

**STUDENT RECRUITMENT TEAM**

**Notes of a meeting held on 26 April 2010**

**Present:** Morag Bell (Chair), Paul Byrne, Andrew Cooney, John Dickens, Wendy Ferguson, Martin Harrison, Jon Inegbedion, Howard Jones, Jennifer Nutkins, Justine Sanders, Tony Westaway

1. **Apologies for absence**

There were none.

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

These were approved.

1. **Matters arising on the notes**
* **Widening Access through Sport (WATS) Project**

It was reported that a meeting between members of the Student Outreach and Recruitment Team, the Development and Alumni Office and Marketing and Communications would be taking place on Thursday 6 May 2010.

* **UCAS visits and bespoke sessions for parents/guardians**

The Team was informed that a majority of departments offered bespoke sessions for parents and guardians. Examples of separate programmes were circulated. The admissions tutors’ forum expected to take place in early July would be used as an opportunity to disseminate good practice and to promote a greater consistency of approach.

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

The Team was advised that this proposal would be considered by Directorates at next round of meetings, taking place in May. The paper would be presented by the ADTs.

* **UKBA Highly Trusted Sponsor (HTS) status**

It was noted that the University had been granted temporary HTS status but would be required to apply by 30 June 2010 for this to be made permanent. Intense lobbying had resulted in the withdrawal of a spreadsheet which had formed part of the original application form. Although it was likely that most universities would decide to apply for the highly trusted status, current advice was to wait until after the General Election in case this led to policy modifications.

1. **International Recruitment: an assessment of cost and income**

A paper prepared by the International Office was received and considered. It was noted that the figure shown in table 1 represented gross income as calculated by the International Office and had not been confirmed by the Finance Office. It was agreed that the total for research students in particular would fall significantly when account was taken of scholarships and other awards. It was recognised too that section 3 setting out the costs of the International Office, had intentionally refrained from attempting to estimate the costs of the contributions made to recruitment and admissions by other parts of the Academic Registry and by admissions staff in academic departments. The role of the International Office in relation to the recruitment of research students was growing. Section 3 was also confined to the recruitment and admissions operation and did not include the costs of all the central services involved in administrative and other support for students, post-arrival, such as Student Records and Examinations, Finance and the Student Support Centre. A future draft of the paper would make the scope of the costing explicit.

**Action: International Office**

The Team noted that the budget proposed by the Academic Registry for the 2010/2011 session would seek to protect the recruitment and admissions function, as a priority activity, from the non-pay savings which had been requested by the University. This recognised that some efficiency gains leading to reductions in expenditure, had already been achieved through process enhancements. Steps taken to reduce the weight and size of the undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses would also bring about economies.

Concern was expressed about the method used by the Finance Office currently to recover from academic departments the cost of scholarships, bursaries and agents’ commission. Rather than simply make a deduction to the tuition fee income, the Finance Office presented the amount due as a cost to be met from an alternative allocation. This approach encouraged departments to take the opportunity to meet their saving targets by reducing the number of awards made and by turning down applications referred by agents.

Section 6 of the paper put forward a number of issues for discussion, giving rise to the following responses:

1. The International Office’s evolving policy of moving away from set piece exhibitions in the direction of private visits was supported. The value of developing effective inter-institutional partnerships was acknowledged.
2. There was greater urgency for the University to consider increasing its involvement in jointly funded scholarship schemes. Competitor institution were now availing themselves of the opportunity provided by these schemes to raise their profile. Details of the range of schemes would be produced and recommendations brought forward. The desirability of creating country-specific awards would also be considered.

**Action: International Office**

1. Broadening the recruitment base to reduce dependency on just a few principal markets remained a key medium term objective. There was no doubt that China would continue to provide significant demand for the foreseeable future but the University’s relationship with Santander provided an excellent platform for targeting Latin America. Successive visits to India and the Middle East were bearing fruit in the form of an increase in postgraduate applications and the potential of progression from the British University in Egypt was becoming apparent. Small countries should not be overlooked. A critical factor lay in the appeal of the University’s subject provision.
2. The need to spend wisely and to secure some economies presented a challenge. Making balanced, well-informed judgements was crucial. There would be no gain from cutting back a central activity, only to transfer the responsibility and, therefore, the cost to departments. A rigorous evaluation of current activities in terms of benefit to the University would be timely, however, and the International Office was invited to draw up a record of existing partnerships and Memoranda of Understanding and offer an assessment of worth alongside each.

**Action: International Office**

1. The University was committed to increasing the recruitment of research students in its strategic plan. Close liaison between the Graduate School and the International Office was essential to ensure co-ordinated planning. Quality had to be a paramount concern.
2. The decision to move from the Education UK website to internally produced material for own language profiles was welcomed. This achieved savings but also opened access to good quality output from the Students Union.
3. The International Office was poised to launch a series of initiatives for the USA market (see item 5 of these notes) and was now engaged in a more systematic and extensive mainland Europe recruitment drive.
4. The International Office had embarked upon an assessment of the value of UK-based recruitment agents and was also prepared to consider the introduction of incentives for agents, above the current levels of commission payments.
5. The importance of maintaining the telephone campaign was emphasised.

