To receive: a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor

5. **Date of Next Meeting**

28 April 2017

**Staff Meeting****Minutes of the Staff Meeting held on 15 April 2016 in the Foulkes-Crowther Lecture Theatre**

**Attendance:** a record of all staff who attended is held in the University Secretary's Office.

**15/07 Welcome**

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed new staff to the meeting.

**15/08 Minutes**

Agreed: the minutes of the Staff Meeting held on 21 September 2015 (15/01-15/06).

**15/09 Matters Arising**

Agreed: that there were no matters arising which needed further discussion.

**15/10 Presentation from the Vice-Chancellor**

- Noted:
- i) that the Vice-Chancellor's presentation would be made available to all staff on the University Portal following the meeting;
  - ii) that the University had won the 'WhatUni' University of the Year Award the previous evening. The University had also been judged as first for student support and for job prospects. It had also been placed in the top three (gold, silver or bronze) in all of the categories in which it had been shortlisted. The Vice-Chancellor expressed his thanks to all staff for their commitment and support in achieving this extremely prestigious accolade. The awards had been voted for by students and the University's success was therefore a reflection of hard work by all staff across the institution;
  - iii) that applications for undergraduate courses starting in September 2016 were currently running at 99% of levels at the same point in 2015. It was noteworthy that the number of students rejecting offers made to them by the University was slightly higher at this current point, however, numbers remained changeable as students were still making up their minds and, therefore, firm outcomes of the full application cycle were not yet available. The University would continue to try to ascertain possible reasons why students were rejecting the offers that had been made to them, and feedback would be provided to Admissions Tutors and other staff in due course;
  - iv) that taught postgraduate applications for 2016 were currently similar to those for 2014 and were lower than those received at the same point in 2015. It was noted that this appeared to be a HE sector-wide situation. The University was continuing, nevertheless, to market its taught graduate provision actively and was also in discussion about a number of opportunities to attract further EU students, particularly to postgraduate courses;
  - v) that, as some staff would be aware, discussions were currently ongoing about whether or not the University's current arrangements for interviewing undergraduates should be

reviewed. In particular, consideration was being given to whether or not it might be possible to hold interviews earlier in the cycle. There was evidence that other Universities had identified that offer making needed to be done as quickly as possible in the cycle and, where interviews were still taking place, these had often been brought forward to try to address this need;

- vi) that undergraduate applications across the HE sector were currently 0.2% higher than in the previous year at the same point in the cycle. It was noteworthy that the increase mainly related to additional EU applicants;
- vii) that it was anticipated that competition for students for 2017 entry would continue to be extremely fierce, particularly as the demographic downturn started to have a greater impact;
- viii) that a new Vice-Chancellor had been appointed at the Royal Agricultural University, Professor Joanna Price. The RAU was also currently focussing on their 'Farm 491' project which was being funded with support from the Local Enterprise Partnership;
- ix) that SRUC had not yet announced the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor. It was also understood that Edinburgh University was currently considering whether it wished to offer agriculture courses. There had also been announcements recently about increased research funding for SRUC provided by the Scottish Government;
- x) that Aberystwyth University currently had an acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Gratton;
- xi) that the new Chief Executive Officer for NMITE (the project to establish a university in Hereford) had been appointed and was likely to move to Hereford before the end of the current year. The Vice-Chancellor had met with the NMITE Development Team and it was hoped that ways of collaborating, rather than competing, might emerge in due course. The focus of the University of Hereford project remained to develop bespoke engineering courses, with an ambition to attract up to 5,000 students by 2020;
- xii) that Agri-Tech developments were also taking place at Lincoln University in conjunction with Lincolnshire LEP. The University of Lincoln was not currently involved in the Agri-Tech East Group and it was not clear whether the developments at Lincoln might, in due course, be linked with Agri-Tech East proposals;
- xiii) that FE local area reviews were currently underway and it was understood that some larger further education colleges were currently challenging certain aspects of the reviews. Reaseheath and North Shropshire College were continuing merger discussions;
- xiv) that the University has now secured contracts, a company structure and other key arrangements which had enabled it to start the construction work on the Agri-Tech Innovation Centre. Work on the SMART Dairy Project would also commence shortly while discussions about the location of a new beef unit were currently in hand. Thanks were expressed to all staff who had been working hard to develop this important project and to meet challenging deadlines;

- xv) that it was clear that the government remained particularly focused on ensuring that centres funded under the Agri-Tech Strategy were working closely with industry partners and there were also likely to be opportunities to further develop the University's links with AHDB. The vision was to fully occupy the Agri-Tech funded centres and to ensure that they were working effectively. The local authority and Marches LEP were continuing to be supportive of a proposal to develop further Agri-Tech related employment opportunities on land set aside to the south of Newport. Funding had now been secured to open up the site and information for companies that may be interested in relocating had also been put together and would be promoted by the inward investment team working at Telford & Wrekin;
- xvi) that announcements on institutional funding for all English HEIs would be made during the next week. The Department of Business Innovation and Skills had published its recent letter to HEFCE in which it had been confirmed that there would be no further changes to the HEFCE budget for the last quarter of the year;
- xvii) that the University's strong student recruitment had enabled it to maintain and slightly improve its financial position this year. It was therefore important that student recruitment was maintained at these levels wherever possible in 2016 and beyond;
- xviii) that during the coming week the outcome of the Institutional Specific Funding (ISF) bid would also be known. It was noted that, as previously indicated, the key criteria to secure extra funding was to demonstrate evidence of 'world leading teaching'. The Vice-Chancellor would update staff on financial matters as soon as information was made available and could be released;
- xix) that plans to change Disabled Students' Allowances arrangements were continuing and it would be necessary for all universities to consider how they would be able to support students in different ways, as some external funding would no longer be available. Thanks were expressed to all staff who were already working hard to consider how the curriculum could be made more accessible to all students. In the meantime, the Exams Office would be very grateful for any additional offers of support for assisting students with specific needs during the exam period. A memorandum from the Vice-Chancellor had been sent to managers during the previous week on this matter;
- xx) that the Student Opportunity Fund was also being reduced and funds had been reallocated to a new national collaborative outreach programme. The programme would fund consortia of universities to undertake collaborative outreach activities. Harper Adams was currently involved in two clusters and intended to bid with Keele University for funding in the next round;
- xxi) that capital funding was likely to be further reduced whilst, at the same time, specific teaching capital had been made available. Further funding to complete the laboratory project was required and work to secure this was currently in hand;

