

**STUDENT RECRUITMENT TEAM**

**Notes of a meeting held on 15 March 2010**

**Present:** Abigail Bartholomew (for item 6), Morag Bell (Chair), Andy Borrie (for item 7), Paul Byrne, Rahmanara Chowdhury (for item 5), Andrew Cooney, John Dickens, John Feather (for item 4), Wendy Ferguson, Martin Harrison, Jon Inegbedion, Howard Jones, Jennifer Nutkins, Justine Sanders

1. **Apologies for absence**

An apology for his absence was received from Tony Westaway.

1. **Notes of the meeting held on 15 February 2010**

These were approved.

1. **Matters arising on the notes**

* **University Open Days**

It was reported that other universities had been contacted regarding their arrangements for Saturday Open Days and one reply had been received so far. This was from Nottingham University confirming that all departments took part in its Saturday Open Days.

* **Ergonomics Department**

The Team was advised that an initial meeting had now been held between the Department and the International Office.

1. **Postgraduate Open Day 24 February 2010**

Professor Feather, Dean of the Graduate School was welcomed to the meeting. A report on the Open Day prepared by Caroline Jeffries, Student Outreach and Recruitment Officer, was received and considered. It was noted that 263 attendees had registered. Approximately 30% were current Loughborough undergraduates and the impression gained was that external participants had come principally from the locality. The organisation of the event had proceeded smoothly and there had been a much higher take-up of campus tours. It was hoped that participants would be tracked through to the beginning of the academic year to ascertain how many were actually recruited by Loughborough. There were plans to adapt the new on-line application process into a proto-portal to act as a customer relations management facility which could include a tracking service.

It was agreed to create a Graduate School stand for the 2011 event which would offer generic advice and also to give greater prominence to research opportunities. The broader issue of the effective promotion of the range of taught postgraduate programmes available at Loughborough was considered. It was felt that these could be clustered together, drawing on work already undertaken, in order to market them in an integrated way.. Attention was also drawn to the need for Loughborough students to be targeted in a cross-departmental way. The Dean of the Graduate School undertook to convene a meeting with the International Office, Marketing and Communications and Student Outreach and Recruitment, to examine these issues further.

**Action: JPF**

1. **Widening Access through Sport (WATS) Project**

Rahmanara Chowdhury was welcomed to the meeting and invited to present her report. The Team was informed that the WATS Project was now in its seventh year. Numbers of participants had grown from the original core group of 10, 8 of whom had progressed to HE and some of whom were now returning to act as mentors on the project. The area from which participants were drawn had extended from Loughborough to cover Leicester, Derby and Coventry. There was no doubt that the project had met one of its key aims, namely to make a positive impact within the relevant communities. The profile and accessibility of the University and HE in general had been raised among young females and, critically, their parents. Participants were being tracked, making use of the Aimhigher in the East Midlands statistical services and the project was being linked to other Student Recruitment and Outreach (SOAR) activities.

It was noted that although the project had been the subject of press releases and media coverage in the past, it could benefit from a further release this year. The possibility of the project being rolled-out nationally was considered and it was agreed that possible opportunities for external funding should be explored through a meeting between the SOAR team, Marketing and Communications and Development and Alumni Relations. It was felt appropriate for Dr Tess Kay, one of the originators of the project to be invited to this meeting.

**Action: SOAR**

Rahmanara was congratulated on the success of the project and thanked for her report.

1. **Faculty of Engineering: survey of 2009 applicants for undergraduate programmes**

Abigail Bartholomew, Marketing Officer for the Engineering Faculty, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to present her report. The Team was informed that the survey had been carried out in July 2009 and had attracted 484 replies, principally from applicants who had made Loughborough their first choice. All departments within the Faculty were covered by the replies. The principal conclusion which could be drawn from the survey results was that the University continued to perform well in its approach to the recruitment of engineering undergraduates. Promotional material (electronic and printed), visits to the campus and the applications process itself had all been assessed positively overall. The survey also confirmed a number of assumptions, such as the continuing relevance of the printed prospectus, the growing role of parents in the decision making process, and the less positive impact of the town. The Team was reassured to learn that, in general, offer levels were viewed as fair and in line with expectations. The finding that the University was viewed as “modern” rather than “traditional” was noted with interest.

The survey report had been presented to the Faculty Directorate and all Heads of Department and admissions tutors. Its recommendations which included the desirability of facilitating more contact with current students during visits and increasing the range of accommodation available for viewing, were being followed-up, the latter through a working group chaired by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Director.