The Team agreed that a number of important issues had emerged from its discussion of the International Office’s paper. These would need to be incorporated into the next draft, perhaps as a cover note, prior to the paper proceeding to Operations Committee.

**Action: HEJ**

1. **International recruitment strategy for the USA market**

A paper from the International Office was received and discussed. It was noted that this represented an action plan rather than a strategy. The paper would be amended to address this and considered again at the next International Office quarterly meeting. The Team was advised that the International Office was consulting departments to ascertain the level of interest in the US market and also to gain an up to date understanding of the many links which already existed with that country. The research undertaken previously by Professor Backhouse, Director of Internationalisation would be utilised. The value of two-way exchanges as an awareness raising initiative was recognised. It was an area in which the University had some earlier experience.

Specific actions already planned included the forthcoming visit of Jon Inegbedion to the long-standing NAFSA Conference, schedule for May 2010 and participation in the British Council’s UK-US partnership meeting on 13 May 2010.

A dialogue with the Research Team would be inaugurated to develop proposals tailored to research recruitment. In this respect the Fulbright Commission’s prestigious awards programme represented an excellent example of a jointly funded scheme participation in which would raise the University’s profile significantly.

It was accepted that any growth in recruitment from the USA would carry a substantial administrative overhead. The US Federal Loans scheme was heavily bureaucratic, time consuming and expensive but unavoidable.

1. **Student accommodation charges: comparator data**

Data provided by imago which compared the University’s range of accommodation charges with those levied by three other institutions were considered. It was unclear as to whether Loughborough’s pricing remained competitive and it was agreed that clarification should be sought about this and also the existence of league tables.

**Action: HEJ**

The University was in a position to promote a very positive message about its accommodation, notably in terms of the range, location and pastoral support but the overall cost was a subject of understandable concern to prospective students and their parents. Academic departments would appreciate being given accurate information about Loughborough’s relative position for dissemination at UCAS visit days. This would be raised at the next admissions tutors’ forum.

**Action: HEJ**

1. **Sustainability in the curriculum: update 2010**

The Team was invited to note and comment upon the latest results of the “key word search” which had been commissioned first two years previously and which had now been updated for the Sustainability Strategy Group (SSG). The emergence of a number of new programmes was welcomed. It was clear that coverage extended right across the institution, with an impressive list of modules revealed by the word “environment” particularly. It was acknowledged that there were other modules with a sustainability content which was not apparent from their titles. The SSG would be promoting greater links with relevant Research Schools. The Team was reminded that the Employability Award required students to undertake a sustainability element.

The results revealed by the word search and the importance of a debate on the future direction of the sustainability agenda, would be drawn to the attention of the Pro Vice Chancellor Research and the Dean of the Graduate School.

**Action: MB**

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

*Undergraduate*

The latest admissions data were considered. The figures for UK/EU and international undergraduate recruitment suggested a return to the position at the equivalent point in 2008. The C to CF conversion rate had fallen by around 4% in both cases, compared to 2009, making it likely that greater use would need to be made of concessions, changed course offers and Clearing this year. Nevertheless, there was every likelihood that the UK/EU target of 3103 would be met without the quality of the intake being compromised.

Two major recruiters of international undergraduates, the Business School and Economics, had experienced significant declines in their applications. This had resulted in fewer offers being made and a reduced number of CFs could be expected as a result. A willingness to be flexible when considering results would assist the departments in reducing an intake shortfall. More positive outcomes could be anticipated, however, for two other departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, namely Social Sciences and Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences. Although numbers were smaller the trends were upward.

An investigation would be carried out into possible reasons for the reduction in the C to CF conversion rate for both UK/EU and international applications and any conclusions would be presented to the next meeting of the Team on 7 June 2010.

**Action: WJF**

The impact of higher entry requirements and the advance publicity given to these would be assessed. The decision of the University to raise its IELTS requirement to an overall 6.5 with no score below 6.0 could also be acting as a deterrent. Typically, the writing component within the test was the stumbling block. The English Language Support Unit would continue to offer in-sessional tuition in this competency, allowing scope for concessions where appropriate.

*Taught Postgraduate*

The buoyant picture presented by the taught postgraduate data became even stronger when it was borne in mind that the closest available comparative figures for 2009 were three weeks ahead. There had been an increase of 10.4% in the total number of offers made to international applicants and firm acceptances had risen by 20.83%. The potentially negative impact of staff resignations and extended sick leave on the resource available within the taught postgraduate office for the processing of applications was being addressed through offers of help from other parts of the department and also the recruitment of temporary staff. Forecast intake outcomes would be presented to the June meeting of the Team.

1. **International Foundation Programme (IFP), Loughborough College**

A report on IFP applications for 2010 entry was received. It was noted that there had been an increase of 38% so far compared to 2009.

1. **The Business School and Economics: international applications**

It was agreed to defer consideration of a paper from the International Office pending consultation with the two departments and also the outcome of a meeting being convened by the Planning Office to begin the process of determining targets for 2011.

1. **Date of next meeting**

Monday 7 June 2010 at 9.30am.

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