

## UNIVERSITY CENTRE WEST ANGLIA

Minutes of a meeting of the Directors of University Centre West Anglia held on 7 March 2018 in King's Lynn.

**PRESENT:** Mr P Bogle (PB)  
Dr T Bolton (TB)  
Ms A Clark (AC)  
Mr D Pomfret (DP) (Chair)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Miss L Andrews (minutes)  
Mr C Challenger  
Mr S Hindle

### Action

#### **334. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

334.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **335. APOLOGIES**

335.1 There were no apologies for absence.

#### **336. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

336.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 1 November 2017 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record

#### **337. MATTERS ARISING**

337.1 ARU Validated Outcomes 2016/17 (minute 322.2) – an ongoing range of conversations were taking place. Dr Bolton believed that there were no applicable benchmarks. Students were able to achieve their best mark with processes put in place to help them to do so.

337.2 Any Other Business (minute 332.1) – the Board noted that a Data Sharing Agreement was required between ARU and CWA to ensure compliance with GDPR. Mr Bogle agreed to share ARU's template agreement.

**PB**

#### **338. COLLEGE OF WEST ANGLIA STRATEGIC UPDATE**

338.1 A strategic update from CWA was received.

338.2 It was noted that CWAs number one priority was quality improvement following the disappointing outcome of the Ofsted report in January.

338.3 FE was a challenging sector and the grade profile from Ofsted showed that FE was lagging behind schools. It was noted that the Strategic College Improvement Fund was launched in November with a more significant programme to be run in the summer. CWA has applied for this and were one of only four successful colleges. It was noted that a

match contribution was required which was challenging as CWA needed to meet the spend profile with a short turnaround time. CWA has selected to work with the Grimsby Institute Group. Ms Clark is leading on this and has solid engagement with Grimsby on what appears to be a really useful programme. Both institutions would benefit from this two-way process which Dr Bolton noted was a long overdue initiative.

338.4 It was reported that post improvement in English in Maths have had a big impact on achievement rates. There has also been significant improvement in attendance rates and the quality of teaching and learning although there were further gains to be made here.

338.5 It was noted that CWAs most recent engagement in World Skills resulted in its first ever gold! CWA also won a gold and silver in Social Care and received a highly commended in carpentry. The hard work was paying off.

338.6 Approval had been obtained from the Careers Defence College Trust to run an Air and Defence course. CWA were now working alongside the single largest employer in the area, RAF Marham, in a concept which would see CWA developing a programme that would make students more employable with the RAF.

338.7 CWA have further developed links with employers, particularly Anglia Water, where apprenticeships were now being offered.

338.8 It was noted that financial challenges have not gone away. The 16/18 demographic dip would be challenging until 2021. This was significant in terms of financial stretch so some difficult discussions were needed with the Board. CWA have good financial health but with quality improvement being the number one priority this would be challenging.

338.9 It was noted that staff have not received a pay increase this year but had a modest 1% uplift last year. There was no clarity around future funding changes. There would be capacity funding for work experience for placements and CWA has been successful in attracting a grant. CWA was currently running with multiple different budgets from various government departments. The adult educational budget added a further layer of complexity and it was not clear how this would play out with the combined authority.

338.10 It was noted that Cambridge was a growth city so there was no demographic dip there but the other two campuses at Fenland and Wisbech had been affected by a 6% reduction year on year.

### **339. ANGLIA RUSKIN STRATEGIC UPDATE**

339.1 A strategic update from ARU was received.

339.2 Student recruitment remained the biggest area of focus and risk. Applications for entry in September 2018 were down compared to last year for both ARU and the sector. There were now different recruitment patterns: less undergraduate students, a rise in international numbers and growth in Degree Apprenticeships. Compared to many

institutions ARU was starting from a reasonable position of strength having grown its student numbers in recent years when a number of other universities had been contracting.

339.3 Degree Apprenticeships continue to be a success story with 470 expected to be recruited to ARU by the end of the year. This makes up 13% of ARUs core in year recruitment. It was noted that the type of engagement required by these students with University services would differ to that of the traditional student. CWA also saw these as an area of growth. Mr Hindle was in liaison with Tracy Armstrong and Tom Taylor in relation to a Chartered Management course. CWA was looking at how they marketed these so as not to compete directly with ARU but also how both institutions could work together. It was noted that CWA preferred a 4 year group scenario rather than a distance learning approach and hoped to offer two more courses in Advanced manufacturing and engineering.

339.4 Ms Clark asked whether CWA students would be able to come across to ARUs access to medicine programme offering. Dr Bolton would find out and report back.

**TB**

339.5 Medical School – it was noted that ARU should find out in the next three weeks if they were successful in receiving government funded numbers for recruitment in September 2018.

339.6 Office for Students (OfS) – the OfS has now published a 170 page regulatory framework and ARUs registration documents were due by the end of April.

339.7 Aletta Norval has joined ARU as new Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) taking over from Lesley Dobrée. Work was being done on student engagement and student retention which was moving in the right direction with retention figures dropping from 15% to 10%. Helen Valentine was due to retire in the summer and a Chief Operating Officer would be advertised for shortly to replace her.

