

# **ASTON UNIVERSITY**

## **INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the International Strategy Committee meeting held on Tuesday 15th May 2018.

**PRESENT:** Saskia Loer Hansen (Chair), Geoff Parkes, Bhavisha Patel, Frank Austermuehl, Carolina Salinas, Wendy Yip, Fiona Kilker, Pawan Budhwar, Paul Knobbs, Odette Hutchinson, Frank Eperjesi, Kate Sugden

**APOLOGIES:** Chris Matthews, Reema Quessou, Sapreena Kumari, Asif Ahmed

**SECRETARY:** Jessica Neumann

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Laura Bryan

### **1. MINUTES**

17/20 CONFIRMED:

The Minutes of the International Strategy Committee held on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018 (Blackboard).

### **2. HONG KONG ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

17/21 RECEIVED:

An oral report by Dr Geoff Parkes on Aston activity in Hong Kong undertaken as part of Geoff's secondment to the Aston Hong Kong branch. The report focused on priority partners and the development of focused articulation agreements, updates on the joint education programme with Northeast Forestry University and the development of the Joint School with Nanjing University of Finance and Economics (still pending official approval in China), market positioning and entry requirements to make Aston programmes sufficiently competitive in China, challenges relating to the offering of the Aston DBA in collaboration with Kaplan in Hong Kong, recruitment fairs, summer school activity, new market developments – specifically Indonesia – and engagement with alumni, global classroom initiatives and collaboration with agents.

17/22 NOTED:

- I. Kaplan DBA require 20 applications as a minimum to run however at present is 5-10 applications below target and hence no firm offers have been given to applicants as of yet. ABS will decide on whether to delay the intake start date until January 2019 or indeed whether the market is too small to warrant an additional DBA provider in Hong Kong. Considerations are underway with Kaplan in Hong Kong and a decision will be made shortly as to next steps.
- II. Aston has received 40+ applications for the Summer Programme, mainly from four partner institutions in China. This is a great outcome for the Summer School and evidences that there is demand for this type of product.
- III. Malaysian market is possibly saturated and Vietnamese is slower therefore now Indonesia is a country of focus for Geoff in terms of recruitment

initiatives.

- IV. Noted Asian market very much driven by rankings. Aston's marketing materials should reflect this, and where our rankings are not sufficiently strong, we need to have very clear value propositions around individual programme offerings.
- V. Noted academic staff to participate further in recruitment activity. A schedule of proposed academic engagement with roadshows and recruitment fairs will be developed as part of the International Recruitment and Marketing Plan.

17/23 RECEIVED:

A report by Dr Geoff Parkes on pre-sessional English language requirements, including a comparison of other UK HEIs. This difference is currently impacting on Aston's ability to convert applicants to firm acceptances and enrolments at Aston.

17/24 NOTED:

Aston's requirements for pre-sessional are higher than other UK HEIs. Discussed whether Aston's requirements should be lowered or if the offering could be amended to provide a greater IELTS uplift in a shorter period of time.

17/25 ACTION:

PVCI to discuss with CELCA.

### **3. INTERNATIONAL PLAN UPDATE**

17/26 RECEIVED:

An oral presentation on the International Plan from PVCI with specific reference to the International Recruitment and Marketing Plan which is now being progressed. The Plan will outline priority markets, channels to market and will aim to be firmer on KPIs and expected growth targets over the next three years. The Plan will also make it clear what input is required by Schools in terms of academic engagement with roadshows. The Plan is progressing and will be finalised once the new Director International Recruitment has arrived. It is anticipated that a formal ask for additional budget will be going forward to the Exec shortly.

17/27 NOTED:

PVCI expressed the intention to complete the draft plan by the end of June 2018 for final revision and input by the new Director on her/his arrival

### **4. BREAKOUT WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PLAN**

Led by Sally Puzey and PVCI.

17/28 NOTED

- I. Pro Vice-Chancellor Research confirmed as on sabbatical until the end of the year however the International Research plan is still to progress as will development of the broader Research Strategy.
- II. There are three envisaged priorities for the international research plan: Build capacity for winning other international research funding beyond H2020 and

attracting government sponsored HDR candidates, develop key institutional partnerships that will enable research impact and deliverables for our beneficiaries, and development a joined up institutional approach to enable better outcomes for the University.

- III. According to the new University strategy, the focus of research activity is narrowing and becoming more focused, however volume remains the same.
- IV. Suggested country specific research champions should be identified to enhance knowledge and encourage participation in funding opportunities.
- V. Noted that more planning for the UK's departure from the European Union is required. European funding constitutes 50% of research income at Aston so we will be more exposed if UK HEIs' access to future research programme change.
- VI. Noted Aston's India Centre logged all Indian scholars and recorded specialisms to build a record of areas of strengths in preparation for funding opportunities. Agreed this approach could be extended to other priority areas.
- VII. Noted academic staff should be more involved in inbound delegations, particularly Government level delegations, in order to introduce research interests at an early stage to make sure we capture any possible opportunities.
- VIII. Commonwealth scholarships fund tuition and living costs therefore further focus on Commonwealth Scholarships should be made by schools to attract more applications from talented students.
- IX. PhD offerings to be clearer and University to confirm what its position is on PhDs as the sense in the Committee was that Aston might not really want international PhDs. The PVCI commented that this was unlikely to be the case, but agreed to seek formal confirmation on this.
- X. Aston has been approached by Turkish Ministry with regard to a package of sponsored students, requiring a 20% discount on PhD and PGT programmes but with an expectation around more significant volume of students. This would be explored in more detail by International Development, pending confirmation about the interest in Aston receiving more Government sponsored PhD students.

## **5. OTHER BUSINESS**

17/29 NOTED:

Members will be contacted in advance of future meetings to decide themes for workshops to ensure that the Committee addresses issues that are relevant and make a difference to Schools engagement in international activity.

## **6. DATE OF MEETINGS**

17/30 NOTED

Future meetings are to be confirmed