- xxii) that the University's budget during 2016/2017 was likely to continue to be an area of focus with much depending on success in relation to student recruitment and overall student numbers;
- xxiii) that discussions were currently underway with the Board of Governors around whether or not the schedule of Board meetings should be amended slightly to respond to changes around Governors' roles in relation to quality assurance and financial sustainability;
- xxiv) that the Green Paper on higher education referred to changes in the quality assurance system and it was understood that there would be a Bill in due course to put forward firm proposals around the Teaching Excellence Framework and the creation of the Office for Students;
- xxv) that the University had been due to have an engagement with the Quality Assurance Agency during 2016/17. It was understood that HEFCE was keen to see a lighter touch for those universities which had a good track record in relation to QAA audits. However, all universities would be required to submit a statement, on an annual basis, approved by the Board of Governors around assurances in relation to academic quality. There would also still be a five year visit from a QA body. It was recognised that the decision to maintain terms may assist the University deal with annual insurance processes and the forthcoming changes more readily. The University was likely to have more information in the next few months about how the pilot of the new QA system would be implemented in 2016/17;
- xxvi) that there had been further discussion around implementing a form of 'tax' for higher education institutions whose students did not secure earnings above the level required to enable them to pay back student loans;
- xxvii) that, in the future, it was likely that if any teaching funding remained this would be allocated by the newly proposed Office for Students;
- xxviii) that Professor Bill Wakeham was continuing his work around employability of graduates who had taken STEM degree subjects. His group had concluded that while employment rates for agri-food graduates remained good, the level of 'graduateness' tended to be lower and salaries generally lower than the graduates in other STEM disciplines. As a result of this, a further analysis had been proposed and it was understood that this would focus in particular on technological developments and evidence of the extent to which these were being included in the curriculum being studied by students. There had also been an acknowledgement that certain jobs within the agri-food and related industries were not necessarily regarded as 'graduate' in the current classification system;
- xxix) that a new body 'Research UK' was to be created. This new body would manage future QR funding in place of HEFCE;
- xxx) that opportunities to develop inter-disciplinary links with colleagues at Staffordshire University in social science research were continuing to be discussed;

- xxxi) that it was understood that Universities UK had issued guidance around university/university staff engagement with the EU referendum debate. In summary, the advice reminded universities of the importance of academic freedom and freedom of speech while ensuring that staff speaking on such matters should remain neutral or should present all sides of the argument rather than their personal view, for or against the subject of the referendum. Further guidance had also been given by the Charity Commission and it was understood that this would be strictly enforced. It was agreed that the University Secretary would circulate guidance as soon as it became available; **CEB**
  
- xxxii) that the National Centre for Universities & Business (NCUB) had developed a brokerage tool to provide information on industry links and placements available at UK universities. Academic staff were also encouraged to provide information on the 'ORCID' (Open Researcher and Contributor Identification) database as the NCUB would be using this database to draw together its own information. It was, therefore, particularly important that all Harper Adams academic staff were able to provide their details through this medium. Ennis Vingoe would send out further information to all staff; **EV**
  
- xxxiii) that further discussions regarding the Midlands engine would be taking place in the coming weeks. It was noted that Telford & Wrekin was a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority and, as a result of this, Harper Adams would be involved in meetings of all universities located within the Combined Authority area;
  
- xxxiv) that HRH The Princess Royal would be visiting the Dairy Crest Innovation Centre on 25 April 2016;
  
- xxxv) that Mr Simon Pride, currently Head of Marketing at Arts University Bournemouth, would be joining Harper Adams as the new Director of Marketing & Communications in June 2016. In the interim period the marketing team would be reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor;
  
- xxxvi) that a number of students had done extremely well in a range of awards including Dairy Student of the Year and Harper Adams had won a Guardian University Award. The University had also been judged as second in the UK in the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey and had also been shortlisted for two Times Higher Leadership & Management Awards (Admissions Team and Marketing Team);
  
- xxxvii) that it was recognised that across the HE sector some issues were arising in relation to current pay negotiations and UCU had given notice that it intended to ballot its members about a potential strike, or action short of a strike. This proposal had emerged before the national pay award negotiations had been concluded. The University was clear that UCU members would need to make their own decision in relation to this particular matter.

15/11 **Questions from Staff**

A member of staff asked when the outcome of the recent Staff Survey would be known. It was confirmed that feedback from Capita had only recently been received and, therefore, as soon as a full analysis had been completed, staff would be updated on the outcome of the survey, including proposed action points.

A member of staff asked whether the funding announcements referred to earlier in the meeting would include confirmation of likely funding for workforce development. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that such funding would be included within the HEFCE grant announcements.

15/12 **Date of Next Meeting**

19 September 2016 at 09.15