339.8 UCU strikes had not affected ARU as there were no staff members on the USS pension scheme being protested about.

#### **340. INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY**

340.1 A verbal update was received.

340.2 It was noted that CWA submitted an expression of interest last year. This was a competitive process and feedback was currently awaited. The launch was not until 2019 so there was a way to go before funds came in. There had been encouragement from the LEP so CWA was quietly optimistic they would get to the next stage. It was noted that, in some areas of the country, institutions were being encouraged to combine into larger and larger bids and create regional centres

**341. NSS**

- 344.1 Shadow survey – this ran from 1 December to the 31 January and replicated what ARU have done. It was noted that 52% of students had engaged and Amazon vouchers worth £150 had served as a good incentive.
- 344.2 Whilst 96% overall satisfaction was seen across the piste, CWA were not complacent. It was noted that a negative reaction had been received in response to the question ‘the college informs students of subsequent changes and improvements’. Action had already begun to address this point and students have been spoken to regarding their responses including the free text comments.
- 344.3 It was reported that 7% disagreed that feedback on their work helped them to improve their grades and 11% disagreed that teaching and learning resources were sufficient. The Board noted that books were expensive and a significant amount of money had been invested in the learning resource centre.
- 344.4 It was noted that Mr Challender had met with all of the course directors to ensure that during induction it was communicated to students that there was a HE specific complaints procedure.
- 344.5 Careers advice and guidance – it was noted that CWA were promoting and placing greater focus on these activities.
- 344.6 This survey would be used every year to guide discussions at SSLC. A risk based approach was being taken and final year students would be disaggregated from this. .

**342. VETERINARY NURSING COURSE RECOVERY**

- 342.1 A verbal update was received.
- 342.2 Following publication of the NSS, the veterinary nursing course had returned a satisfaction figure of just 6.5%. A detailed action plan had subsequently been produced by CWA and ARU and after a series of meetings the action plan was agreed and completed to the satisfaction of both parties. Progress against the plan has been closely tracked and changes in management in CWA have had a strong positive impact. Everyone has worked hard but getting to a satisfactory score may take longer than a year. Mr Pomfret would be meeting with Professor Watkins at ARU to further discuss.

**DP**

**343. UCWA HE COHORT 2017/18**

- 343.1 A report was considered.
- 343.2 It was noted that there were 329 FT and 51 PT students enrolled as at 5 February 2018.

CWA tended to recruit late in the cycle and were successful during clearing. Mr Challender would clarify the drop-out rate between cohort years.

CC

#### **344. UCWA APPLICATIONS 2018/19**

344.1 A report was considered.

344.2 It was noted that there was a total of 250 applications for 2018 compared to 260 last year. The total for 2016 was 278 which showed a consistent decline. However, CWA was doing better than the national trend and its comparator group. Veterinary nursing applications were up this year at 105. There were a large proportion of walk-ins that did not come through UCAS.

344.3 Dr Bolton noted that if veterinary nursing numbers were stripped out there would be an overall drop of 20% which was significant.

344.4 Conversions were more important than applications themselves. Mr Challender ran a regular report predicting the cohort for September 2018. A paper detailing the forward projection of courses and new programme development over the next three years including Degree Apprenticeships would be brought to the next meeting.

CC

#### **345. PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

345.1 A report regarding moving from a joint venture to a validation model partnership agreement was considered.

345.2 It was reported that Mr Bogle and Mr Pomfret had a useful discussion where a wish was expressed to change the governance model. It was noted that colleagues at Peterborough were more than happy to share their experiences with CWA. However, it was noted that Peterborough had different aspirations.

345.3 The pros and cons of each model were summarised and considered. Dr Bolton reported that a franchise model was preferable for new and less experienced partners but would recommend a validation model for more confident, experienced providers. It was noted that a franchise model gave the University more control whereas a validation model would allow CWA to tailor and shape its own curriculum and allows for a more locally grown offering. Library access would not be the same on a validation model which required an adjustment to the validation fee recognising that these costs would be met by the college.

345.4 Mr Pomfret was unaware that CWA was so constrained. Ms Clark noted that CWA wrote the veterinary nursing course, there were also modules that had been written by CWA validated by ARU but not used by ARU.

345.5 It was considered that CWA might be impacted negatively financially by moving away from the current model and were not currently persuaded that this would benefit CWA. Mr Pomfret needed to better understand

ARUs drivers for bringing this to the table and welcomed further exploration of this.

**346. OFFA 2019/20**

346.1 A verbal report on UCWA tuition fees was received.

346.2 It was noted that further exploratory work would be undertaken to ascertain how fees would best suit students of the future. The current access agreement would be rolled forward one year and then a fundamental review undertaken. ARU would roll forward what was submitted last year as far as possible although this would be submitted to the OfS as an Access and Participation Plan who have different requirements to HEFCE.

**347. OIA REFERRALS**

347.1 A verbal summary status was received.

347.2 It was noted that CWA had received one complaint from a veterinary nursing course student which had gone through the complete HE complaints process. The student took legal action and then went to the OIA. The OIA terminated the complaint at the outset and confirmed that the college had done all it needed to do.

**348. JOINT RISK REGISTER**

348.1 The risk register was reviewed, updated and **APPROVED**.

348.2 Ms Clark agreed to update the risk register in light of today's discussions particularly regarding the risk around funding challenges and the attractiveness of the course portfolio in relation to failure to action student numbers.

**AC**

**349. FORECAST FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2018**

349.1 The forecast financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2018 were noted and **APPROVED**.

**350. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

350.1 The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 2pm on 6 June 2018 in Milton.

350.2 It was suggested that a future meeting could be held in Chelmsford to include a tour around the Medical School. Colleagues from CWA welcomed this.