The survey would be repeated in 2010, on a slightly earlier date, and it was hoped to extend it to cover the other two Faculties.

There would be an opportunity for current practices in relation to bespoke sessions for parents during visits to be reviewed at the next admissions tutors’ forum. The desirability of a dedicated webpage for parents on the prospective students’ site was endorsed.

**Action: HEJ**

Abigail was thanked for her report.

1. **University-wide admissions policy for elite athletes**

Andy Borrie, Director of Performance Sport, Sports Development Centre, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to present the latest version of his paper. It was noted that the Sports Strategy Group, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, had expressed its support for a university-wide admissions policy which formalised existing practices and that various meetings had taken place in order to put together a set of proposals which would be supported by the Team, the Faculties and central admissions. The report was clear in its understanding that the ownership and control of admissions rested with academic departments. The current arrangement within the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences which had worked well for a number of years had been used as the model. The report now contained, however, an explicit undertaking that no concessionary offer would be lower than 300 points (BBB grades) unless really exceptional an d fully documented factors had been identified, perhaps supported by the outcome of an interview. It was confirmed that in any one year the total number of concessionary offers outwith SSEHS would be limited to 75.

There was support for the principle of a gathered field approach, recommended by central admissions, whereby a meeting would take place in early February at which the overall position would be reported and an opportunity afforded for decisions not to make a concessionary offer or to reject a recommended applicant to be reviewed. It was agreed, however, that the processing of concessionary offers in line with the policy need not be delayed until this meeting.

There was support for the view that the University’s admissions policy ought to make explicit the fact that in certain circumstances, a concessionary offer would be considered. Such a statement could also define the conditions and safeguards which would apply.

It was agreed to invite Andy to make appropriate revisions to the document prior to its returning to the Team for final approval and onward recommendation to the Directorates and Senate.

**Action: AB**

Andy was thanked for his paper and also for both his patience in continuing to steer the proposal forward and his flexibility in accepting the need for revisions.

1. **Undergraduate and taught postgraduate recruitment to Loughborough, 2010** **entry**

The latest statistics were received and considered. These included for the first time data on conditional offers and acceptances for undergraduate programmes.

*Undergraduate*

Although only a minority of replies had been received to date (21% and 8% respectively), a fall in the C to CF conversion rate was already apparent for both UK/EU and international applications. Research into the conversion rates for previous years had revealed that the trajectory flattened from February onwards, suggesting that the current rate would now be maintained. It was agreed that the policy to raise entry requirements could be a contributory factor to the decline. It was also recalled that 2009 had been an exceptional year, assisted by the University’s status as Sunday Times University of the Year. It remained the case that the University was well placed to meet its target of 3103 UK/EU undergraduates, even if greater use of concessions, changed course offers and a return to Clearing proved to be necessary in order to achieve this. It was agreed that a measure of flexibility would be permitted in assessing the English Language competence of those international applicants who fell slightly short of the new minimum requirement but who were otherwise academically suitable for admission. There was no doubt that competition for international recruitment was intensifying. A meeting would be held to consider what interventions were necessary to protect Loughborough’s recruitment.

**Action: HEJ**

A report on applications to the International Foundation Programme would be presented to the next meeting of the Team.

**Action: HEJ**

*Taught Postgraduate*

The upward trend in both UK/EU and international applications was being maintained (37% and 29% respectively). The strengthening of Loughborough’s position in India was noted, a welcome development due in part to the use of reliable agents. The processing of applications continued to be carefully monitored. The attention of the Team was drawn to the desire of both the Business School and Economics, expressed at recent meetings with senior management, to reduce their intakes of international postgraduates from 2011 onwards in order to improve staff-student ratios. It would be necessary for this shortfall to be recovered by other departments to enable the University to protect its income level. Possibilities would be explored with the International Office in due course

**Action: MB/FMH**

The desirability of introducing an application fee for certain programmes was being considered. A review of administrative support for the whole area of student finance (including scholarship and bursary processing) was viewed as a priority.

The Team was briefed on the latest pronouncements from the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) including the proposal to create a Highly Trusted Sponsor Status. Representations were being made by the sector in the hope that revisions would be accepted to make the proposal more realistic, practical and less intrusive.

1. **Date of next meeting**

Monday 26 April 2010 at 9.30am

Author: Howard Jones

Date: 16 March 2010

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